Pharaoh had insisted that the cattle and livestock of the Jews remain in Egypt as the select group of Jewish worshippers be allowed to go and serve Hashem for a short, three-day sojourn. Moshe, however, demanded that everyone, from the elders to the children, be allowed to leave, and that all their animals be taken with them. Moshe argued that it might be necessary to have all the animals, since the magnitude and degree of worship that would be required was as yet unknown.

What was the logic of this particular argument of Moshe? Would Pharaoh be so foolish as to believe that Hashem might require thousands upon thousands of animals to be slaughtered as part of this ritual?

Maharil Diskin explains that Moshe was actually telling Pharaoh that Hashem might ask the nation to offer a tithe, or to bring one animal out of every twenty or every fifty, as we find was the case following the battle with Midian in Parashas Mattos. Therefore, explained Moshe, it was necessary to take all the animals with them in order to count them all at that time and designate the proper percentage that would be requested.

The wording of the demand of Moshe is very specific in this matter, as he pointed out that “from among them (קַר) we will bring offerings”. This is also the element of uncertainty to which Moshe referred when he said, “we do not know what will be the nature of our service to Hashem until we arrive there”, as the precise percentage from the animals will only be determined when we arrive at our destination.

**IT WAS NOT OBVIOUS**

The events of all future exiles are rooted in the history of the first exile, of the Jews in Egypt. Rashi, (based upon Berachos 9a-b) explains that Hashem had to use the word "נֶא" – “please” – to request that the Jews go out of their way to ask their Egyptian neighbors for vessels of gold and silver. The rationale for this request was so that Avraham would not complain that his descendants fulfilled God’s decree that they would be enslaved but did not receive the property promised to Avraham.

In Oznaim LaTorah, Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin wonders why the Jewish people shouldn’t jump at the chance to take with them spoils from Egypt, at least as partial payment for the slave labor they had done. We find the answer to this question mirrored in the events of recent history. Had the Jews in Egypt not been commanded to take from the Egyptians, there would likely have been a controversy among them. Though some would have said that they are merely being compensated for their labor, others would have responded that the crimes committed by the Egyptians against the Jewish people were so heinous, stooping even to the murder of children, that they could never accept such “blood money” from the Egyptians, allowing them to think that they had at least partially atoned for their
crimes. Such a dispute happened in our time when the question of reparations from Germany became a point of contention. Only because Hashem had promised Avraham that his descendants would leave Egypt with spoils (some of which were used in the construction of the Mishkan), did He pressure Moshe into pleading with the people to fulfill the request. Otherwise, the argument of those who would refuse to accept any compensation from the Egyptians might have carried the day.

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“TRUTH” IS NOT A RELATIVE TERM

Our Rabbis have interpreted the word “ק.pref” as meaning “approximately midnight”. They state that Moshe said “at approximately midnight”, which means “close to it”, either before or after it, and he did not say “at midnight”, lest Pharaoh’s astronomers err [in their calculation of the precise midpoint of the night] and say “Moshe is a liar”. But the Holy One, blessed is He, Who knows His times and moments, said “at midnight”. -- Rashi (based upon Berachos 4a)

Rabbi Yaakov Levinstein notes that the Egyptians here were about to suffer a devastating and overwhelming loss of their firstborn sons, to the extent that “there was no house where there was not a death”. It might seem absurd for the Torah to be concerned that at that point the Egyptians would come and accuse Moshe of being a fraud, due to his having proclaimed that the plague would strike precisely at midnight, while, according to their calculations, the actual deaths would have occurred a moment earlier or later. With Moshe’s declaration having been so precise in terms of the deaths, would the Egyptians be impressed due to the timing being off? Furthermore, even if, according to their calculations, Moshe’s words were exact except for the timing being off by a minute or two, does this warrant his being branded as a “liar”?

Apparently, the concern was not that the Egyptians would question Moshe or his validity, but that the nature of truth itself would be compromised in their eyes. “Truth” is not a relative term. If there is even a slight compromise to the truth being represented, the impression is one of falsehood and fraud. Of course, the Egyptians would realize that Moshe was only human, and they would understand that as a mortal being he could not be more precise than an estimate of when the deaths of the firstborns would occur. Yet, this in and of itself would be a tragedy, for Moshe was not simply representing himself. He was conveying the message of Hashem, and as such, the ultimate in truth was at stake. This is the reason it was critical that his words not be subject to being mocked as inaccurate.

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A COMPLETE NON-BELIEVER

Rashi comments that Pharaoh arose “from his bed”. What is the significance of this insight of Rashi?

The Kotzker Rebbe points out that some secular and enlightened Jews claim that they are non-believers. They do not want to be bothered with what they consider to be the archaic practices of the past, and they dismiss any connection with our traditions, excusing themselves by denying Hashem and His existence. Yet, these people are often not sincere. Once they are faced with an illness or any serious difficulty, they are quick to turn to Hashem. They ask that a “מש.martir ל Wichita” be said, and they themselves turn to Tehillim for solace and comfort in their time of need. On occasion, some of these misguided people may consult cults or other attempts to connect with spirituality to find answers, but this also indicates that they are not truly disbelievers. They may be running away from the truth, but they are not true deniers.

Pharaoh, on the other hand, was a complete epikuros. He saw that nine of the plagues had already occurred and that every prediction by Moshe had been accurate, with no detail left to spare. Moshe had warned Pharaoh that every firstborn was to die, including the son of Pharaoh himself, and that there would be a great cry throughout the land. Yet, despite this terrible threat, Pharaoh not only ignored Moshe, but he even went to bed that night as if nothing was about to happen. This can only be the conduct of a complete non-believer.

This is the meaning of the comment of Rashi on our verse. Pharaoh was informed by Moshe of the impending disaster which was about to strike, but he still went to bed that night. This illustrates the utter depths to which Pharaoh was willing to deny the existence of Hashem.

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A person must treat a Torah scroll with great honor. A special place should be designated for it, and that, too, should be made beautiful and should be accorded respect. One should not hold the Torah without its mantle. When the Torah is being carried, one should stand until the Torah scroll is returned to its place or until it passes out of his sight. In the synagogue, when the Torah is removed or returned to the ark, it is a mitzvah for whom the Torah passes next to, to accompany it to its place. Similarly, the person who lifts up the Torah scroll and the one who rolls it closed should accompany the scroll. (See Mishnah Brura 149:1, note 7,8)

Other sacred texts should also be treated with respect. It is forbidden to sit on a bench on which such texts have been placed, unless the texts are placed on another object a hand breadth high. It is absolutely forbidden to place such texts on the ground. One should not put a sacred text on his lap and rest his arms upon it. If necessary, a person may sit on a chest containing other sacred texts, but not on one containing a Torah scroll.

Halachic Corner is dedicated by Benyomin Freeman in memory of his father Gedalia Freeman, z’l. May his memory be for a blessing.

Questions for Thought and Study

1. Why are the plagues of locusts, darkness, and death of the firstborn placed together in Parshas Bo? What do all of these plagues have in common? See Abarbanel 10:1

2. How was Moshe’s departure from Pharaoh different than previously, when he warned Pharaoh about the plague of locusts? See Ohr HaChaim 10:6

3. How could Moshe tell Pharaoh “ות게 מצא את כל עמליך ואת כל מעהיך” – that he “would never see his face again”? Didn’t he see him two more times after Pasuk 10:29? See Ramban 10:29

4. How do we know that three types of firstborns would be killed during that plague? See Ba’al HaTurim 11:5

5. How were Bnei Yisrael like a Bar Mitzvah boy before the first Korban Pesach? See Chizkuni 12:3

6. Why does the Torah need to tell us that Pharaoh arose “at night” (“את לילה”) during the plague of the firstborn? Didn’t the Torah already mention that it was midnight? See Ohr HaChaim 12:30

This Week Likutei Peshatim is Sponsored

This Motzaei Shabbos please join Hebrew Theological College, in conjunction with Yeshiva Parents and Yeshiva Women at our 39th Annual Melave Malka, February 1, at 8:00 PM. A sumptuous fleishig buffet will be served. For info/RSVP on this enjoyable event: call 847-982-2500, email karesh@htc.edu, or go to www.htc.edu/mm.

Featured Speaker at Hebrew Theological College’s Melave Malka: Rabbi Yona Reiss, Av Beis Din, eRe, presenting “Challenges of Legalized Marijuana – Nipping the Problem in the Bud”. Special introduction by Representative Yehiel (Mark) Kalish on the topic of “Legalized Marijuana – How Did We Get Here? A View From The Legislative Floor”. The evening will conclude with our exciting raffle. Walk-ins welcome.

Save the Date: Join The Blitstein Institute for its Annual Winter Event on Saturday evening, February 29, at 9:00 PM in the Sky Lounge of the State and Chestnut Building, 845 N. State. Rabbi Yoehn Weinrib will present his beautiful Illuminated Original Manuscripts. Join us for an evening of music and great food. Catering by Shallots with Wines by Shulem. Complimentary valet parking.

Rabbi Joshua Zisook at 847-982-2500 or jzisook@htc.edu, or go to www.htc.edu/mm.

Other sacred texts should also be treated with respect. It is forbidden to sit on a chest containing other sacred texts, but not on one containing a Torah scroll.
Wisdom of Torah Institute will present a public lecture by Dr. Esther Shkop on Tuesday, February 11th, at 8:00 PM. Topic: “In the Image of God: What is Man? Exploring Human Nature in Light of Bereishit and Tehillim.” In the WiFi Bet Midrash, 8170 McCormick Blvd. in Skokie.

- Begin your journey toward a high demand, high pay profession in Computer & Information Sciences and Web Design. Blitstein Institute is proud to offer a Technology Bootcamp this spring semester. Learn how to use code to set up & customize fully-functional websites. Classes start February 9th for 10 Sundayformations are available for the first 8 students. Scholarships are available for the Bootcamp. Child care is available. For more info please call 773-973-0241 and ask for Mrs. Mann.

- The DeZimrah Institute seeks to train future Baelie Tefillah to lead Shabbos davening with niggunim that will inspire the entire kehillah to follow in the Tefillah B’Shira experience. Join world-renowned Cantor Benny Amar on Sunday morning, February 23, 2020, 9:00-10:30; at Congregation Or Torah, for a workshop on “How Your Tefillah Can Bring the Kahal to the Next Level”. If you are interested in this unique opportunity, please call Julie at 847-877-8000 or email Dezimrah@gmail.com.

- The DeZimrah Institute is pleased to present Benny Amar, exceptional singer and Baal Tefillah from the Manhattan Jewish Exhipe, to lead a special davening, Kabbalat Shabbat through Musaf. Kiddush to follow. February 21-22, at Congregation Or Torah in Skokie. Weekend events sponsored in Memoriam of yahrzeit of John Hanus, ז’”ט.

- Bernard Horwich JCC Early Childhood is proud to announce the expansion of our program for two-year-olds for the 2020-21 school year. Limited space is available in three- or four-year-old programs as well. Our NAEYC accredited program, dedicated, nurturing educators help grow lifelong learners. For more information, or to set up a tour, contact Miriam Aberman at 773-516-5881 or jccchicagoearlychildhood.org/tour.

- Do you know how to build a strong foundation for your teenagers? Join the YU Torah Mitzion Kollel for: “Building a Strong Foundation for Our Teenagers” – a conversation between Rabbi Dovid Kupchik, Principal, Fasman Yeshiva High School, and Rabbi Dr. Leonard Matanky, Principal, Ida Crown Jewish Academy, mediated by Rabbi Reuven Brand, Rosh Kollel. Tuesday evening, February 4th, 8:00 PM, at Bernard Horwich JCC Rosenstone Gallery (3003 W. Touhy, WRP).

- The amazing thing about camp is that it truly brings out the best in everyone and you don’t feel like you have to change Maayan Midwest for a summer you are Join Camp Maayan Midwest for a season you won’t miss. To apply for camp or find out more information, please call at 847-440-4940 or visit campmaayan.com.

- Hillel Torah seeks a Director of Student Services (K-8) for the 2020-21 school year. As a member of the senior educational leadership team, the Director of Student Services will work closely with the Director of Curriculum, teachers, families and outside professionals to meet a wide range of student academic, social and emotional needs. The ideal candidate will have training and classroom experience in special education or a related discipline. To apply, send resume, cover letter & statement of educational philosophies to resumes@hilleltorah.org.

- Hillel Torah announces its first-ever Benefit Concert, “Souls of the Soul” featuring hit singer-songwriter Ishay Ribo. The concert will take place on Sunday, March 22nd, at the Genesee Theater, and all proceeds will benefit Madraigos Midwest. Join the waitlist to be notified when tickets are available for purchase: MadraigosMidwest.org/Concert. For more information and sponsorships, contact us at info@madraigosmidwest.org or 773-478-6000.

- Spring Semester at Blitstein Institute begins February 3rd. Combine the impact of a rigorous education that takes place in a real classroom, taught by outstanding faculty, in a strong Torah environment. Online options available for additional flexibility. Complete a prestigious Bachelor’s degree through quality employers and outstanding graduate programs. For information call Mrs. Mann: 773-973-0241.

- JCC Chicago is now hiring Early Childhood Assistant Teachers and Substitute Teachers in Chicago (Lakeview & Rogers Park) and Northbrook. Be part of a team of educators, social workers and specialists who support the whole child through a developmentally appropriate curriculum embracing Jewish life and complementing the home. Learn more and apply online at https://www.jccchicago.org/about/career-listings/.

- JCC Chicago is now hiring dynamic and engaging Summer 2020 Day Camp Staff for the following positions: Counselors (male), Art Specialists, Sports Specialists and Song Leaders at Apachi Rogers Park, and Counselors, Art Specialists, Sports Specialists and Song Leaders at Apachi Evanston! Learn more and apply online at https://www.jccchicago.org/about/career-listings/.

- This Monday, February 3, Life Unexpected presents: “Raising a Child with Challenges – It Takes a Community”, featuring panelists Rebecca Bassman; Aviva Berger, Shana Erenberg; Tami Meer; Aviva Robinson; Aviva Vilenski; & moderator Mara Tesler-Stein. at Adas Yeshurun, 3050 Touhy. 6:45 PM in the WiFi Bet Midrash, 8170 McCormick Blvd. in Skokie. For more info please call 773-973-0241 and ask for Mrs. Mann.

- Congregation KINS welcomes Rabbi Dov Lipman, former Member of the Knesset, who is with us this Shabbat. Rabbi Lipman will speak at our Shabbat afternoon shiru, which will meet at 3:30 PM. Please note the special time for this week only. Rabbi Lipman will speak on: “Are We Experiencing the Beginning of the Redemption?” Rabbi Lipman will also be speaking at a family Seudah Shlishit: “Behind the scenes in the Knesset.” Men and women are invited to attend both.

- Darchei Noam Glenbrook looks forward to our annual “Four Rabbis Walk into a Shul” program, “An Evening of Torah,” this Motzei Shabbat, February 1st, 7:15-10:00, featuring Rabbi Moshech Shneur Becher along with Rabbi Daniel Fox, Yehoshua Karsh and Yehuda Meyers. Call 224-306-9364 for more information.

- Beginning this Motzei Shabbat! Torat Imecha: Learning from Generations of Jewish Women. NILI Midor L’Dor – an inter-generational learning program for 5th-8th grade girls with their mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and friends, is back! Led by Mrs. Tamar Shames, NILI Midor L’dor will take place Motzei Shabbat: February 1, 15, & 29, 7:30-8:15 PM. in the WiFi Bet Midrash, 8170 McCormick (Skokie). You bring a learning partner, we’ll bring the learning & exciting raffle prizes at each session!

- This Weekend! YU Torah Mitzion Kollel’s Aron & Rivka Friedman Living Torah Series welcomes Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Senior Lecturer for Gateways Organization & a Professor at YU. Jan. 31 - Feb. 1. Friday night, 8:15 at Yishai & Bluma Broner’s home (2928 Estes); Shabbat Drasha at KINS; Pre-Mincha Shiur, 3:45 at Michael & Judy Daniels’s home (6441 St. Louis, Lincolnwood); Seudah Shlishit at Bais Chaim Dovid; Motzei Shabbat, Keynote Speaker at “Four Rabbis” Program, 7:15 at Darchei Noam Glenbrook.

- YU Torah Mitzion Kollel invites you to their 12th annual Dinner celebration. February 23, 2020, at the Crowne Plaza O’Hare, honoring Rabbi Hillel & Faye Meyers and Rabbi Gedalya & Tamar Shames. 5:30 Pre-Dinner Shiur with Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, President of Yeshiva University, 6:30 Dinner and Dessert Buffet. Visit www.torachicago.org or call the office at 773-973-6557 to register.
JDBY-YTT is also seeking an Associate Tuition Manager to join the tuition management team & assist in the financial aid and tuition process. The position is full-time or part-time. The ideal candidate will be highly organized, financially literate, with good communication skills, and attention to detail. Please send a résumé to hr@jdbyytt.org with “Associate Tuition Manager” in the subject line. Please include several references.

• Please vote for the Orthodox Israel Coalition (OIC), Slate #4 in the World Zionist Congress election, taking place now through March 11. A vote that really matters! OIC is a broad-based coalition of the major organizations that have represented Orthodox Jewry in the World Zionist Congress for over 100 years. Partner organizations include: Touro, YU, RCA, OU, AMIT, Mizrahi, Bnei Akiva, Young Israel, and Torah Mitzion. Visit voteoic.org for details.

• Every 5 years, the World Zionist Congress convenes to determine leadership positions & policies that shape the future of Israel, key decisions regarding institutions which allocate nearly $1 billion annually to support Israel & World Jewry. Including World Zionist Org., Jewish National Fund, Canadian Jewish Congress for Israel). Delegates to the Congress are members of Slates that represent various factions & ideologies.

• Slates are awarded seats at the World Zionist Congress based on the number of votes they receive in the World Zionist Congress Election. The math is simple: more votes = more delegates = a stronger voice at the Congress = more money for Torah values, institutions and programming. HTC/Touro is proud to be a partner on the OIC slate, and asks you to help assure that the Torah perspective is strongly represented in the next World Zionist Congress: VoteOIC - Slate #4 at VoteOIC.org.

• Have a background in math or science? Waldor Science introduces Edge, a program that can train you to become a teacher for Chicago yeshivas and high schools in as little as two years! Participants will earn $45,000 annually while learning and helping our community. Learn more at our open house, February 18, at 7:00 PM, at the Adas Yeshurun Social Hall, or at www.edgetraining.org or 773-649-5355.

• Lincolnwood shul seeks qualified Ba’al Kri’ah for Shabbat and Chagim. Please send résumé and references to office@ljcagbi.org and put Torah Reader in subject line. No phone calls please.

• Please join Kehilat Chovevei Tzion, February 8th, at 8:00 PM, for a fun Melava Malka featuring Rabbi YY Jacobson. There will be music, food and inspirational Torah at the home of Elisha and Donna Atkin, 9100 Karlov Avenue, Skokie. Sign up at https://www.skokieshul.org/event/RabbiYY.

• Congratulations from the Silverman kids to our abba, David Silverman, on the publication of his book, “And God Created Hummus: New and Selected Poems”, by Glass Lyre Press. (Or Torah)

• By Neal Nathan, and Aaron, Rachel, Esther, Avi and Miriam Montrose in memory of their beloved mother and grandmother, Clara Nathan, מ"ס, to commemorate her third yahrzeit on 12 Shevat. May her memory be for a blessing. (Ezras Israel, KINS, Chovevei Tzion)

• By Edith Leib, Arleen Leib, Rachel & Richard Silverman and family, Rabbi Aaron & Leora Leib and family, and Rabbi Jason & Chana Leib and family, in loving memory of their son, husband, father and zaidie, Barry Leib, מ"ס, on the occasion of his 9th yahrzeit on the 10th of Shevat. May his memory be for a blessing.

• By the Rice, Karesh, Mittel, Feder, Amster, Karr, and Light families in loving memory of our father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, Abe Rice, מ"ס, on the occasion of his 16th yahrzeit on 11 Shevat. (KINS; Mikor Hachaim; Scarsdale; Queens; Atlanta; Waterbury; CT; Riverdale; Florida; Hewlett)

• By Marshall & Mirel Castle and family in commemoration of the yahrzeits of his parents: his mother, Ruth Castle, מ"ס, on 12 Shevat, and his father, David Castle, מ"ס, on 15 Shevat. (Anshe Motele)

• In commemoration of the 12th yahrzeit of Dr. Burt Kaufman - מ"ס, this Monday, February 3rd at 8 Shevat. He is missed greatly by all who knew him. May his legacy continue to inspire us! - Ira Kaufman and family; David & Karin Kaufman and family; Hindy & Moshe Goldfinger and family; Avi & Oreet Kaufman and family; Zahava & Chaim Suss and family.

• By Dr. Barry & Helen Baylis, Michael & Malka Frazin, and Yakov & Elyse Baylis, and Avner and Netanya Frazin and Yisrael Mayer and Elana Tamar Baylis, in loving memory of our mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, Tema Stolper, מ"ס, on her yahrzeit on 12 Shevat. We still miss her so much, despite the more than thirty years since her passing.

• By the Berger and Goldberg families in loving memory of our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, Esther Goldberg, מ"ס, on the occasion of her 16th yahrzeit on 11 Shevat. May her memory be for a blessing. (Chesed L’Avraham; Chovevei Tzion; Israel)

• By the Wechsler Family in loving memory of our beloved mother and grandmother, Frieda Wechsler, מ"ס, on the occasion of her 20th yahrzeit on 10 Shevat. May the manner in which she lived her life show us the way to live ours, and may the profound effect she had on her family and her many friends always be an inspiration to us.

Likutei Peshatim is endowed by Les & Ethel Sutker in loving memory of Max and Mary Sutker and Louis and Lilian Klein, מ"ס. May their memory be for a blessing.

Answers:

1. All of these plagues created darkness. Even in connection with locusts and the death of the firstborn, darkness descended upon the land of Egypt.

2. In Pasuk 10:6 the Torah says, regarding Moshe’s departure, "ורחך הכ modele" (“And he turned and left.”). The extra word הבLocale tells us that Moshe left Pharaoh in a disrespectful manner by turning his back to him. Moshe did this as Pharaoh refused to change his ways with each plague.

3. One explanation is that Moshe didn’t actually see Pharaoh again because with the plague of the firstborn Pharaoh called to Moshe but didn’t actually see him (or it was too dark). Another explanation is that Moshe meant that he would never be summoned again to Pharaoh’s palace and see him again there.

4. The word פֶּרֶךְ ("firstborn") is written three times in Pasuk 11:5, once for the firstborn from the father, once for the firstborn of the mother, and once for the head of each household.

5. Bnei Yisrael were commanded to set aside a lamb for the Korban Pesach and guard it. This was their first mitzvah. Since they were doing their first mitzvah, it is as if they became a זיו (adult). This is one reason why we call the Shabbos before Pesach “Shabbas HaGadol”.

6. On the night of the plague of the firstborn it was light like day throughout the night. This was only true for the righteous, so the Torah needs to tell us that for the wicked Pharaoh it was dark like night.