

This Week's Parshah - Parshas Acharei

Out of This World

We hear about it all the time. It gets honorable mention as part of the *kiddush*, every *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*. There are numerous mitzvos which commemorate it. Once a year, we're supposed to spend a large part of the night just talking about it. In fact, there is a mitzvah to remember and mention it twice a day, every single day, as recorded in the Mishnah in Berachos (1:5):

“We mention *yetzias Mitzrayim* at night (in addition to the daytime recital).”

Apparently, the Torah considers *yetzias Mitzrayim* to be a *big deal*. Why is that, exactly? Of course, being freed from bondage was a great thing, and the fact that the Exodus serves as the starting point of our nationhood is also quite significant. However, other nations have experienced emancipation throughout history, and they all mark their dates of origin. Is there perhaps a deeper dimension to *yetzias Mitzrayim*, which could help account for the exceedingly prominent place that it occupies in Jewish life?

The *sefarim* do allow us a glimpse of the deep significance of this event. In order to appreciate it more deeply, however, we first must take a short journey into other realms. (Bear in mind that some of the following concepts may be somewhat unfamiliar and esoteric; there is no real way for most mortals—including the writer—to have a clear and complete comprehension of them. The bare basics will be mentioned for our purposes, with the understanding that a truly adequate exposition is way beyond the purview of this forum).

Some Things You May Not Have Been Aware of About Your Universe

The *Chachamim* tell us that the world was initially arranged to be managed through the medium known as *teva*, nature. Usually, upon hearing the word ‘nature’, our minds conjure up a picture of a deer on the banks of a forest stream, placidly munching on elderberry leaves (or something like that). When the *sefarim hakedoshim* utilize this term, however, they often refer to something much more esoteric.

The world's daily functions are, for the most part, administered through a combination of stars, constellations, and their angelic associates. Amongst the administering angels are the celestial representatives of the nations of the world, such as the *sar shel Esav*—the chief angel for the nation of Edom—who fought with Yaakov Avinu (*Bereishis* 32:25-30; see *Rashi*, verse 25). Health, wealth, intellectual ability—all are channeled to the inhabitants of the earth through this mode.

Since man's affairs are basically laid out in the arrangement of the stars, it is possible to foretell future events through stargazing. Astrologers do this, but their readings are often inaccurate (*Ramchal, Derech Hashem, sec.2, ch. 7*). In any event, dabbling in such activity is forbidden by Torah law; instead, we just rely on the Creator (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, 179:1*).

(NASA doesn't detect the emanations associated with the stars; as of yet, their instruments are not wired to pick up spiritual frequencies. Yet, there is more to the celestial bodies than meets the telescope. The Rambam, in *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 3:7-9, describes the celestial bodies as possessing intelligence superior to that of humans. According to the Rambam, the celestial bodies recognize the Creator and offer Him praises. See *Ramchal, Adir Bamarom*, p.66, for further elaboration on this topic, although he doesn't mention NASA per

se.)

Of course, these ‘natural’ forces have no inherent power in and of themselves; Hashem created them, infused them with whatever ability they possess, and can alter, overpower, or disband the entire system with an anthropomorphic ‘snap of a Finger’. By and large, however, He chooses not to do so, but allows the world to be administered through this system of ‘*teva*,’ which He set up, and constantly sustains and oversees.

In short, the system of *hanhagas hateva* could be summarized as the Creator’s management of the universe through celestial intermediaries. This system remains in effect even today.

Yetzias Mitzrayim

Despite Hashem’s general governance through *teva*, there was one nation with which Hashem desired to have a *direct* relationship. With them, He would build a direct connection, personally conducting their affairs while bypassing any intermediaries.

R’ Yitzchak Isaac Chaver (*Siach Yitzchok, drush leParshas Beshalach*) explains that the venture of taking the Jews out of Egypt went far beyond a mere transfer of people from one geographic location to another. Its benefits transcended even the freedom from slavery. The true essence of *yetzias Mitzrayim* was to emancipate an entire nation from the dominion of *teva*. Whereas the rest of the world would continue to be governed by the *hanhagas hateva*, from *yetzias Mitzrayim* henceforth, the Jewish people would be free from its control. Rather, their lives would be guided solely and directly by Hashem.

Although we may not fully grasp the concepts alluded to above, we can still gain a clearer idea of the deeper significance of *yetzias Mitzrayim*. At this point, in this singular moment in history, the unique, direct relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people was forged.

We live in a precarious era. Only decades after a third of our people were wiped out, the Jewish nation continues to be in the targets of scores of bloodthirsty Islamo-maniacs. Assimilation takes an insidious, ever-increasing toll on Jewish demographics. The deck, *Rachmana latzlan*, certainly seems stacked against the Jewish people.

Yet, the lesson of *yetzias Mitzrayim* should be a source of solace for us. According to the natural order of things, the situation appears bleak, indeed. However, the affairs of the Jewish people are not subject to the control of *teva*. Hashem takes care of us directly, despite the natural forecast. True—in every generation they rise up against us. Nevertheless, Hashem delivers us from their hand.