

GROWTH

At The

SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT

BO

8th Edition
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BS"D

Charisma

As Hashem had promised Avraham years earlier, the Jews had left Egypt with much bounty. Following command, the Jews asked Egyptians for "objects of gold and silver," and miraculously *G-d gave the Jews charisma in the eyes of the Egyptians* (Shemot 11:3).

What exactly made the Egyptians suddenly view the Jews, who they've been tormenting all this time, with charm?

R' Yitzchok Fingerer shared a beautiful answer. After the plague of darkness, which paralyzed the Egyptians for 3 days, the Jews had the chance to take advantage of their enemy's vulnerability. They had every excuse to – they had been enslaved for hundreds of years with no compensation! But they didn't do that. *That's not Jewish*, they said. When someone is vulnerable – even if he/she deserves the worst – we don't prey on them. The Egyptians had committed awful, obscene crimes; they bathed in Jewish blood and had used children as bricks! But what does revenge do to *us*, our souls and consciences?

When the Egyptians woke up from their stupor, they were sure that their houses would have been looted. To their shock, they saw everything was still there. That's when they realized that we're special – that's when we had acquired grace in their eyes – and that's why they helped the Jews in the end.

מי כעמר ישראל...

Power Sharing

This week's Parshah contains the first mitzvah given to the collective Jewish nation: *החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים*. If you can imagine, the Jews are all gathered together, as Egypt is being plundered with plagues, and the redemption is imminent. Moshe had just received prophecy from Hashem; he was about to give over the very first divine commandment to *Am Yisrael*. The crowd is hyped; they're all anticipating what the first order of business will be as G-d's Chosen People. And then came the announcement: *The Jews will be distinct from the other nations! No longer will you be using a solar calendar; we'll be going with the lunar one from now on...*

What a thriller...

Our Sages teach us that the first of anything bears tremendous significance and sets the tone for everything to follow. From the hundreds of *mitzvot* which carry unique and powerful realities, the very first one had to have been to start calculating the year with 354 days, comprised of 12 lunar months, each between 29 and 30 days...?? What is behind this anticlimactic turn of events?

R' Leiby Burnham offered an astounding novelty. What's unique about sanctifying the new moon each month and the concept of "Rosh Chodesh" is that Boreh Olam placed it in the hands of the Jewish People. *לכם* ראש חדשים – "this month is *to you* the head of months..."

Back in Biblical times, the new month was not set in the calendar; it didn't automatically renew itself. It depended on 2 witnesses viewing the new moon, testifying in court, being cross-examined, and the rabbis thereupon declaring Rosh Chodesh. Thus, the "sanctification" of the new moon and renewal of each month is dependent on us and in the control of our rabbis. And it's not just Rosh Chodesh alone; by extension, every Jewish holiday is tied to these calculations – *our* calculations – as well. So much so, that even if the court made a mistake and declared Rosh Chodesh on the wrong date, it is as they announced and that month's holiday is observed based on that reckoning.

The first *mitzvah* given to *Am Yisrael* was not just an important one, it was *the* important one. In essence, it was Hashem conveying some of His power to humanity, showing that not only does He trust us, but that He cherishes His relationship with us. The word for holiday (*מועד*) stems from "meeting" (*ועד*). Rather than just set up dates for us to meet, Himself, Hashem tells us: "You choose the time, and I'll be there." Just as every relationship requires both parties to be dominant and passive in different situations, Hashem solidified His relationship with us by making Himself "passive" in this sense and allowing us to exert dominance.

In fact, there's a famous rule about the Torah: *לא בשמים היא* – it is not in the Heavens. In other words, the *chachamim* were granted autonomy on how/where to expound upon and draw conclusions, so much so that their Halachic ruling even overrides that of a *Bat Kol* from Heaven (see Bava Metzia 59b). Thus, it is very befitting for the first *mitzvah* of the Torah to the collective nation to have been this very fundamental idea, of G-d "power-sharing" with His people whom He finds so dear...

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Frida Bat Yafit Miriam Bat Bakol Shira Chaya Bat Rachel Esther Bat Frida
Rahamim Ben Shifra Yitzchak Ben Naama Chaim Avraham Ben Shifra Zisel Idan Ben
Tova Yoel Ben Sara Daniella Chaya Bat Oksana Oksana Bat Raya Yosef Ben Oksana
Tamar Bat Oksana Ellanore Bat Oksana Mihael Rahamim Ben Mazal Yehoshua Ben Miriam

"If you won't be better tomorrow
than you were today, what do
you need tomorrow for?"

(R' Nachman of Breslov)