

THE PERFECT DAY

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we read the parsha of Bo, containing the final three plagues followed by Bnei Yisroel's [the Children of Israel's] exodus from Mitzrayim [Egypt].

"And it was in the midst of this day, Hashem took Bnei Yisroel out of the land of Mitzrayim... And Moshe said to the nation: Remember this day that you left Mitzrayim, from the house of bondage... On this day you are going out, in the month of the Aviv (spring). [12:51,13:3-4]"

Rashi explains by bringing the Medrash. "Didn't they know in which month they left Mitzrayim? Rather Moshe was telling them to focus on the kindness that Hashem had showed them by choosing a good month for taking them out--not too hot, not too cold, no rains."

What is the significance of Moshe specifying that on this day you are going out?

The S'forno writes that on that particular year, the lunar month during which they left Mitzrayim came out in the springtime. Moshe was telling them to guard and maintain the character of that day. Make the necessary leap years to ensure that this lunar month will always come out in the spring.

The Jewish year is counted according to the lunar months. With each month consisting of a touch more than twenty-nine and a half days, the twelve-month year comes out to approximately three hundred and fifty four days. The solar year consists of three hundred and sixty five days. As such, the lunar month runs at an annual eleven-day deficit. It is interesting to note that the Moslems, who also go according to the lunar year, don't compensate for these eleven days. As a result, their holidays gradually work their way through the different seasons, falling eleven days earlier (according to the solar cycle) each year.

As we learned in the passuk [verse] above, we are commanded to adjust our calendar, keeping it synchronized with the solar year, thereby ensuring that each holiday will always fall out in the same season. This is done in the following manner: Every nineteen years, the lunar year would fall behind two hundred and nine days (nineteen [years] x eleven [days] = two hundred and nine). Therefore, within every nineteen-year cycle we have seven leap years. A Jewish leap year has an additional thirty-day month. Seven out of every nineteen years we have thirteen instead of twelve months in the year. That keeps us even with the solar year and its seasons. (These seven years x thirty days actually makes up two hundred and ten days. That extra day is accounted for by the fact that neither the lunar nor the solar years are perfectly even numbers.)

What is the underlying concept making it so crucial to maintain the holidays in their proper seasons?

Rav Eli Meir Bloch zt"l explained that there is a common misconception. People often think that after the world had been arranged with different seasons--planting, growing, ripening, harvesting, gathering--the holidays then fell out in the properly corresponding time. Pesach, {Passover} the holiday of freedom, fell out in the spring. Shavuot, the holiday of the Torah being given, fell out in harvest time.

The truth, however, is actually very different. In the highest spiritual realms, there is a 'time' that is particularly suited and conducive for freedom. This is called Aviv. It is a time of renewal and birth. A time suited for a fresh start that will enable growth and development toward a far loftier aspiration. Freedom was not an end in and of itself but rather served as a means. It served to plant seeds for the nation. The fruits, born from those seeds, were only harvested seven weeks later when we stood at the foot of Sinai and received the Torah.

Being that there was this Divine Will of Aviv, this concept pierced its way down through the spiritual worlds, ultimately manifesting itself in our coarse, physical world as the season that we call spring. A time of planting, a time of things only beginning to develop and ripen. But the source and purpose behind this season is the freedom that it manifests.

The cold, barren inactivity of winter is a reflection of the spiritual freeze we were subjected to during the enslavement. The Aviv broke through the cold with the warming rays of the sun and the delicate seedlings peeking their heads out from the thawing earth. That physical manifestation of Aviv heralded the arrival of the Divinely designated time for freedom. We left Mitzrayim but immediately began counting the days toward Sinai. The harvest time, reflecting the Divinely designated time of generous bounty-giving, is the course exterior containing within the most precious bounty ever presented to mankind--the Torah.

"On this day you are going out, in the month of the Aviv. [13:4]" Maintain that day. Maintain the totality of the opportunity and the experience. Use it to the maximum every year.

Good Shabbos,
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