

"This month shall be to you the beginning of the months." (12:2)

The *Sforno* explains that from this point forward the months of the year shall be yours, to do with them as you will. During the bondage, however, "time" did not belong to you. Rather, slaves spend their time fulfilling the will of others. A slave has no time which he can consider his own. He lacks freedom of choice due to his subservience to his master, who determines his complete schedule. In contrast, freedom grants the individual mastery over his own time, enabling him to decide the most effective course for its utilization.

Perhaps we may suggest a more profound meaning to his words, that the gentile nations are slaves to time. This concept refers specifically to the various events which take place as a result of the "times". These occurrences have a permanent influence upon these individuals, resulting in their spiritual rise and fall. *Am Yisrael*, however, has the ability to subjugate the events of time and transcend them, so that they have no effect upon the individuals spiritual development. The secret of the eternity of *Am Yisrael*, is in contrast to the many nations who have disappeared from existence. Our eternity is a result of our total subservience to Hashem and His *Torah*. Indeed, our *Chazal* have stated that "*there is no free man other than one who studies Torah.*" The rationale for this statement is that true freedom is defined as the ability to free oneself from all masters, even the dictates and absurdities of the events associated with the "times".