Rosh Chodesh and the role of humans in creation

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Parshat Bo

Thank you to my AJA students for your insights into this shiur



- Makkat Arbeh
- Makkat Choshech
- Makkat Bechorot
- Yetziat Mitzrayim

# Parshat Bo

- Rosh Chodesh
- Korban Pesach
- Chag Hamatzot
- Tefillin
- Pidyon Bechorot

### **Sforno -** (15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century)

### Rosh Chodesh

וָיּאֹמֶר יְהֹוָהֹ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמָר:

Hashem said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt:

ָהַחְׂדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רְאֹשׁ חֲדָשִׁים רִאשׁוֹן הוּאֹ לָכֶּם לְחָדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה:

This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you.

Shemot 12:1 - 2

החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים. 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 הבחיריי:

החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים, will be yours, to do with as you like. This is by way of contrast to the years when you were enslaved when you had no control over your time or timetable at all. While you were enslaved, your days, hours, minutes even, were always at the beck and call of your taskmasters.

וּבְרָאשֵׁי חָדְשֵׁילֶם תַּקְרִיבוּ עֹלֶה לַיהֹוֶה פָּרִים בְּנֵי־בָקָר שְׁנַּיִם וְאַיִל אֶחָׁד כְּבָשִִים בְּנִי־שָׁנָה שִׁבְעָה הְּמִימְם:

On your new moons you shall present a burnt offering to two bulls of the herd, one ram, and seven yearling lambs, without blemish. (Bamidbar 28:11)

וָיּאמֶר יְהֹוָהֹ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֵׁן בָּאֱרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמְר:

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Shemot 12:1 - 2

Ramban (13th century)

**החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים** זו מצוה ראשונה שצוה הקב"ה את ישראל על ידי משה, ולכן אמר בארץ מצרים, כי שאר מצות שבתורה היו בהר סיני,

ולפי מדרשו לכם לומר שקדוש החדש צריך בית דין מומחין (ר"ה כה:) ולכך לא נאמר בתחלה "דברו אל כל עדת ישראל", שאין בקדוש החדש אלא משה ואהרן וכיוצא בהם. וטעם החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים, שימנו אותו ישראל חדש הראשון, וממנו ימנו כל החדשים שני ושלישי עד תשלום השנה בשנים עשר חדש, כדי שיהיה זה זכרון בנס הגדול, כי בכל עת שנזכיר החדשים יהיה הנס נזכר, ועל כן אין לחדשים שם בתורה, אלא יאמר בחדש השלישי (שמות ייט:אי), ואומר ויהי בשנה השנית בחדש השני נעלה הענן (במדבר י יא), ובחדש השביעי באחד לחודש וגו' (שם כט א), וכן כלם:

וכמו שתהיה הזכירה ביום השבת במנותינו ממנו אחד בשבת ושני בשבת, כאשר אפרש (רמב"ן על שמות כיות"), כך הזכירה ביציאת מצרים במנותינו החדש הראשון והחדש השני והשלישי לגאולתינו, שאין המנין הזה לשנה, שהרי תחלת שנותינו מתשרי, דכתיב (שמות ל״ד:כ״ב) וחג האסיף תקופת השנה, וכתיב (שם כג טז) בצאת השנה, אם כן כשנקרא לחדש ניסן ראשון ולתשרי שביעי, פתרונו ראשון לגאולה ושביעי אליה וזה טעם ראשון הוא לכם, שאיננו ראשון בשנה, אבל הוא ראשון לכם, שנקרא לו לזכרון גאולתינו:

ַוְיּאמֶר יְהֹוָהֹ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֱל־אַהָרֹן בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמְר:

Hashem said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt:

הַחְׂדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לְכֶם רְאֹשׁ חֲדָשֵׁים רְאשׁוֹן הוּאֹ לְלֵם לְחָדִשֵּׁי הַשְּׁגָה:

This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you.

#### Ramban

THIS MONTH SHALL BE UNTO YOU THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS. This is the first commandment which the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded Israel through Moses. Therefore, it says here [that the Eternal spoke unto Moses and Aaron] in the land of Egypt, <sup>97</sup> Verse 1. for the rest of the commandments of the Torah were given to him on Mount Sinai...

.... According to the Midrashic interpretation, <sup>101</sup>Rosh Hashanah 25b. The process involved witnesses who saw the appearance of the [in the verse, This month shall be unto you], means that "the Sanctification of the New Moon" <sup>101</sup>Rosh Hashanah 25b. The process involved witnesses who saw the appearance of the new moon.... is to be performed only by a Court of experts [as Moses and Aaron were]. And this is the reason it does not say at the beginning [of Verse 2], Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, since "the Sanctification of the New Moon" can be performed only by Moses and Aaron and their like.

וְיּאֹמֶר יְהֹוָהֹ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהָרוֹ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמִר:

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Shemot 12:1 - 2

#### Ramban

Now the purport of the expression, *This month shall be unto you the beginning of months*, is that Israel is to count this as the first of the months, and from it they are to count all months — second, third, etc., until a year of twelve months is completed — in order that there be through this enumeration a remembrance of the great miracle, [i.e., the exodus from Egypt, which occurred in the first month]. Whenever we will mention the months, the miracle will be remembered. <sup>102</sup>*Thus everytime a person says, for example, "the third month," he implies that it is the third in the order of the months which begins with Nisan, when the exodus occurred. ... Just as in counting the weekdays we always remember the Sabbath-day since the weekdays have no specific name of their own, but instead are called "one day in the Sabbath," "the second day in the Sabbath," as I will explain, <sup>106</sup><i>Further, 20:8.* so we remember the exodus from Egypt in our counting "the first month," "the second month," "the third month," etc., to our redemption.

#### Seforno

To do with as you like

#### Ramban

- To mark this historic event
- The laws of Rosh Chodesh

 Isaiah Berlin (1969) famously distinguished between two basic concepts of freedom, namely *freedom from* or negative freedom, and *freedom to* or positive freedom. Freedom from consists in the absence of obstacles or constraints to one's own action. By contrast, freedom to identifies the possibility to autonomously determine and achieve individual or collective purposes (Berlin, <u>1969</u>). (Frontiers of Psychology, 2019)

## Goals ...

- To better understand the Sforno's perspective
- To explore the structure of the laws of Pesach
- To relate these laws to our understanding of the Mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh generally



### The laws of Korban Pesach (12:3-14)

- When to take the se
- How and when to eat it

#### Korban Pesach continued (12:3 - 14)

- How you should eat it
- It will save you from Makat Bechorot

#### Chag HaMatzot (12:15 – 20)

- Mitzvah TO eat Matzot
- Mitzvah NOT to eat Chametz

Moshe relaying the Mitzvah of Korban Pesach In preparation for Makat Bechorot (12: 21 - 28)

- Taking the se
- Using the blood on the doorpost

Korban Pesach preparations continued (12:15-28)

Makkat Bechorot (12:29 - 36)

Leaving Mitzrayim (12:37-42)

Reiteration of the laws of Korban Pesach (12:43-50)

- Laws of Korban Pesach
- Laws of Chag Hamatzot
- Preparation of Korban Pesach for Makat Bechorot
- Makat Bechorot
- Leaving Mitzrayim
- More specifics about the Laws of Korban Pesach

וַיּאֹפּוּ אֶת־הַבָּצֵּק אֲשֶּׁר הוֹצְיאוּ מִמִּצְרֵיִם עֻנָּת מַצְּוֹת כִּי לְאׁ חָמֵץ בִּי־גֹּרְשָׁוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם וְלָא יִכְלוּ לְהִתְמַהְמֵּהַ וְגַם־צֵדָה לֹא־עָשָׂוּ לָהֶם:

And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had taken out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, since they had been driven out of Egypt and could not delay; nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

Shemot 12:39

ּ וְכִי־יָגוּר אִתְּךֹּ גֵֹּר וְעֲשָׂה פֶּּסַח ֹ לַיהֹוָה הָמְוֹל לָוֹ כָל־זָכָּר וְאָזֹ יִקְרַב לַעֲשׁׂתוֹ ו הָיָה פְּאֶזְרַח הָאָרֶץ וְכָל־עָרֵל לְאֹ־ִיאֹכַל בְּוֹ:

If a male stranger who dwells with you would offer the passover to יהוה, all his males must be circumcised; then he shall be admitted to offer it; he shall then be as a citizen of the country. But no uncircumcised man may eat of it.

**Shemot 12:48** 

### Some conclusions

- We eat matza to recall the exodus
- The Korban Pesach is unique to those who show adherence to Hashem's laws and covenant (more soon)
- Makkat Bechorot is the only Makkah that is contingent on action of the people

Seforno	Ramban
To do with as you like	To mark this historic event The laws of Rosh Chodesh

### Why are the specific laws of Korban Pesach so important?

יהוה (43)said to Moses and Aaron: This is the law of the passover offering: No foreigner shall eat of it. (44) But any householder's purchased male slave may eat of it once he has been circumcised. (45) No bound or hired laborer shall eat of it. (46) It shall be eaten in one house: you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house; nor shall you break a bone of it. (47) The whole community of Israel shall offer it. (48) If a male stranger who dwells with you would offer the passover to יהוה, all his males must be circumcised; then he shall be admitted to offer it; he shall then be as a citizen of the country. But no uncircumcised man may eat of it. (49) There shall be one law for the citizen and for the stranger who dwells among you. (50) And all the Israelites did so; as יהוה had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

Shemot 12:43-50

(מג) וְיּאֹמֶר יְהֹוָהֹ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲדֹּן זֻאֹת חֻקְּת הַפְּסַח כְּל־בֶּן־נֵכָּר לֹאֹ־יִאֹכֵל בְּוֹ: (מד) וְכָל־עֶבֶד אִישׁ מִקְנַת־כֶּסֶף וּמַלְתָּה אֹתוֹ אָז ִיאֹכַל בְּוֹ: (מה) תּוֹשֶׁב וְשָׂכִיר לֹאֹ־יִאֹכַל בְּוֹ: (מו) בְּבַיִת אֶחָדֹ יֵאָלֵל לֹא־תוֹצְיא מִן־הַבַּיִת מִן־הַבָּשָׂר חֻוּצָה וְעֻצֶם לָא תִשְׁבְּרוּ־בְוֹ: (מז) כְּל־עֲדָת יִשְׂרָאֵל יַעֲשָׂוּ אֹתְוֹ: (מח) וְכִי־יָגוּוּר אִתְּךְּ גַּר וְעֲשָׁה פֶּסַח ֹ לֵיהֹוָה הָמְוֹל לְוֹ כָל־זָכָר וְאָזֹ יִקְרָב לַעֲשֹׂתוֹ וְהָיָה כְּאֶזְרָח הָאֶרֶץ וְכָל־עָרֻל לְאֹ־יִאֹכַל בְּוֹ: (מט) תּוֹרָה אַחַת יִהְיֶה לָאֶזְרֶח וְלַגֵּר הַגָּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם: (נ) וַיִּעֲשָׂוּ כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר צְוָּה יִהֹוֶה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאֵת־אַהֶּרָן כֵּן עְשִׂוּ: {ס}

# The Brit/ot

Brit Milah

Brit Zera

ַזאֹת בְּרִיתִֿי אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרֹּוּ בֵּינִי וּבֵּינֵילֶם וּבֵין זַרְעַךָּ אַחֲבֶיךָ הִמִּוֹל לָכֶם: בָּל־זָכֵר:

Such shall be the covenant between Me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep: every male among you shall be circumcised.

Breishit 17:10

בְּיּוֹם הַהֹּוּא כָּרָת יְהֹוֶה אֶת־אַבְרָם בְּרִית לֵאמֶר לְזַרְעֲךָּ נָתַהִּיּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ :הַזֹּאת מִנְּהַר מִצְלַיִם עַד־הַנָּהָר הַגָּדָל נְהַר־פְּרָת:

On that day יהוה made a covenant with Abram: "To your offspring I assign this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates—

Breishit 15: 18

Brit Bein habetarim

Brit Ha'am

- Laws of Korban Pesach
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Seforno	Ramban
To do with as you like	To mark this historic event The laws of Rosh Chodesh

- The two britot
- Freedom to

ַבְּרֵאשָׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהֵים אֵת הַשְּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאֶרֶץ:

When God began to create\* When God began to create Others "In the beginning God created." heaven and earth—

(Breishit 1:1

ובראשית THE BEGINNING — Rabbi Isaac said: The Torah which is the Law book of Israel should have commenced with the verse (Exodus 12:2) "This month shall be unto you the first of the months" which is the first commandment given to **Israel.** What is the reason, then, that it commences with the account of the Creation? Because of the thought expressed in the text (Psalms 111:6) "He declared to His people the strength of His works (i.e. He gave an account of the work of Creation), in order that He might give them the heritage of the nations." For should the peoples of the world say to Israel, "You are robbers, because you took by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan", Israel may reply to them, "All the earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it and gave it to whom He pleased. When He willed He gave it to them, and when He willed He took it from them and gave it to us" (Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 187). (Rashi, Breishit 1:1)

### Rav Moshe Stav

Magid Shiur, Yeshivat KBY, Hachodesh Hazeh Lachem Rosh Chodashim

Rabbi Yitzchak's question is rooted in the assumption that the purpose of the Torah is to teach us mitzvot the answer to this question is that the stories recorded in Sefer Breishit teach us the very foundations of our beliefs and an understanding of how Hashem runs the world, which must precede the learning of the mitzvot.

.....

There are two systems of Hashem's providence in this world. The first utilizes the laws of nature and is expressed by the name Elokim. The second is overt providence, as reflected in the creation of Klal Yisrael, who live in accordance with the Torah, who are governed directly by Hashem, and who achieve spiritual perfection. In order to create this ideal reality, all the details of the whole must be perfect – including the sanctity of place (Eretz Yisrael, which lacks nothing) and the sanctity of time. In order to create such a nation, the prerequisite is that the nation establish its schedule on its own, according to its own priorities. This is the deeper meaning of the Seforno's brief comment.

## Breishit 1 vs Breishit 2

אֵלֶּה תוֹלְדָוֹת הַשָּׁמֵיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְּרְאֵם בְּיוֹם עֲשֶׂוֹת יְהֹוֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶרֶץ וִשָּׁמֵיִם:

Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created. When God יהוה made earth and heaven—

וְלָל וֹ שִׂיחַ הַשָּׁלֶּה טֵּרֶם יְהְיֶה בָּאָּרֶץ וְכָּל־עֵשֶׁב הַשְּׂדֶה טֵּרֶם יִצְמָח כִּיֹ לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהֹוֶה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָּרֶץ וְאָדָם אַיִן לְעֲבֻּד אֶת־הֶאֲדָמְה: when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field. had yet sprouted, because God יהוה had not sent rain upon the earth and there were no human beings to till the soil,

ָוְאֵד יַעֲלֶה מִן־הָאָבֶץ וְהִשְּקָה אֱת־כָּל־פְּגֵי הָאֲדָמֶה:

but a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of the earth—

וַיִּיצֶר יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הֶאָדָם עָפָר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפֶּיו נִשְׁמַת חַיֵּים וַיִהִי הָאָדָם לְנֵפָשׁ חַיֵּה:

God יהוה formed the Human blowing into his nostrils the breath of life: the Human became a living being.

Breishit 2: 4 - 7

ּבָרֵאשָׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהָים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאֶרֶץ:

When God began to createheaven and earth—

וְהָאָּבֶץ הָיְתָה תֹּהוּ וָבָהוּ וְחֻׂשֶּׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהֻוֹם וְרַוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת

ַעַל־פְּגַיִ הַמְּיִם:

The earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—

ָןיּאֹמֶר אֱלֹהָים יְהִי אֲוֹר וַוְיְהִי־אְוֹר: God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

Breishit perek 1: 1 - 3

וְאֵלָּא אֶל־אַבְרָהֶם אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שַׁדֵּי וּשְׁמִי יְהֹּוָה לָאׁ נוֹדַעְתִּי וּלָהֵם:

Hashem appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, but I did not make Myself known to them by My name

Shemot, Perek 6:3

Chazal debate whether the future redemption will take place in Tishrei or in Nissan. These two views parallel the two different modes of Hashem's hashgacha. Sefer Bereishit is the sefer of "Elokim," the book of creation and nature, of "the power of His actions He recounted to His nation," of the avot who lived their lives guided by Hashem's hand in nature: "I appeared [to the avot]... with the name Kel Shakkai, but the name Hashem I did not reveal to them" (Shemot 6:3). Sefer Shemot, in contrast, is the sefer of the Name of Hashem – the revelation of His hashgacha, the main goal of which was the creation of His nation. – Rav Stav

That is freedom that comes from voluntary acceptance of the law. That is the kind of freedom that hard work though it is, is absolutely invulnerable, and will never die and will never be conquered. That is the kind of freedom to which we are called as Jews and which we recall ourselves every Pesach, let us use that freedom first to say I'm proud and tall as Jews, and second to work for the freedom and justice of all.

Rabbi Jonathan Saks, A New Concept of Freedom, March 20, 2018