

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmani zy" a, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



אמרות שמשון

How Being Scattered Across the Globe Throughout Our Many Years in Exile Was To Our Benefit

וְהָיָה שְׁעֵמְדָה לְאַבְוֹתֵינוּ וְלָנוּ שְׁלֵא אֶחָד בְּלִבָּד עָמַד עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ, אֱלֹא שְׂבָכָל דּוֹר וְדוֹר עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ וְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְצִילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם.

It is that pledge to Avraham Avinu that has sustained our forefathers and us; that it has not been merely one nation who has risen up against us determined to destroy us. Rather, in every generation they rise up against us to destroy us, but Hashem always rescues us from their hands.

The simple reading of this passage in the Haggadah clearly appears to be conveying that this itself 'that it has not been merely one nation who has risen up against us determined to destroy us' is what 'sustained our forefathers and us'. It would seem that the Haggadah is implying to us, that only because of Hashem's pledge to Avraham at the covenant, that He would watch over the Jewish people and protect them from all the nations that will rise up against them, did He exile them, scattered, across many lands. Consequently, it was not merely one nation who stood up against the Jewish people; rather it was many host-nations who had the ability to do so.

This idea appears to be quite difficult to comprehend, for how can it be that it would be safer and more secure for the Jewish people to be scattered across many lands and to consequently have to confront many host-nations rising up against them, rather than to be exiled together to one land and to confront only one single host-nation who would seek to destroy them.

The Gemara in Pesachim (פ"ה ע"ב) brings the following. R' Oshaya said: "What is the meaning of that which Devorah and Barak praised Hashem, upon their miraculous victory

over the army of Sisra, when they said as follows; דַּקְתָּ פְרוּזוֹנוֹ - 'They will recount the righteous deeds that Hashem performed, for His open cities in Israel'. [According to its literal translation, the Passuk predicts that the Jewish people will thank Hashem for being able to live securely in open and un-walled cities.] This Passuk can be interpreted [through transposing the letters ו and ר in the word פְרוּזוֹנוֹ - His open cities, and thus yielding the word פְרוּזוֹנוֹ - He scattered them] to mean that Hashem performed a righteous deed with the Jews in that He scattered them among the nations". This was a point that was mentioned in the following conversation, in which a certain apostate said to R' Chanina, "We are better than you.



Concerning you it is written, כי (מלאכים א' י"א ט"ז) 'For six months the Jews stayed there until they had destroyed all the males of Edom. But as for us, you have been with us for many years and we have not done anything to you'. R' Chanina responded to him, "With your consent, I will let one of my students reply".

R' Oshaya then came forward and responded to the apostate and said; "You have not eliminated the Jews only because you do not know how to do it! If you were to say 'Let us destroy all of them', that option would be ruled out because not all the Jews are under your control, for they are scattered among several nations, and if you were to decide to kill only those who are under your control, that option would be ruled out as well, because through the efforts of the Jews who would survive in other countries, you will be called a genocidal government, and your reputation will be tarnished". Upon hearing his reply, the apostate said, "I swear by the wall of the Romans that it is with this thought that we go up and down, as we constantly grapple with this very dilemma".

According to this notion we can understand why it was indeed more secure for the Jewish People to have always been scattered and dispersed across many lands throughout their years in exile, and how this was actually part of

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Hashem's master plan in protecting His chosen and beloved people. For had the entire Jewish nation all been exiled to one land, their host-nation would have been much more motivated and prepared to annihilate them, and only because no single nation has ever hosted the Jewish nation in its entirety did they never actually destroy us.

We can now truly appreciate the passage of the Haggadah where we say, והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו, שלא אחד בלבד עמד עלינו לכלותינו - *It is that pledge to Avraham Avinu that has sustained our forefathers and us; that it has not been merely one nation who has risen up against us determined to destroy us*, for it was indeed only in the merit of Hashem's pledge to Avraham Avinu that we were exiled to many lands, and were thus confronted throughout our years in exile by the many host-nations who were constantly rising up, trying to destroy us.

זרע שמשון הגדה של פסח אות ג

Why It Was Significant That the Plague of the Firstborns Occur Precisely at Midnight

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה כֹּה אָמַר ה' בְּחֻצַת הַלַּיְלָה אֲנִי יוֹצֵא בְּתוֹךְ מִצְרַיִם: וּמָתוּ כָּל בְּכוֹרֵי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר פְּרֹעָה וְכוּ' (שמות יא ד-ה)
Moshe said, "So said Hashem: At about midnight I shall go out in the midst of Egypt. And every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die..."

The Gemara in Brachos (א"א ברכות ד ע"א) discusses why Moshe said that Hashem will slay the firstborns 'at about midnight', and not 'at midnight', and says as follows. *Because Moshe knew the exact moment of midnight, why did he say 'at about midnight'? Moshe thought that Pharaoh's astrologers might err in their calculation in the precise moment of midnight, and would then claim that Moshe is a liar. Moshe's caution was based on the lesson that was taught, 'Teach your tongue to say "I do not know", lest you be caught in a falsehood.*

We need to understand why the astrologers would be so meticulous regarding the exact moment of the plague's occurrence, that were Moshe to have said "at midnight" and it would seem to them that it had occurred a bit before or after the exact moment of midnight, they would immediately have called him a liar. Furthermore, why would the astrologers seek out to dispute Moshe's prophecy, after having clearly seen that his previous prophecies were all perfectly accurate?



We first need to understand why indeed Hashem said, and why it was actually so significant, that the plague should occur precisely at midnight.

There are seven moving cosmic bodies who govern and exert their respective astrological influence on the earthly affairs according to

their hourly rotations. These seven bodies are; Mercury, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun and Venus. Each of these seven bodies govern and exert their influence in a specific sequence and continuous cycle. The cycle begins with Mercury governing during the first hour after Shabbos, followed by the moon in the second hour, Saturn in the third etc. Following this pattern, we can determine which specific planet governs during any given hour.

The Gemara in Shabbos (פ"ז ע"ב) tells us that the Jewish People left Egypt on Thursday, and, hence, the slaying of the firstborns was at midnight of Wednesday evening. According to the cycled pattern, we can determine that on Wednesday evening - which was the night of the firstborn's plague - Jupiter and its favorable influence govern in the hour preceding midnight, and Mars and its detrimental influence govern in the hour following midnight.

In view of this, we can understand why Hashem slayed the firstborns at the exact moment of midnight, not a moment before nor a moment after. The reason is because had they been struck during the hour preceding midnight, in which the influence of Jupiter governs, the clear recognition of the miracle would have been greatly diminished, because the redemption of the Jews from the plague would not have been attributed to the merit of the Jews, but rather to the favorable influence of Jupiter governing at that hour. Similarly, had the plague struck during the hour following midnight, the Egyptians would have easily dismissed the plague, attributing it, not as a punishment to their wicked behavior but rather to the negative influence exerted by Mars governing during that hour.

Thus, Hashem brought about the plague at the exact moment of midnight, which is the transition period of the planets, where neither Jupiter nor Mars govern or exert any influence, thereby establishing the twofold miracle; the salvation of the Jews being due to their merits, and the plague upon the Egyptians being as punishment for their wicked behavior.



In light of this, we can understand that had Moshe said that the plague would occur "at the very moment of midnight", the astrologers would have been extremely particular regarding the plague occurring at that very moment. Because the plague occurring at "the moment of midnight" would be a clear allusion to the double miracle - the redemption of the Jewish firstborns, proving the Jewish People's righteousness, as well as the punishment of the Egyptians, proving their wickedness - and the Egyptians would be more than happy to accuse Moshe of lying and thereby disputing at least one of the two miracles.

זרע שמשון פרשת בא אות ג

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