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# א ביסל תורה!

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בא

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## מכת חשך The True Meaning Behind

By Nathan Weinstock

In this week's פרשה בא, פרשת בא, מכות בכורות and חשך, ארבה, the final three מכות take place. I wanted to take a deeper dive specifically into the מכה of חשך. When reading the פשט, it can be easy to understand this מכה as normal darkness, like what we see at night time. However, this understanding can stop us from finding the full value in this מכה, leading me to wonder: What was the true purpose of מכת חשך and what did ה' really mean by "darkness"?

The פסוקים state that this darkness which ה' had brought was something that could be touched, and that it was so dark that the Egyptians could not see nor move because of it. Now רש"י understands this to mean that this darkness is something much greater than any darkness brought by night. It is more intense and more black. ספורנו expands on this understanding and describes the darkness as unable to interact with light. The darkness was extra dense and unable to absorb light, where he says that even a flare lit on fire would not be able to make any difference in the darkness. In the פסוק it says that the Jews were not affected by this darkness and actually had light in their dwellings. חזקוני deduces from the fact that no specific city was mentioned where there was no light, while in other מכות it may have mentioned that גשן was affected, that the Jews had light wherever they went. Anywhere in Egypt, even in the houses of the Egyptians they were able to see. This helps maximize how great this miracle truly was, because of its subjectivity.

In last week's פרשה וארא, פרשת וארא, רש"י explains that the reasons the different מכות were sent in this specific order was because they followed a classic war strategy of the time: First, the opponent poisons the city's water supply, then they sound their trumpets in order to scare the people, then they continue on with normal war tactics. The blood poisoned their water supply, the frogs croaked loudly, and the next few מכות should be just normal war tactics. Yet, the שפתי חכמים discusses why that answer may not be enough for this מכה. He explains that plain simple darkness would fit in with the opinion of the war strategy but that doesn't explain why ה' would cause such intense and strong darkness for a simple war. The שפתי חכמים continues to explain רש"י and says that the reason we had חשך was because ה' did not want the Egyptians to see the evil Jews perish. However, he also teaches us the classic מדרש that the darkness was meant for the Egyptians to see how righteous the Jews were. The Jews had ample time in the three days of darkness to take everything from the Egyptians, but they didn't. This is what made the Jews righteous in the eyes of the Egyptians, which is why later in the פרשה, the Egyptians lent the Jews whatever they wanted.

This explanation by the Siftei Chachamim teaches us that the best way to achieve your goals is not through force and cruelty, but through kindness and decency. The Jews didn't get possessions from the Egyptians through theft, rather they got their possessions by not stealing from the Egyptians when they were in a vulnerable position. The Egyptians saw how the Jews were such good people and gave them all of their possessions willfully. We should always try to be decent human beings, even in times as hard as the Jews slavery in Egypt.

# The Symbolisms Behind a Sheep Sacrifice

By Binyamin Orkaby

In this weeks פרשה, we are given the first collective מצוה in the תורה, which is “הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֹאשׁ הַחֹדֶשִׁ”, in other words the מצוה of ראש חודש. Immediately after giving בני ישראל this מצוה, משה and אהרן tell בני ישראל that “בְּעֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם אִישׁ שֶׁה לְבֵית־אָבֹת שֶׁה לְבֵית־” on the 10th of the month they should take a lamb one per family, one per house (שמות יב:ג). רש"י explains that the reason the תורה says both, one per family, and one per house, is to show that if there was a large family (meaning the extended family - grandparents, uncle's, aunts etc.), each separate household would slaughter a lamb so as to have enough meat for everyone in each household. However, there is another deeper question in this פסוק. Why did it have to be a שֶׁה, a lamb, that בני ישראל slaughtered and not another animal like an ox or a bull?

רמב"ן explains that there was some sort of spiritual power (in the form of a טלה, which is used synonymously with a שֶׁה to mean a young ram, or lamb) the Egyptians believed in, was at the height of its power during the month of ניסן. Therefore בני ישראל were commanded to slaughter the טלה, and eat it, to show that it had no power. This would show that it was not because of this עבודה זרה of the Egyptians that בני ישראל were let out of Egypt, but rather because of ה'. רמב"ן brings a second opinion from שמות רבה which says that the sheep was the god of the Egyptians, and so by slaughtering their gods, ה' showed the Egyptians that He was able to destroy their gods in the time of their strength. Essentially ה' was telling בני ישראל to take the Egyptian gods and kill them.

נחל קדומים, better known as the חיד"א, says that בני ישראל were supposed to be destroyed because of their sins, like the Egyptians. Therefore ה' told בני ישראל to bring the שֶׁה as a כפרה, atonement for their sins. The חיד"א says that the reason a שֶׁה was used for the כפרה of בני ישראל was because the גימטריא, numerical value of שֶׁה is 305, and the numerical value of כפרה is also 305.

חתם סופר brings another opinion and says the reason for a שֶׁה being brought for the קרבן was to remind us of the זכות of יצחק and יעקב with relation to sheep. יעקב for the many sheep that he got from לבן, and יצחק who was brought as a קרבן by יצחק.

רבי הירש gives an alternative view and says that the reason we slaughtered a lamb and not some other animal is so that we will see ourselves like sheep and ה' as our shepherd. From when we began our relationship with ה' we were given the concept of “הַכֹּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבּוֹקֶר וְאֶת הַכֹּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבִיִּים” that day in and day out we must surrender ourselves to ה'. רבי הירש then adds that it is not the “Jewish” lamb who bears the suffering of the world, but rather the young, perfect little lamb. This expresses the idea of us, בני ישראל, being completely independent, and yet always always young, never growing out of the need for ה'’s guidance.

We can learn from רבי הירש that no matter how much we think we’ve grown up, we will always be the children of ה'. We may think that we can live independently, completely on our own, but in truth we are like wandering sheep without ה' our shepherd. Alone we can't accomplish much, but under ה'’s guidance we can be together as one nation. May we always remember that we are never alone, for ה' is always there to guide us even during our hardest days.

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