

# OUT OF THIS WORLD

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

Then Abram said, "See to me You have given no offspring, and my steward inherits me..." Suddenly the word of HASHEM came to him saying, "That one will not inherit you. Only him that comes forth from you shall inherit you." And He took him outside and said, "Gaze now, toward the Heavens, and count the stars if you are able to count them." And he said, "So shall your offspring be!" (Breishis 15:3-5)

He took him outside: Simply, he took him outside of his tent to see the stars. The Midrash however learns that He told him to go outside the realm of his astrological limitations. (Rashi)

Why does Rashi need to offer a second explanation to Avram's being taken out? What was deficient with the first simple understanding? Maybe it was not important enough to know that he was inside the tent to learn now that he taken out of his tent. The Torah is not a book of choreography. It becomes necessary then to know that he was taken out of the world. Also worthy of note, "Habet" means to look down on something. It seems Avram was told to gaze from outside the bubble of the physical universe to observe the stars for some as yet unexplained reason.

We can only imagine that this must of have been a moment of intoxicating joy for Avram. He was hoping and begging for a child and HASHEM, Master of the Universe informs him that his children will be numerous as the uncountable stars. Wow! There's only small problem. In the ancient world before the innovation of telescopes, the naked eye is only capable of observing not more than 4,000 stars. That's not so many when talking about the creation of a great and influential nation over many thousands of years of history. The number 4,000 is not enough to swing the election in a small state. Big deal! So will be his seed? What did Avram perceive? The verse tells us that he was told to count if he was able. My five-year old can count to four thousand (with some help). Certainly Avram, one of the greatest original thinkers and investigative scientists of all time could make the count. Was this a moment of disappointment or joy? What did he see?

Amazingly, the Talmud Brochos (32B) writes the following: G-d said to the People of Israel, "I created twelve constellations, and for each constellation I created thirty hosts and for each host I created thirty legions and for each legion I created thirty divisions, and for each division I created I created thirty battalions and for each battalion I created thirty camps, and to each camp I have attached three hundred and sixty-five thousand -tens of thousands of stars, corresponding to the days of the solar year, and all of them I have created only for your sake!"

Let's do the math!  $30 \times 30 \times 30 \times 30 \times 12 \times 365 \times 1,000 \times 10,000 = 1,064,340,000,000,000$  stars. As of 2003 astronomers estimated the number of stars in the universe to be 7 followed by 22 zeroes. The number offered by the sages is above 10 followed by 18 zeroes. Who's right? It may not be an exactly countable number anyway, because stars are constantly being created and destroyed. Even Avraham Avinu failed to tally the total if in fact he stepped out of more than his tent and what he saw was from **out of this world**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).