

Rabbi Leiby Burnham- Bais Nissan 5774, April 2nd 2014

Why Do We Need Freedom?

This past Shabbos we read Parshas hachodesh. We always read it the shabbos before Rosh Chodesh Nissan . Why? Rashi explains that after we learn about the lunar calendar, and the cycles of the moon, then the Torah commanded us about the korban Pesach, so it is fitting to read the parshas hachodesh right before rosh chodesh Nissan.

This seems strange, Rashi seems to be going out of his way to answer something that does not need answering. Do you want to know why we say parshas hachodesh on the shabbos before rosh chodesh Nissan? Because parshas hachodesh occurred on rosh chodesh Nissan-that is when Hashem said to Moshe Rabbeinu, “hachodesh haza lochem rosh chodoshim” this is the first of the month, this is the Nissan-so of course this is the most appropriate time to read this parsha, right before rosh chodesh Nissan.

So Rashi instead of saying we read it right before rosh chodesh Nissan because that is when it happened-he gives another reason, the reason we read it is because in this parsha we speak about the korban pesach. So what is the connection here? There must be that Rashi is telling us that ‘hachodesh hazah lochem rosh chodoshim-the idea of going by the moon and pesach are connected.

The Torah connects them, The Torah put the mitzvah of following the lunar cycle and the mitzvah of korban pesach next to each other. Why?

In addition, Rabbi Burnham continued, because this is a shiur for Aneinu, for women, he will answer another question as well. The connection between Rosh Chodesh and Pesach which are both yomim tovim for women-Why?

On Rosh Chodesh women are supposed to abstain from certain work. On Pesach , the gemara says, “b’zchus noshim tzidkonios nigalu avoseinu mi’mitzraim”. Why were women responsible for the geula in Mitzraim? asks Rabbi Burnham . He explained that Klal Yisroel , the men were extremely depressed, there seemed to be no reason to live. The work was excruciating, they were caked in mud, their children were being killed, and they gave up hope. What did the women do? And this was after a hard day’s work as well on their part. They went down to the river with 2 pails, in one they filled it with water and Hashem specifically put small fish i.e. sardines into the water, and the women filled the 2nd pail with these small fish. The women took these 2 pails, used some of the water to cook their husbands the fish, then went to the fields where their husbands were working, fed them some fish, washed off the caked on mud from them and then spoke to them in soft loving words, encouraged them not to give up hope, that

the world was not coming to an end, that Hashem had not forsaken the Yidden and in this way they encouraged their husbands to agree to continue to populate the world.

We see in the Haggada, that at the climax of the haggada, what do we say? “L’ifichoch anuchnu chaovim l’hodos, l’hallel,....we need to praise the one who took us out of Mitzraim-9 different ways are listed as to how to thank Hashem for taking us out ‘avdos l’charus’ from slavery to freedom, m’ogon l’simcha- from sadness to happiness etc. but is this really true, asked Rabbi Burnham. It seems not, if we read the posukim. Did we really go from slavery to freedom? If we read the posukim in Shemos, it says, Moshe asked Pharoh, ‘Shilach es Ami, V’avduni” let my people go, so they can SERVE me. In Sefer Shemos, the concept is repeated numerous times, “Let the Yidden stop being Pharaoh’s slaves and become Hashem’s slaves.”

Rabbi Burnham discussed in great detail, what it means to be an ‘eved Hashem’ and how true freedom, is when we serve Hashem. Those who do not keep Torah and mitzvos, might think they are free, but in actuality, everyone serves something, someone-the goyim serve their sports, their entertainment etc. If you leave a person long enough, they will become slaves to something, but the smart person is the one that becomes slaves to the right things.

The freedom we received upon leaving mitzraim, was not to do what we want, but to choose to be with Hashem to be the ‘am hanivchor”. Rabbi Burnham gave a simlie to a violin string. It only produces music when it is wrapped tightly around the violin. Standing alone, the string might be ‘free’ but it is worthless. It can produce music when it is **wrapped tightly around the violin’**. So too those that choose not to marry, not have children, not to hold down a proper job-might think they are ‘free’ but in actuality they are not. Freedom is not ‘what I can do, but rather what I **choose** to do with my life”. I am not free if I let external forces keep me where I am.”

Rabbi Burnham carried this idea into the difference between chometz and matzoh.

The concept of Rosh Chodesh is the concept of a ‘year’-shono-which the goyim have and the concept of ‘chodesh’-month which comes from the word ‘chodosh’ newness which the yidden have. Each month, I have a sense of newness, I can attack new things, new ideas, because I am free. I am not a slave to my past.

What is the connection between ‘hachodesh hazah lochem, rosh chodoshim ‘ and the korbon pesach-that the Torah puts them together. Rashi is telling us, that we had to take the Egyptian idol-the sheep and shect it-because that represented ‘shono’ the goyim’s way of dealing with the world-same old thing, doing it over and over again, no change, and shect it, get rid of it to obtain the newness the a new month brings to us.

And Rabbi Burnham spoke very highly of women. He explained what was the greatness that we did in Mitzraim, that in our zchus all of Klal Yisroel was freed? The men had given up. They had been convinced of looking at the world in the goyish way-'shono'-same old thing, no change, no hope for the future. They had become depressed-our children will be killed, we will always be slaves-'shono'.

But the women said, "no-think 'chodosh'-think of newness. We have faith, even when it is dark , there is hope, there is a newness, they encouraged their husbands to start thinking this way and in this zchus, they were able to have more children and we were taken out of the 'mazorim (spelled in Hebrew like mitzraim)-but means we were taken out of our narrow way of thinking, out of our borders to a new reality.

Rabbi Burnham pleaded with us, to do the same today. He says this generation is a depressed generation, they have no hope for the future, they are constricted (mazorim), society is crumbling.

He said we women have an enormous task, we have the responsibility to again take Klal Yisroel out their mazorim. Since women understand the concept of 'hischadshous' of newness, of hope, we will again be zocha to bring the ultimate geula