

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת בא

החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי השנה

“This month shall be for you the beginning of the months, it shall be for you the first of the months of the year” (12:2)

The Gemara in Sanhedrin says that one who blesses the moon at the appropriate time (Kiddush Levana) is considered to have greeted the Divine Presence. Why is this so? The Torah Temimah says that the renewal of the moon reflects how Hashem renews the world constantly and is always involved in its events. It is also a mini-creation and we get to, in a sense, witness creation ourselves. When a person recites the blessing for the moon, it is as if he publicly testifies that Hashem created the world and is actively involved in it and that is why reciting Kiddush Levana is equivalent to acknowledging the Divine Presence.

והיה כי יבאך ה' אל ארץ הכנעני כאשר נשבע לך ולאבתך ונתנה לך

“It will come to pass, when Hashem will bring you to the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your forefathers, and He will have given it to you” (13:11)

Rashi comments that Hashem “will have given it to you” means that even though they were going to receive the land because Hashem had promised it to their ancestors, they should view it as if it was being given to them on their own rights and not as an inheritance. R' Yerucham Levovitz notes that Chazal have a similar teaching when it comes to Torah study, that the Torah should be new in our eyes each day as if it were just given to us. This gives it a new feel and breathes an excitement into Torah study. The same is true of Eretz Yisrael. Moshe was telling them to feel as if they had earned it on their own merits. It should not feel old to you and as something handed down through the generations. This was meant to engender excitement among the people and make the land beloved to them.

והיה לאות על ידכה ולטוטפת בין עיניך כי בחזק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים

“And it shall be for a sign upon your arm, and for headpieces between your eyes, for with a strong hand Hashem removed us from Egypt” (13:16)

Why do we have so many mitzvos that commemorate our exodus from Egypt? As long as we know and believe that it happened, shouldn't that be enough? The Ramban explains that throughout history, people have denied that Hashem created the world. Even many of those who did believe in a Creator believed that He was not involved in the running of the world but that nature always runs its course. They felt that Hashem was not powerful enough to change natural law. But the plagues in Egypt contradicted all of these falsehoods. By sending a prophet to predict the impending plagues and then sending them with such force and only upon the Egyptians, all these theories evaporated. It was clear for all to see that Hashem exists, that He knows and cares about what happens in the world and that He created the world and is quite capable of changing the natural course of events. In short, the events of Yetzias Mitzrayim validated the entire Torah.

However, this was a one-time event. Hashem does not create miracles and wonders to counteract the claims of every person who denies Him. Instead, Hashem displayed all his glory once, in Egypt, with the intent that it should stand for all time as a reminder of His existence and strength and as a proof against those who would deny these truths. In order that this proof of Hashem's greatness and this basis of our belief should remain with us at all times, Hashem instructed us to reenact Yetzias Mitzrayim every year on Pesach. Not only that, but we are to write about these events and post them on our doors as mezuzos and bind them to our arms and heads as tefillin. We are commanded to mention Yetzias Mitzrayim verbally twice daily in Shema. All this is so that we never forget the basic truths expressed in the events that happened in Egypt and that we steadfastly believe in them. When one purchases a mezuzah or when one wears tefillin or when one mentions Yetzias Mitzrayim in Shema or does one of the many other mitzvos that are “a commemoration of Yetzias Mitzrayim,” he expresses his belief that Hashem exists, that He is involved in world events, that He

created the world and is capable of intervening with the laws of nature at will and that the Torah is of Divine origin and everything that is contained within it is true.

This is why, says the Ramban, it is so important to have daily mitzvos commemorating these important events. We should bear this idea in mind whenever such mitzvos cross our paths and remember what we are affirming by performing them.

*Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman
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