

ALWAYS ON THE JOB

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

"Remember this day that you left from Egypt" [Shemot 13:3]

The culmination of the plagues with which Hashem devastated the land and the economy of Egypt took place on the 15th of the month of Nissan. Hashem commanded His people to remember this day. In his work, "Shem Olam" the Hafetz Haim explains why it is so important that we not only remember the events of the Exodus but also keep the date of those miraculous events on our minds.

The Gemara explains that Hashem appointed a force called a "mazal" for everything in creation. Our sages say, "There is no blade of grass below that does not have a Mazal above." Even so, warns the Hafetz Haim, one should not mistakenly believe that G-d has turned over the power and the control to the mazal; there is no power other than G-d and there is no will other than His. All forces are merely messengers of G-d created to do His bidding and should He decide that the "natural" functioning of a creation would not serve His purposes then He will change nature to bring about His desired results.

The Egyptians worshipped the mazal of the sheep or ram. The power of that sign --Aries -- is at its peak every year in Nissan and the height of its potency is on the 15th day of the lunar cycle, when the moon is full -- at midnight. What did Hashem do in order to show that He alone is the power that controls all creation? He struck down the firstborn of the people of Egypt at the time when the power that they worshipped was at its peak -- the 15th at midnight. Therefore the verse reads "remember THIS day..." that even though it is the day for their god to have the most influence possible on that day specifically Hashem hit with His fury to bring them to submission. Remembering the DATE of the Exodus is an enhancement of our appreciation of the power of Hashem and His demonstration of love for us. Shabbat Shalom.

TABLE TALK Question from the Parasha

Why did Hashem command Moshe to instruct the Jewish people to borrow valuable jewelry and expensive clothing from the Egyptians? It would all come into Jewish possession after the splitting of the sea and the drowning of the Egyptians in any event.

Answer 1: If the Jews did not leave with the valuables then the Egyptians might not pursue them and the miracle at the sea would not take place as planned. This ploy brought about the spoils recovered at the sea. [Maor Va- Shemesh]

Answer 2: Since the Jews had run off with the possessions of the Egyptians they would be reluctant to return to Egypt out of fear of reprisals by their creditors. [Otsar Haim]

DID YOU KNOW THAT Squeezing fruit in order to extract the juice is in general forbidden both on Shabbat and Yom Tob. No fruit may be squeezed into an empty vessel or into a liquid, regardless of whether it is squeezed by hand or with an instrument. [E.g. squeezing lemons, oranges, or the juice out of shredded carrots or chopping fruit to such an extent that it becomes liquefied]. On the other hand a lemon may be sliced and put into a drink, such as tea or cold water, even though some of the juice may come out by itself. It is permissible to squeeze fruit --by hand-- onto non-liquid food on Shabbat and Yom Tob if the food will absorb most of the juice OR if the juice will enhance the flavor of the food. [Source Shemirat Shabbat K'Hilkheta, Chapter 5; 1-3]

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