

א ביסל תורה!

The Maimonides School Parsha Newsletter

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בא

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A Return From a Physical and Spiritual Exile

By Aaron Banks Sr.

In this week's פרשה בא, פרשת בא, ה' gave the Jews Three מצוות as they were about to leave Egypt and go through the desert. The three מצוות are פסח, ברית מילה, and ראש חודש. Many מפרשים ask why ה' gave us these three מצוות, namely Rav Yeruchom Levovitz, the esteemed משגיח of the Mir Yeshiva.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz asks the question, why did ה' need to give us these מצוות in Egypt? If He was going to take us out anyway, why not just give us the מצוות in the desert?

He answers that since the Jews were on the 49th level of טומאה, only maintaining their Jewish clothes, language, and names, ה' needed to give us these מצוות to reincarnate the Jews in Egypt as a “new nation,” and to purify us from the impurities of Egypt. ברית מילה was given to us in order to separate our physical bodies from the gentiles, and to give us a clear sign that we are different and special. קרבן פסח was given to us because the Egyptians worshiped animals, and by sacrificing animals we were showing that only ה' is in control and is the one true ruler of the universe. ראש חודש was given to us to separate us even more as we are not just different from the gentiles in the physical aspect, but even different in the simple measurement of time. The rest of the world calculates their calendars by the solar cycle, but Jews calculate the calendar with the lunar cycle. By giving us these three simple מצוות, ה' was giving us a way to escape the 49th level of טומאה.

This is far deeper than it may seem on the surface. Not only were these מצוות given in order to rescue us and bring us back to ה', but they also all symbolize beginnings. A ברית מילה is the beginning of someone's life, the קרבן פסח was the beginning of a united Jewish nation, and ראש חודש is the beginning of a month. The fact that these all symbolize beginnings shows us how at this stage in the history of the Jewish people, the Jews have a clean state. ה' gave these מצוות in order to bring the Jews back to Him, and they're creating a beginning for a new nation, a new wave of people with pure hearts and morals.

I want us to all be זוכה to remember that we are different from the rest of the nations of the world in our own special way, and that ה' chose us, as we say every Friday night in קידוש מכל, כי בנו בחרת ואותנו קדשת מכל, הַעֲמִים.

The meaning behind חשך

By Binyamin Orkaby

In this weeks פרשה, בא, we are told the story of 8, 9 and 10. The 8th מכה is that of ארבע, a swarm of locusts which "וַיִּכָּס אֶת-עֵינַיִן כָּל-הָאֲרֶץ וַתְּחָשֶׁךְ הָאֲרֶץ" "covered the entire land and the land became dark with locusts." (שמות י"ט"ו) Following the מכה of locusts is the 9th מכה, חשך, darkness. However, what is so special about this darkness? It is dark every night, so what made this darkness any different than the regular cycle of night and day?

רש"י gives a rather simple explanation, as he usually does. He says that the חשך, darkness, wasn't a regular darkness, rather it was more than the usual nighttime darkness. רש"י says that it was a blacker and darker than during a regular night. The ספורנו explains similarly that the darkness was different then the regular darkness of nighttime. He explains that at night one can light a candle and they would be able to see the people around them. However, the darkness of מכת חשך, was a total darkness which no light could penetrate. As it says "לֹא-רָאוּ אִישׁ אֶת-אָחִיו" "each person was not able to see the other". The מדרש אגדה says that the darkness was so thick that when it began people who were standing could not sit, and people sitting could not stand.

Though there was "חָשֶׁךְ עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם" darkness on all of מצרים, בני ישראל had light "לְכָל-בֵּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" "all of בני ישראל had light in their dwellings." The מעם לועז brings down that the light that בני ישראל had was brighter than regular light, and that they had light even at night.

The מעם לועז also explains that מכת חושך showed that ה' was greater than the Egyptian god of the sun. By causing there to be complete darkness, ה' showed the Egyptians that their god, the sun, had no strength to do anything.

This מכה of חשך shows the all encompassing strength of ה'. ה' showed that he has control over everything in this world even beyond things that can be touched. ה' changed the very fundamentals of light and dark. This was a message to the Egyptians that ה' is all powerful, but is also a message to us. ה' with the מכה of חשך, along with all the other מכות, shows us that He has the power to do anything, and that He cares for בני ישראל, His chosen nation. By understanding that ה' is all powerful and that He cares about us, בני ישראל, we can, hopefully, realize that with ה's help there is nothing we can't do.

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