

Sermon by Rabbi Hirsch

Bo 21 “Cure First”

Gut Shabbos. Shabbat Shalom. First, I'd like to acknowledge that this week's sermon is sponsored by the Straus family, in honor of Daphne's first birthday and as thanks to the Mekor community for their support during Rachael's hospital stay. Happy Birthday!

It is fitting that the presidential Inauguration took place this week, because in the first pasuk of the Chumash, Rashi brings the famous midrash, in the name of Rabbi Yitzchak, that the Torah should have started with this week's parsha. The reason he gives is that this parsha is where we read about the first mitzvah presented to the Jewish people as a nation – the mitzvah that Nisan, the month of the Exodus, should be the first month of the year. Of course, we know that Rosh Hashana is also the beginning of the new year. But Jewish law also assigns that status to several other dates, to recognize the special type of beginning that each of those dates signifies.

Nisan is considered the beginning of the months, the first month. That's why there are some poskim who say that when you write a date, for example on a check, you should not write the number 1 to denote January, you should just

use the name of the month. Because there is only one month that can be called the first, and that is Nisan. But the strange thing about this mitzvah is that it is based on Nisan being the month within which the Exodus from Egypt occurred; however, the event hadn't even occurred when the mitzvah was declared. How is it possible to have commemorated an event that hadn't taken place yet?

We find the same conundrum with the mitzvah of eating matzoh. One reason given for this mitzvah is that we left b'chipazon, in a hurry, but the problem, once again, is that the Exodus hadn't happened yet when the mitzvah was given. The explanation I give in my Pesach book, *Bringing Order to the Seder*, is that the liberation may not have occurred yet, but it was a foregone conclusion the Jews would leave. It wasn't a question of **if** the Exodus would occur, only a question of **when**. The Jewish people did not need to be saved, because salvation was guaranteed from the outset. Slavery was just a means to that inevitable conclusion.

This teaches an important principle. As the Talmud says in Mesechet Megillah 13b, **אין הקב"ה מכה את ישראל אלא כ"כ בורא** *God does not smite Israel unless he creates the cure first*, meaning, *He brings the solution before the problem*. Every dilemma we face has a solution embedded

within it, so problems are not occasion for despair, but opportunities for us to discover a solution.

Therefore, when we pray to God to help us with problem, we should pray **not** for the solution but for the ability to discover it as easily and effectively as possible.

Understanding this concept can change our perspective on freedom. It can lift the burden of hopelessness we may feel sometimes in our personal lives and also when we think about the pervasive hardship in the world. When we take the lesson of our parsha to heart and hold on to the certainty that all our problems ultimately have solutions, then God willing, we'll be able to successfully overcome whatever life may bring. Shabbat shalom.