

Discourse 22

*“HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem... -
This month shall be for you...”*

Delivered on Rosh Chodesh Nissan,¹³⁹⁷ 5729

By the grace of *HaShem*, blessed is He,

1.

The verse states,¹³⁹⁸ “This month shall be for you the beginning of the months, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.” About this it states in the discourses of our Rebbes, our leaders,¹³⁹⁹ “Rabbi Yitzchak said,¹⁴⁰⁰ ‘The Torah only had to begin with the verse, ‘This month shall be for you.’ Why did it begin with [the account of creation and the verse],¹⁴⁰¹ ‘In the beginning’? Because of the [thought expressed in the verse],¹⁴⁰² ‘He declared to His people the strength of His deeds in order to give them the heritage of the nations.’”

They explain¹⁴⁰³ why it was precisely Rabbi Yitzchak who said this, in that [the name] Yitzchak-יצחק is of the root,¹⁴⁰⁴

¹³⁹⁷ After the Shacharit morning prayer, (in connection with the Hachnasat Sefer Torah of the students of Oholei Yosef Yitzchak in Morroco).

¹³⁹⁸ Exodus 12:2

¹³⁹⁹ See Ohr HaTorah, Bo p. 251 and on; p. 262, and elsewhere.

¹⁴⁰⁰ See Rashi to Genesis 1:1

¹⁴⁰¹ Genesis 1:1

¹⁴⁰² Psalms 111:6

¹⁴⁰³ Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 256

¹⁴⁰⁴ Genesis 21:6

“God-*Elohi*” *m*-אלהי”ם has made laughter-*Tzock*-צחוק for me.” That is, when we overturn *HaShem*’s title God-*Elohi*”*m*-אלהי”ם,¹⁴⁰⁵ which is the matter of power, strength, judgment, and constriction, and we add and reveal the nullification of the “something” (*Yesh*) to the Godly “nothing” (*Ayin*), the true matter of laughter-*Tzchok*-צחוק then comes to be.¹⁴⁰⁶

[This is likewise the general matter of [the verse],¹⁴⁰⁷ “[So she called his name Yosef-יוסף],¹⁴⁰⁸ saying], ‘May *HaShem*-יהו”ה add (*Yoseif*-יסף) another son (*Ben Acher*-בן אחר) for me,’” as in the explanation¹⁴⁰⁹ that even from the aspect of “the other-*Acher*-אחר”¹⁴¹⁰ there comes to be the aspect of a “son-*Ben*-בן,” this being the true matter of addition.]

This then, is why Rabbi Yitzchak said, “The Torah only had to begin with the verse, ‘This month shall be for you.’” This is because the general matter of [the verse], “This month shall be for you,” is the nullification of the “something” (*Yesh*) to the Godly “nothing” (*Ayin*), as will be explained.

¹⁴⁰⁵ See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 1, The Gate of Intrinsic Being (*Shaar HaHavayah*) and The Gate of His Title (*Shaar HaKinuy*).

¹⁴⁰⁶ Torah Ohr, Toldot 17d and on.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Genesis 30:24

¹⁴⁰⁸ Perhaps mentioned in connection with the institution “Oholei Yosef Yitzchak” which donated the Sefer Torah.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Ohr HaTorah, Vayetztei 220a; Sefer HaMaamarim 5661 p. 164; 5698 p. 30.

¹⁴¹⁰ See Talmud Bavli, Chagigah 15b

Now, this is explained in Emek HaMelech,¹⁴¹¹ in the teaching, “Rabbi Yitzchak said,¹⁴¹² ‘The Torah only had to begin with the verse, ‘This month shall be for you.’ Why did it begin with [the account of creation and the verse],¹⁴¹³ ‘In the beginning’ etc.” That is, the general story of the act of creation took place after the constriction of the *Tzimtzum*, this being why it states, “In the beginning God-*Elohi*”מ-אלהי created,” specifying His title “God-*Elohi*”מ-אלהי,” which indicates the aspect of Might-*Gevurah*,¹⁴¹⁴ through which the possibility for the matter of constriction (*Tzimtzum*) is made, and from this the constriction (*Tzimtzum*) is made to be in actuality.

However, the general matter of Torah is as in the verse,¹⁴¹⁵ “Torah is light,” meaning [that its purpose is] to reveal “the eternal truth of *HaShem*-יהוה to the world.”¹⁴¹⁶ This being so, the Torah only had to begin from the verse, “This month shall be for you,” which refers to the service of *HaShem*-יהוה, blessed is He, by the Jewish people, in fulfilling His Torah and *mitzvot*, by which they also cause the nullification of the “something” (*Yesh*) to the Godly “nothing” (*Ayin*), thus

¹⁴¹¹ Emek HaMelech, Shaar 1 (Shaar Sha’ashu’ey HaMelech) Ch. 1, cited in Ohr HaTorah, Bo ibid. p. 262.

¹⁴¹² See Rashi to Genesis 1:1

¹⁴¹³ Genesis 1:1

¹⁴¹⁴ See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 1, The Gate of His Title (*Shaar HaKinuy*); Also see Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *Gates of Light*, Gate Six (*Gevurah*).

¹⁴¹⁵ Proverbs 6:23; See Zohar III 53b

¹⁴¹⁶ Psalms 117:2; See Ginat Egoz of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *HaShem Is One*, Vol. 1, The Gate of Intrinsic Being (*Shaar HaHavayah*); Also see Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as *Gates of Light*, Gate Five (*Tiferet*).

revealing “the eternal truth of *HaShem*-יהו"ה” in [the world that was created with the verse], “In the beginning God-*Elohi*”מ-אלהי created.”

This is also the general matter of Rosh Chodesh (the new moon), including Rosh Chodesh Nissan, “it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.” This is why it is one of the four beginnings (Rosh HaShanah) of the year (as explained in various places in Kabbalah). This is as in the teaching of our sages, of blessed memory,¹⁴¹⁷ “The first of Nissan is the New Year (Rosh HaShanah) for kings.” Additionally, it also is first in the count of the months (which is why [the Torah] calls the month of Tishrei, “the seventh month”). Therefore, the month of Nissan is also called “the month of spring (*Aviv*-אביב),”¹⁴¹⁸ thus indicating of the matter of “the beginning.”¹⁴¹⁹

From this it is understood that Rosh Chodesh Nissan possesses a general matter that includes all the months, in addition to possessing a unique matter that specifically relates to the month of Nissan, which is why “it shall be for you the first of the months of the year.”

The explanation is that the matter of Rosh Chodesh (the head of the month) is that it includes the whole of that month, (which is why it is called “**the head** of the month-*Rosh Chodesh*-חודש ראש,” as explained in the discourses on Rosh HaShanah).¹⁴²⁰

¹⁴¹⁷ See Mishnah Rosh HaShanah 1:1; Talmud Bavli, Rosh HaShanah 2a

¹⁴¹⁸ Exodus 13:4; 23:15; 34:18 and elsewhere.

¹⁴¹⁹ See Zohar II 186a; Also see the Rav, the Maggid of Mezhritch, in Likkutei Amarim 47d; Ohr Torah 30a

¹⁴²⁰ Likkutei Torah, Drushim L'Rosh HaShanah 58a; Ateret Rosh, Shaar Rosh HaShanah, end of Ch. 2.

The matter of a “month-*Chodesh*-חודש” is as in the verse,¹⁴²¹ “His wife *Chodesh*-חודש,” this being the matter of “renewal-*Hitchadshut*-התחדשות,” since this is when the moon is born anew. In other words, on the eve of Rosh Chodesh, which is the introduction to Rosh Chodesh, the moon becomes the aspect of a “nothing” (*Ayin*) (this being the matter of the nullification of the “something” (*Yesh*) to the Godly “nothing” (*Ayin*)), and on Rosh Chodesh it is born anew, which is why it is called the “birth” (*Molad*) of the moon, similar to “at first it was dark and then the light followed.”¹⁴²²

The explanation is that the moon receives its light from the sun and thus has changes in it. However, the true matter of change is through man’s toil (in revealing “the truth of *HaShem*-יהוה” in [the world created with the verse], “In the beginning God-*Elohi*” מ-אלהים created”).

In contrast, all matters in the order of the chaining down of the worlds (*Seder Hishtalshelut*) are not in a way of change. That is, the general matter of new months (which is also present on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, which “shall be for you the first of the months of the year,” and includes all the new months and is their primary aspect) is the change and renewal brought about through man’s toil in affecting the nullification (*Bittul*) of the “something” (*Yesh*) to the Godly “nothing” (*Ayin*).

We should add to this based on the explanation in Tosefot¹⁴²³ about the specific wording [of the Mishnah], “**They are** (*Heim*-הם) four New Years,” (Rosh Chodesh Nissan being

¹⁴²¹ Chronicles I 8:9; Talmud Yerushalmi, Yevamot 8:3; Ruth Rabba, beginning of Ch. 4.

¹⁴²² Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 77b

¹⁴²³ Tosefot to beginning of Tractate Rosh HaShanah, entitled “*Arba’ah*.”

the first of them). This is because it is coming to explain the [likeness between the various] Rosh Hashanahs themselves, whereas “in the case that it does not say ‘They are-*Hein*-הֵן’ is because it is [in connection] to the [distinctions that separate] what is then [enumerated].”¹⁴²⁴ This likewise is the distinction between the order of the chaining down of the worlds (*Seder Hishtalshehut*), which is for the sake of the refinement (*Birur*) done within it, and the matter of the New Years (Rosh HaShanahs) and how much more so, the New Months (Rosh Chodesh) which are for the sake of renewal (*Chiddush*-חידוש), this being the primary matter and the ultimate intent.

3.

Now, in addition to what was stated regarding the general matter of the New Months (Rosh Chodesh), there is the matter of Rosh Chodesh Nissan, which is higher than them all, such that it is “for you the first of the months of the year.”

The explanation is that it is written,¹⁴²⁵ “The gate of the inner courtyard that faces eastward... on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened.” It is explained in the discourses¹⁴²⁶ on the verse, “This month shall be for you,” that the “inner courtyard” refers to the aspect of Understanding-*Binah*. [This is also the matter of the Torah scroll (*Sefer Torah*),¹⁴²⁷ for as

¹⁴²⁴ See Tosefot *ibid.*, and also see Tosefot to beginning of Bava Kamma 2a

¹⁴²⁵ Ezekiel 46:1

¹⁴²⁶ Ohr HaTorah *ibid.* p. 253

¹⁴²⁷ See the notes regarding the Hachnasat Sefer Torah at the beginning of the discourse.

explained in various places,¹⁴²⁸ its matter is the aspect of Understanding-*Binah*.]

The words, “The gate of the inner courtyard that faces eastward (*Kadeem*-קדים),” refer to the revelation of the Ancient One-*Atik* (“eastward-*Kadeem*-קדים”)¹⁴²⁹ which is in Understanding-*Binah*.¹⁴³⁰ The substance of this, as it is in the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, is the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*), for as known, repentance (*Teshuvah*) is the aspect of Understanding-*Binah*.¹⁴³¹

This is why we find about the eve of Rosh Chodesh, that it is called a “small Yom Kippur,”¹⁴³² this being the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*), as brought in the discourses on the verse, “This month shall be for you” (in a several places).¹⁴³³ This matter is present on every Rosh Chodesh, and with greater strength on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, since it is “for you the first of the months of the year.” From this it is understood that the eve of Rosh Chodesh Nissan is also in a way of greater addition, since the Rosh Chodesh that comes after it, is in a way of greater addition.

In other words, there is the general service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, in fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot*, including

¹⁴²⁸ Likkutei Torah, Drushim L'Shemini Atzeret 80a

¹⁴²⁹ See Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light, Gate Ten (*Keter*).

¹⁴³⁰ See Zohar III 178b; Torah Ohr, Lech Lecha 11b; Also see Shaar HaYichud of the Mittler Rebbe, translated as The Gate of Unity, Ch. 40

¹⁴³¹ Zohar III 122a (Ra'aya Mehemna); Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light, Gate Eight (*Binah*), and elsewhere.

¹⁴³² See Pri Chadash to Orach Chayim 417 and the other commentators to Shulchan Aruch there, and elsewhere.

¹⁴³³ Ohr HaTorah *ibid.* p. 253; Also see Shaarei Orah of Rabbi Yosef Gikatilla, translated as Gates of Light, Gate Eight (*Binah*) *ibid.*, that Yom HaKippurim refers to Understanding-*Binah*.

serving Him with repentance (*Teshuvah*) as it is throughout the whole year, at which time even serving Him with repentance (*Teshuvah*) is an orderly service.

Higher than this is the service of Him during the month of Nissan. For, the first of Nissan is the Rosh HaShanah for the three festivals,¹⁴³⁴ meaning the holiday of Pesach, and [the name] “Pesach-פסח” means “to skip,”¹⁴³⁵ this being the matter of “skipping” [in ascent] in the service of Him with Torah and *mitzvot*, and even the matter of “skipping” in service of Him with repentance (*Teshuvah*), in an even higher way than the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*) as it is, in and of itself.

It can be said that this is the difference between the arousal from below and the arousal from Above that depends on the arousal from below – (The matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*) is also included in this, this being the matter of “[You shall love *HaShem*-יהוה your God...] with all your more”¹⁴³⁶ (*Bechol Me’odecha*), such that commensurate to the word “all **your** more,”¹⁴³⁷ we thereby awaken the “more” (*Me’od*-מאד) of the One Above.) – and between the aspect of the arousal from Above that is higher than the arousal from Above that depends on the arousal from below,¹⁴³⁸ which is even higher than the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*),¹⁴³⁹ (even though the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*) is generally the

¹⁴³⁴ Talmud Bavli, Rosh HaShanah 4a (and Rashi there).

¹⁴³⁵ Rashi to Exodus 12:11; 12:13

¹⁴³⁶ Deuteronomy 6:5

¹⁴³⁷ See Torah Ohr, Mikeitz 39c and on, and elsewhere.

¹⁴³⁸ See Likkutei Torah, Shir HaShirim 23d and on.

¹⁴³⁹ See Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 260

aspect of arousal from Above that transcends the arousal from Above that depends on the arousal from below.)

It can be said that the general repentance (*Teshuvah*) of the month of Nissan is the matter of the repentance (*Teshuvah*) of the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*), about which it states,¹⁴⁴⁰ “Moshiach is destined to bring the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) to repentance (*Teshuvah*).”

With the above in mind, we can understand what we find in Talmud¹⁴⁴¹ about Rabbi Elazar ben Arach (who was a very great man),¹⁴⁴² that “he was drawn after the wine of Phrygia and the water of Deyomeset [and thus forgot his learning] and when he stood to read the verse, ‘This month shall be for you (*HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem* - להחודש הזה לכם),’ he read it, ‘Their hearts have become deaf (*HaCheireish Hayah Leebam* - יהיה להם חירש),” about which Rabbi Nehorai said the verse, “Do not rely on your understanding.”¹⁴⁴³

In explanation of the connection and relationship between “This month shall be for you,” (through which it was recognized that he was drawn after the wine of Phrygia and the water of Deyomeset), even though, at first glance, this matter relates to every Rosh Chodesh throughout the year and to the whole of the year, it can be said that the intention in this is that it is not sufficient for there to be the general service of *HaShem* - יהי"ה, blessed is He, in fulfilling Torah and *mitzvot*, including even serving Him with repentance (*Teshuvah*), as it is

¹⁴⁴⁰ See Likkutei Torah, Drushim L'Shemini Atzeret 92b; Shir HaShirim 50b; Also see Zohar III 153b.

¹⁴⁴¹ Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 147b

¹⁴⁴² As it states in Ohr HaTorah *ibid.* p. 257; Also see Mishnah Avot 2:8

¹⁴⁴³ Proverbs 3:5

connected with bodily matters and the limitations of the body. Rather, there specifically must be service of Him in a way of “skipping” (*Dilug*), this being the matter of the month of Nissan.

This is also the meaning of their statement, “Do not rely on your understanding.” That is, this must be in a way that even transcends the aspect of Understanding-*Binah* (which is the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*)), “The gate of the inner courtyard that faces eastward,” this being the repentance (*Teshuvah*) of the month of Nissan, the matter of which is “to bring the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) to repentance (*Teshuvah*).” This is why it was specifically through this that he was called by the name Rabbi Nehorai-נהוראי, which is like the verse,¹⁴⁴⁴ “He knows what is in the darkness, and light (*Nehora*-נהורא) dwells with Him,” this being the aspect of darkness as it is Above.

4.

With the above in mind, we can understand the dispute between Rabbi Eliezer (Rabbi Eliezer the Great) and Rabbi Yehoshua, as to whether they are destined to be redeemed in Tishrei or whether they are destined to be redeemed in Nissan,¹⁴⁴⁵ each of them following his mode of learning. For, Rabbi Eliezer the Great holds that “if the Jewish people repent,

¹⁴⁴⁴ Daniel 2:22

¹⁴⁴⁵ Talmud Bavli, Rosh HaShanah 11b

they are redeemed,”¹⁴⁴⁶ and he therefore holds that they are destined to be redeemed in Tishrei.

In contrast, Rabbi Yehoshua holds that “they were redeemed in Nissan and are destined to be redeemed in Nissan,” since he holds that the repentance through which the redemption will come is repentance that comes entirely from Above (“The Holy One, blessed is He... will restore them to the right path”).¹⁴⁴⁷ This is as explained before, that the repentance (*Teshuvah*) of the month of Nissan is the aspect of arousal from Above that transcends all arousal from below.

The explanation is as our sages, of blessed memory, stated,¹⁴⁴⁸ “He did not stop loving her until He called her ‘My daughter’ etc., until He called her ‘My sister’ etc., ‘until He called her ‘My mother.’”

Elsewhere it states that there is an aspect of “daughter-*Bat*” that is even higher than the aspect of “My mother,” referring to the aspect of Kingship-*Malchut* (the “daughter-*Bat*”) as she will ascend in the coming future.¹⁴⁴⁹

Now, “He called her ‘My mother-*Eemee*”” refers to the aspect of Understanding-*Binah*, this being the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*) as mentioned above. This is why Rabbi Eliezer was of the view that “if the Jewish people repent, they will be redeemed” and “they are destined to be redeemed in Tishrei,” this being because of the superiority of “He called her ‘My mother-*Eemee*”.”

¹⁴⁴⁶ Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 97b

¹⁴⁴⁷ Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 97b *ibid*.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Midrash Shemot Rabba, end of Pekudei

¹⁴⁴⁹ See Torah Ohr, Mikeitz 36d

However, it is explained in various places in Chassidus¹⁴⁵⁰ that the Halachic ruling is like the view of Rabbi Yehoshua, that they are destined to be redeemed in Nissan. This refers to how the aspect of the “daughter-*Bat*-בת” ascends to the aspect of “My mother-*Eemee*-אמי,” such that it even transcends the aspect of “My mother-*Eemee*-אמי.” That is, the matter of repentance (*Teshuvah*) (“my Mother”) is present, but the repentance is in a way that comes completely from Above (this being the matter of “My daughter-*Bat*-בת,” in that she only is the aspect of a recipient).

5.

Now, since all the revelations of the coming future depend on our deeds and service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, throughout the time of the exile,¹⁴⁵¹ there also is this matter on Rosh Chodesh, this being the matter of “This month shall be for you.” The explanation is that the matter of Rosh Chodesh (the New Moon) is the *Sefirah* of Kingship-*Malchut*,¹⁴⁵² the matter of speech (*Dibur*).¹⁴⁵³

It is through the service of *HaShem*-יהו"ה, blessed is He, on the eve of the New Moon (Erev Rosh Chodesh) - the little Yom HaKippurim - that Kingship-*Malchut* (“My daughter”) ascends to the aspect of Understanding-*Binah* (“My mother”),

¹⁴⁵⁰ See Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 271; Discourse entitled “*HaChodesh*” 5700 (Sefer HaMaamarim 5700 p. 28).

¹⁴⁵¹ Tanya, Likkutei Amarim, Ch. 37

¹⁴⁵² See Ohr HaTorah ibid. p. 252 and on.

¹⁴⁵³ See Ohr HaTorah ibid., and elsewhere.

this being “the gate of the inner courtyard that faces eastward... on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened.”

Nevertheless, this ascent is still within the order of the chaining down of the worlds (*Seder Hishtalshehut*). However, within the New Moons (Rosh Chodesh) themselves there is the matter of Rosh Chodesh Nissan, about which the verse states, “It shall be for you the first of the months of the year,” during which Kingship-*Malchut* ascends beyond the aspect of “My mother,” after having ascended to the aspect of “My mother” on the eve of the New Moon (Erev Rosh Chodesh).

This is because of the superiority of the level of repentance (*Teshuvah*) in a way of “bringing the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) to repentance (*Teshuvah*).” This matter (of “bringing the Righteous (*Tzaddikim*) to repentance (*Teshuvah*)”) is done through our righteous Moshiach, may he come and redeem us and take us upright to our land, “as in the days when you left the land of Egypt,”¹⁴⁵⁴ that “in Nissan they were redeemed and in Nissan they are destined to be redeemed,” and there will be the fulfillment of the prophecy, “As in the days when you left the land of Egypt, I will show them wonders!”

¹⁴⁵⁴ Micah 7:15