



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

28th January 2023 - Volume 15 - Issue 26 - בא - ו' שבט תשפ"ג

## News This Week

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Avi and Debbie Stern on the wedding on Wednesday in London of Zvi to Shira Stimler. The Aufruf takes place in Shul this Shabbos followed by Kiddush in the Shul hall. Mazel Tov also to grandparents Michael and Bayla Brandeis.

Mazel Tov to David and Eunice Wolfson on the birth of a great grandson in Israel

### Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to Bayla Brandeis and Penina Wieder for the Yahrtzeit of their mother on Monday, 8th Shevat.

## Pharoahic or Phyrhic Victory

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

In this week's portion Moshe warns the Egyptian nation about the last and most devastating of the ten plagues – Death of the First Born. Therefore, he tells the Egyptian ruler, "Thus says Hashem, 'At about midnight I will go about Egypt and strike the first born'" (Exodus 11:4)

The vague expression "about midnight" is noted by Rashi who quotes the Talmud in Tractate Berachos. In actuality, it was the plague occurred exactly at midnight (Exodus 12:29).

Why then, would Hashem Whose all encompassing magnifying eye can discern milliseconds as if they were eternities, need to identify the time of striking with the vague reference "about midnight." Why didn't Moshe warn the Egyptians that at the exact strike of midnight Hashem would smite the firstborn?

Surely the indefinite timing was not done to catch the Egyptians off guard. Hashem could have told them the exact second and they would have been helpless and defenseless in an attempt to stop Him!

The Talmud explains that Moshe was reluctant to say that Hashem would strike at midnight. He suspected that the Egyptians with their fallible timepieces would miscalculate the hour of attack. Then they would then point their fingers and scoff, saying that the attack was off by several moments and question the accuracy of both Moshe's prediction and Hashem's ability to execute precisely as predicted. Therefore, Moshe gave the fuzzy reference "about midnight" even though the actual attack occurred precisely at that hour.

When I learned the Rashi and later the Talmudic source that he based his explanation on, I stood in wonder.

On the night of one of the most calamitous events in Egyptian History, how can we fathom a skeptical reaction based on the mere miscalculation of at most a few seconds. Which Egyptian would actually care enough to even discern if there were a discrepancy of a few seconds. More so, after losing thousands of firstborn children, which Egyptian would have the audacity to mock Moshe by saying that the attack was mistimed?

Clearly, definitive judgment was an eternal hallmark of G-d's Divine judgments. There cannot be even an iota of room for question. But how would the Egyptians even think to find skepticism in an ever so powerful and disastrous calamity that clearly is stamped with the Seal of the Divine?

An old story I heard, at least in one variation begins with a foolish smuggler who was caught with thousands of dollars worth of contraband merchandise being accosted by his vicious captor. The accused man refuses to divulge any information about the source of the bounty so the officer decides to play hardball with him.

He forces the poor man to stand behind a solid white line and threatens him with physical violence dare he crosses the boundary. "If I catch you stepping over that line," he shouts, "I'll break every bone in your body!"

The frightened fool is stuck behind the line while the sadistic official demolishes every bit of the booty. He rips the cloth, smashes the pots and pans, and shatters the glass items.

Suddenly the pathetic victim begins laughing. He slaps his sides in astonishing indifference to the havoc and destruction being wreaked upon his smuggled wares.

Finally, the officer stops smashing the merchandise and screams at the hysterical fellow.

"Hey you! What do you think is so funny?"

The poor punch line has the feeble victim mocking the officer. "Ha Ha!" he shouts. "While you weren't looking, I stepped over the line three times!"

There is a pathetic nature often associated with defeat. The loser tries to find solace in the phyrhic, meaningless victories of tiny nothings. The world may be collapsing around him yet he will grasp the tiniest solace in his brilliant accomplishment by finding a meaningless point of an imagined breach in an all-encompassing armor.

The people of Mitzrayim (Egypt) were reeling from the greatest tragedy in history, yet they would search to find a discrepancy of a few seconds to justify their desperate attempt at defiance.

How often do we revel in our phyrhic victories when they are nothing more than Pharaohic victories?

## Choose Light

Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)

What is the worst calamity that can befall a person? What agonies are the most difficult to endure? To find the answer, we need only look at the plagues that afflicted the Egyptians when they refuse to let the Jewish people out of bondage.

## Davening Times

Candle Lighting	No later than 4.26pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	4.31pm
Hashkoma	7.25am
Shacharis	9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.11am
Rov's Mishnayos Shiur	3.47pm
Mincha	1.30pm / 4.17pm
Motzei Shabbos	5.37pm
Ovos uBonim	6.37pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	4.35pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

The Ten Plagues were designed to break down the stubborn resistance of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Each successive plague turned up the pressure another notch or two higher, until Pharaoh, no longer bear the pain, finally capitulated. The final and most crushing blow was the death of the firstborn. The runner-up in sheer torture was the ninth plague, which enveloped Egypt in such a dense, palpable darkness that all the people were completely immobilized. The agony of a prisoner in solitary confinement does not compare to the living death that gripped the benighted Egyptians.

While all the Egyptians were trapped in the darkness, life for the Jewish people continued as usual. As with all the other plagues, they were completely impervious to the effects of the catastrophes to which Egypt was being subjected. And yet, the Torah tells us that during the plague of darkness "the Jewish people had light in all their dwelling places." Why was it necessary to tell us that the Jewish people were unaffected by the darkness? Furthermore, what is the significance of their having light in "their dwelling places"? Surely, they enjoyed light wherever they were.

Earlier in Genesis (28:10), we read that "Jacob departed from Beersheba and went to Haran." The Midrash observes that the Torah finds it appropriate to mention his point of departure in addition to his destination point. This teaches us that "when a righteous person is in a city he represents its glory, light and beauty, and when he departs, its glory, light and beauty are removed." What is the significance of this redundant language?

The commentators explain that all too often we do not appreciate what we have until we lose it. When do people realize that the righteous person is the glory of his city? When he departs and the glory is removed.

In Egypt as well, the Jewish people did not appreciate fully the wonderful gift of light until the plague of darkness struck Egypt. Watching the Egyptians immobilized by the darkness, they were suddenly extremely grateful that they had light to illuminate their lives.

On a more mystical level, the commentators see darkness and light as metaphors for the Egyptian and Jewish cultures. Egyptian society, steeped in superstition, magic and idolatry, was blind to the Presence of the Creator in the world. It was a place of darkness. The plague of darkness tapped into the Egyptian way of life and produced a physical manifestation of the spiritual darkness. And the severity of the plague was clear proof of the extent to which the spiritual light had been extinguished in Egypt. The absence of spirituality immobilizes a person and prevents him from moving forward.

When the Jewish people perceived the spiritual blight of the Egyptians, they recognized the Presence of the Creator in every grain of sand, every blade of grass, and this profound faith illuminated their world. The purity of life in "the Jewish dwellings," therefore, shone with a transcendent light that reflected the inner spirituality of the Jewish people.

A young student was sitting in the back of the classroom and daydreaming. At the front of the room, the teacher was explaining the intricacies of a difficult subject, but the student paid no attention. He was lost in the faraway world of his imagination.

Suddenly, he heard another student speaking loudly and disrupting the class. The teacher asked the troublemaker to be quiet, but to no avail.

The daydreamer's interest was piqued. He ears perked up, attuned to every word that transpired in the classroom. He listened to the teacher trying to convey important ideas, and he listened with revulsion as the troublemaker blotted out the teacher's words with his disrespectful noise.

How foolish I've been, thought the daydreamer. My teacher is telling us such important things, and I wasn't paying attention. Unfortunately, it took the troublemaker's antics to make me aware of what I was missing.

In our own lives, we sometimes become so caught up in the hustle

and bustle of daily life that we lose sight of the deeper truths of life, of a sense of which things that are important and which are not. But then when we see the extreme degradation of the society in which we live, we are snapped back to reality and regain our innate appreciation for Jewish values and ideals. It is better, of course, never to lose sight in the first place, not to wait for the darkness of others to inspire us to choose light.

## Coming or Going?

Shlomo Katz (Torah.org)

Many commentaries ask why, as our Parashah begins, Hashem says to Moshe, "Come to Pharaoh . . .," rather than "Go to Pharaoh." R' Shaul Alter shlita (rabbi of Kehilas Pnei Menachem in Yerushalayim; formerly the "Gerrer Rosh Yeshiva") explains:

The Gemara (Mo'ed Kattan 16a) asks: How do we know that a defendant who ignores the first summons of the Bet Din should be sent a second summons? The Gemara answers that this is learned from the verse (Yirmiyah 46:17—in this week's Haftarah), "They called out there, 'Pharaoh, the blustery king of Egypt, has let the appointed time go by.'" R' Alter explains: Pharaoh ignored repeated warnings, and Hashem could have brought the full brunt of the Plagues down on Pharaoh immediately, but He showed patience. Similarly, a Bet Din should show patience.

R' Alter continues: A Chassid once told R' Yisrael Friedman z"l (1797–1850; the Rizhiner Rebbe) that he (the Chassid) had committed the same grievous sin so many times that he worried that his repentance would not be accepted. The Rizhiner responded: In the Yom Kippur prayers, we refer to Hashem as a "Salchan" and "Machlan"—one who forgives and cleanses repeatedly. We do not use the form "Solei'ach" and "Mochel," which would indicate one who forgives occasionally or by chance (see Bava Metzia 33a). Though we commit the same sins year after year, Hashem forgives repeatedly.

In this light, concludes R' Alter, we can suggest the following reason why the verse says, "Come to Pharaoh." It means: Come and adopt as your own this trait of patience that I, Hashem, demonstrate toward Pharaoh. (Ivra D'dasha)

OJ Shabbos Chabura invites all men & boys to  
Melava Malka & Shiur

LAB GROWN MEAT,  
IS IT KOSHER?  
PART TWO

BY REB NAFTOLI GOLDBLATT

8.30PM  
MOTZEI SHABBOS PARSHAS BO