

WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE

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Parshas Bo

"When all is said and done"

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Today's Learning:
Nach: Yeshayah 63-64
Taharot 9:6-7
O.C. 399:1-3
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Batra 155
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Berachot 11

The Midrash Tanchuma on our parashah opens with a description of the plague of Darkness. The midrash asks: From where did this darkness come? [Commentaries explain that this darkness was not merely the absence of light; rather, the Torah teaches that it was a tangible darkness that weighed down the Egyptians.] One answer offered by the midrash is that it was darkness from gehinnom, about which we read (Iyov 10:22), "The land whose darkness is like pitch-blackness, a shadow of death and without order, whose very light is like pitch blackness."

The midrash continues: Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: There are three sources from which we learn that a person must review his Torah learning shortly before he passes away. In Mishlei (22:21), we read, "To teach you the veracity of true words so that you may answer words of truth to those who send word to you." [Commentaries explain that one will be called upon to speak "words of truth," i.e., Torah, "to those who send word to you," i.e., to G-d, who sent the person here; therefore, one must prepare by reviewing his learning.] Likewise, we read in Kohelet (12:13), "At the end of the matter, when all has been heard: Fear G-d and keep His commandments, for that is man's whole duty." [Commentaries explain: "At the end of the matter," i.e., life, "all that a person has learned will be heard"; therefore, one must prepare.] Finally, we learn this from the verse cited above, "A shadow of death and without order"--when a person approaches the shadow of death, he should give order to that which he learned.

The midrash concludes its exposition of the verse from Iyov: Woe to a house whose windows open onto darkness, as it is written, "Whose very light is like pitch blackness." Commentaries explain: A house should be filled with light, i.e., Torah. Woe to a person who opens the windows of his house to allow in the darkness of gehinnom instead.

"Please speak in the ears of the people: Let each man request of his fellow and each woman from her fellow silver vessels and gold vessels." (11:2)

The Gemara (Berachot 9a) notes that Hashem said, "Please speak . . ." The Gemara explains that Moshe was to say to Bnei Yisrael, "Please request gifts from the Egyptians."

Why was it important that Bnei Yisrael ask for gifts? And, why did Hashem only request that they ask for gifts, rather than commanding them to ask. R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (1865-1935; Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Eretz Yisrael) explains: After hundreds of years in the Egyptian exile, Bnei Yisrael were lowly and down-trodden. The nature of a person in such a situation is not to dream of "big things"; he will be more than satisfied if he can gain his freedom. However, in order to prepare Bnei Yisrael for the glorious spiritual future that lay ahead of them, Hashem "needed" them to think big. As a first step, He wanted Bnei Yisrael to want wealth.

The Gemara explains that the reason Hashem wanted Moshe to request Bnei Yisrael to ask for gifts was so that Avraham Avinu would not say, "You kept the part of Your promise which said, 'They will enslave them and they will oppress them,' but not the part that said, 'And after that they will leave there with great wealth'." R' Kook explains: The "great wealth" to which Hashem referred in His promise to Avraham was the Torah and Eretz Yisrael. However, given the lowly state of Bnei Yisrael, Avraham might have complained that they were not capable of aspiring to spiritual goals or nationhood. Indeed, the Gemara records that Bnei Yisrael told Moshe, "We will be happy just to be released from our imprisonment."

Of course, telling Bnei Yisrael to seek wealth can backfire, since they might think that having material wealth is an end in itself. Thus Hashem requested, but did not command, that they seek wealth, so that no one would mistake it for a mitzvah. (Ein Ayah)

We are taught that "ma'aseh Avot siman la'banim" / the events in the lives of the Patriarchs foreshadow what will befall their descendants. For example, the gifts that Bnei Yisrael received from the Egyptians were foreshadowed by the gifts that Avraham Avinu received from Pharaoh (Bereishit 12:16). Indeed, this may have been Avraham's intention when he said to Sarah (12:14), "Please say that you are my sister, so that things will be good for me for your sake . . ." Avraham may have wanted Sarah to be taken to Pharaoh so that Avraham would receive gifts, thus foreshadowing the receipt of gifts by his children from the Egyptians.

Nevertheless, one must ask: How could Avraham benefit from Sarah's being in such a difficult

situation? R' Yitzchak Dadon shlita (Yeshivat Merkaz Harav) explains: Avraham knew that Sarah would be taken to Pharaoh in any event, and he was concerned that this would cause him to hate the Egyptians. Avraham, the pillar of chessed, had worked his entire life on loving every human being; how could he allow himself to hate an entire nation? Thus, if he could arrange things so that the Egyptians would do something good for him, his middah / trait of hakarat ha'tov / recognition of the good that was done for him would prevent him from hating the Egyptians. Similarly, Avraham wanted his descendants to receive gifts from the Egyptians so that they (Bnei Yisrael) would not hate the nation that had first hosted, and only later enslaved, them. (Haggadah Shel Pesach: Dodi Tzach V'adom)

"I shall go through Egypt on this night, and I shall strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from man to beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I shall mete out punishment -- I am Hashem." (12:12)

In the Pesach Haggadah, this pasuk is interpreted as follows: "I shall go through Egypt on this night" -- I [Hashem], and not a malach / angel.

"I shall strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt" -- I, and not a saraf (another type of angel).

"Against all the gods of Egypt I shall mete out punishment" -- I, and not a messenger.

"I am Hashem" -- I am He, and no other. [Until here from the Haggadah.]

R' Aharon Teomim z"l Hy"d (rabbi and darshan in Prague, Worms and Krakow; martyred in 1690) explains: Our Sages teach that once Hashem permits a plague to begin, the Angel of Death does not distinguish between the innocent and the guilty. Thus, Hashem Himself had to carry out the Plague of the Firstborn to ensure that no firstborn of Bnei Yisrael would be killed. Nevertheless, one might have thought that Hashem's power of discernment was only needed in those cases where Egyptians and Bnei Yisrael were in the same house. The general plague, however, could have been carried out by the Angel of Death. Therefore, the pasuk tells us, "I shall go through Egypt on this night" -- I, and not a malach. Even though an angel could have performed part of the mission, Hashem chose to do it Himself.

"I shall strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt" -- I, and not a saraf. This refers to striking those Egyptian firstborn who took refuge in a Jewish home. These firstborn had to be stricken by Hashem Himself, for the reason explained above.

"Against all the gods of Egypt I shall mete out punishment" -- I, and not a messenger. The Egyptians' idols could have been destroyed by an angel, as there was no issue of discerning between the innocent and guilty. Nevertheless, Hashem chose to do it Himself.

Finally, lest one think that angels did assist, and the verse merely reflects the halachic principle of, "A person's agent is like himself," therefore the pasuk concludes: "I am Hashem" -- I am He, and no other.

(Haggadah Shel Pesach Bigdei Aharon)

"When your children say to you, 'What is this service to you?'" (12:26)

In the Pesach Haggadah, this question is attributed to the rasha / wicked son. R' Shmuel Zvi Danziger z"l (the Alexanderer Rebbe; died 1923) explains the rasha's question as follows: Even you do not understand the deep meaning behind these rituals that you perform; therefore, they will not help you merit the redemption. Why then do you bother? The rasha does not understand that G-d guides those who truly seek Him to deeper and deeper understandings of the Torah and mitzvot.

As for the rasha, had he been in Egypt, he would not have sought-out G-d and would not have merited this Divine assistance. Therefore, he would not have been redeemed. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Tiferet Shmuel)

R' Shmuel Meltzen z"l (Slutsk, Poland; 19th century; author of Even Shleimah) writes that the degree to which a person merits Divine assistance in attaining spiritual goals depends on the degree to which he strengthens himself in the following areas: Love of Hashem, fear of Hashem, attaching himself to Hashem, bitachon / trust in Hashem, and the trait of simchah / joy. Of these, the most important is bitachon, R' Meltzen writes. (Ha'emunah V'ha'hashgachah p.2b)

Shabbat: A Remembrance of the Exodus

R' Yechezkel Landau z"l (the Noda B'Yehuda; 18th century) poses the following question: Why is a man permitted to recite kiddush for his wife? A man who recited Ma'ariv has already said "Vayechulu" and the blessing "Mekadaish ha'Shabbat"; thus, he has certainly fulfilled his Torah obligation to recite kiddush. All that remains is a Rabbinic obligation to recite kiddush over a cup of wine. His wife, on the other hand, has most likely not recited Ma'ariv since (married) women generally do not recite that prayer; thus, her obligation to recite (or hear) kiddush is on the level of a Torah obligation! As a general rule, a person whose obligation is of a relatively lesser Rabbinic nature cannot exempt a person whose obligation is of a higher Torah nature. [Thus, for example, a child cannot recite Birkat Hamazon on behalf of an adult.] Why then can the husband recite kiddush for his wife? (Dagul M'revavah ch.271)

R' Akiva Eiger z"l answers that this is simply an example of the rule that one who is theoretically obligated to perform a mitzah can exempt another person even if the former is not obligated at the moment. (Sh.U't. R' Akiva Eiger No. 7)

Some answer that there is no set text for the Torah obligation of kiddush. Thus, when the husband comes home from shul and his wife says "Shabbat Shalom" (or any similar greeting), she fulfills her

Torah obligation to sanctify the Shabbat verbally, i.e., to recite kiddush. Now, both the husband and the wife have "only" a Rabbinic obligation to recite kiddush over a cup of wine. Since their obligations are equal, the husband may exempt the wife through his recitation.

In contrast, R' Yosef Babad z"l (Poland; died 1875) answers that even the husband has not fulfilled his kiddush obligation through praying because an essential aspect of kiddush is missing from the Ma'ariv shemoneh esrei. Specifically, one is obligated to recall Yetziat Mitzrayim / the Exodus in kiddush. Thus, the husband's and wife's obligations are equal, i.e., they are both on a Torah level, and the husband may recite kiddush for his wife. (Minchat Chinuch, mitzvah 31)

Why is recalling Yetziat Mitzrayim a part of kiddush? One answer is that the miracles associated with the Exodus (the Ten Plagues and the splitting of the Yam Suf) attest to the fact that G-d is the Creator just as Shabbat does, because it is intuitively obvious that no one but the Creator of the universe could have wreaked havoc with the laws of nature the way that G-d did in Egypt. Knowing this actually strengthens our belief in Creation, and thus makes Shabbat more meaningful, because our ancestors saw the Ten Plagues and the splitting of the Yam Suf, whereas no one saw Creation. (Zemiroth Shirin Ve'rachshin p.137, citing Rambam z"l)

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **[Torah.org](https://torah.org)** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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