

RED ALERT!

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DIVREI TORAH

- The Plague of Darkness is described as quite severe and devastating to the Egyptian people. It was such a dense darkness that it paralyzed all its victims. They could not stand or eat for at least three days. The Midrash stated that the Jews would easily enter Egyptian homes in order to see where they stored their gold and silver. But, if that were true, they could easily have left Egypt and have taken all their possessions and even many Egyptian things with them. The Egyptians were incapable of stopping them or even knowing that Bnei Yisrael left. But Bnei Yisrael were not able to leave because they were under the complete command of Hashem, and He wasn't finished with His plan of punishing the Egyptians and educating the Jews.
- Hashem asked Bnei Yisrael to take Egyptian gold and silver with them. After years of slavery, Bnei Yisrael were not interested in wealth. They were interested only in their freedom. Hashem made it clear to the Jewish people that they were leaving Egypt and headed out into the desert. The people never asked about food or

water. Just freedom. At this juncture in the story Hashem was interested in fulfilling His promise to Avraham that his offspring were to leave their oppressive slavery as very wealthy people. Hence Hashem had to ASK the people to take this wealth with them. At this point the Jewish people were pawns in a divine script. They had no say in the matter. Just listen and do what you are told. The slavery had cleansed the people of any jealousy or strife among them. They were fully prepared for their divine mission, to be Hashem's people!

- In chapter 12, Hashem introduces Rosh Chodesh to the people. Hashem really introduces a great deal more. He unveils the lunar calendar as a means to create a new nation. The world celebrated the New Year in Tishrei. Here the Torah creates a new Rosh HaShana just for us, in Nissan, the anniversary of the creation of the new nation, Am Yisrael. This was to become the beginning of the Torah world. Immediately after the Exodus will be the Revelation of the Divine world, a spiritual (with a physical component) existence, just for the Jewish people. Seven weeks after the Exodus will be the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. The Torah bonds Pesach with Shavuot. Shavuot has no calendar date in the Torah. It is defined as seven weeks after Pesach. Along with the Exodus are new Torah laws to better comprehend what

Pesach really means to us eternally.

- Our Jewish calendar is primarily Lunar, but it does possess a Solar component as well. It is on the 15th day of the lunar month of Nissan, but it is also to be exclusively a springtime holiday, thereby combining the lunar date within a solar part in being in the spring. This law will keep us unique in the world. The world is primarily solar. The Moslem world is lunar. Jews are in the middle. We synthesize the two into a blended calendar. Hashem is interested in creating a nation that is both lunar and solar, able to relate to both worlds. Keeping us connected but at the same time unique. The rest of the world rejects us because we are unable to assimilate within their society. It bothers them greatly, but this is what Hashem wanted to create.

- I had a college friend who could eat meat, but was emotionally bothered by the sight of chicken. Eating chicken requires you to visualize the concept that what you are eating was once a live entity. When he eats meat, he does not visualize that it comes from a cow. (This never bothered me at all.) When the Torah tells us how they prepared the Pesach sacrifice, it specifically tells us that we're to roast it with its head, its legs, with its innards (12:9). The form of the lamb was preserved until eaten. (Oznayim

LaTorah). This was to make sure that they knew that they were eating a lamb. In Egypt, Hashem wanted them to know that they were consuming an Egyptian deity. This was important for not only were they to know this, but that the Egyptians would know this too. This meant that there was a risk for the Jews to do this. It would anger the Egyptians as well as instruct the Jews.

- The placing of the blood of the sacrifice on the doors of their (Jewish) homes was essential. They would take hyssop and dip it in the blood of the sacrifice and smear the blood on the lintel and doorposts. In the movie The Ten Commandments, the blood was smeared on the outside of the house. This was incorrect. It was smeared on the inside of the house. It was for the Jews to see. And for the Angel of Death to see. They had to bend low in order to get the hyssop and then reach up high to smear the lintel. Bending low means to humble oneself. Reaching high was elevating oneself spiritually. Our Patriarch Avraham humbled himself when he referred to himself as "dust and ashes" (B'reishit 18:27) and then was able to elevate himself spiritually. By applying himself in this way in Egypt, the Jew was able to identify himself with his illustrious Patriarch.

- During the Killing of the Firstborn, Jews were not permitted to leave

their homes (12:22). This was to protect them from the divine Destroyer. I add an additional idea. No'ach and his family were (possibly) prohibited from seeing their neighbors dying outside from the Ark during the Flood. Mrs. Lot was instructed (along with her family) not to look back and view the destruction of the people of S'dom. Both were situations where the survivors were not that much better spiritually from the ones killed by the Almighty. Possibly here too, those surviving this final Plague were not that much holier than those being killed. Therefore, they were not permitted to view their misfortune. Hashem mercifully saved them. They needed to realize their good fortune was decreed by Hashem.

- **MIDRASH.** When Moshe announced the final Plague, he said it would come at around midnight. He did not say at exactly midnight, for fear that the Egyptian magicians would miscalculate the moment and accuse Moshe of lying. (Rashi, quoting the Midrash). The Midrash continued to say that doubters of Hashem's existence would pounce on a minor error to claim that they are right not to believe in Hashem.

Questions by RED

From the text

1. Name the last three Plagues. (chapter 10...)
2. What was the first Mitzva given to Bnei Yisrael as a nation? (12:2)
3. What is the first month of the year when counting the months? (12:2)
4. When was the Pesach sacrifice offered (and slaughtered), and when was it eaten? (chapter 12)
5. How long was the Pesach holiday observed in Egypt?

From Rashi

6. What two things were accomplished during the Plague of Darkness? (10:22)
7. Why did Hashem kill the firstborn of the lowly Egyptian maidservants? (11:5)
8. For how many days must we eat Matza? (12:15)
9. How many times did Bnei Yisrael observe the Pesach holiday in the desert? (12:25)
10. Where in our prayers do we remember the Exodus from Egypt? (13:3)

From the Rabbis

11. With the Plague of the Locusts, Par'o was ready to let the people go

to celebrate with Hashem. How did he guarantee that Bnei Yisrael would return to Egypt? (Or HaChayim)

12. Why did Hashem give the Mitzva of Rosh Chodesh to Bnei Yisrael at the time of the Exodus? (Rav Soloveitchik)

13. Why do we call the holiday Pesach and the Torah calls it the holiday of the Matzot? (Hirsch)

Midrash

14. How was the Plague of Locusts an act of “measure for measure” against the Egyptians?

Haftara - Yirmiyahu

15. Hashem will punish Bnei Yisrael, but what will He not do?

Relationships

- a) Pinchas - Aharon
- b) Gershom - Gershon
- c) Yefet - Yavan
- d) Zilpa - Asher
- e) Kehat - Amram

ANSWERS

1. Locusts, Darkness, and the Killing of the Firstborn

2. Rosh Chodesh

3. Nissan

4. Slaughter on the 14th of Nissan, Erev Pesach; eat it at the Seder, the 15th of Nissan.

5. One night.

6.

1) Hashem killed the many Jews who were assimilated within Egyptian culture and didn't want to leave Egypt.

And 2) to allow Bnei Yisrael to see where the gold and silver were.

7. Because they too enjoyed seeing the Jews suffer.

8. For only one night. But we still had to be rid of Chametz.

9. Only once, during the second year in the desert.

10. Every day in the third passage of the Sh'ma.

11. Par'o would keep the women and children as hostages.

12. A slave has no control of the time. His master has total control of the time. With freedom, the Jewish people now have control over their time, reflected by their ability to proclaim Rosh Chodesh.

13. We compliment Hashem to having the Angel of Death skip over our houses, hence the name Pesach. And the Torah compliments us for eating Matza.

14. The Egyptians forced the Jewish slaves to grow crops, and the locusts devoured the crops.

15. He will not destroy us completely.

Relationships

a) Grandson & Grandfather

b) Great Uncle & Great Nephew

(Note: In Divrei HaYamim Alef, the text called Gershon with the name Gershom. The Radak wrote that the two names are interchangeable.)

c) Father & Son

d) Mother & Son

e) Father & Son