

Parshas Bo

January 19, 2018

A Taste of Torah

Plague Revelation

by Rabbi Shmuel Halpern

Thinking back to the Seder night of this past year, I can't help but recall being moved, thinking of the suffering of the individual Jewish slave in Egypt. While I was able to understand the general reasons given for the Egyptian exile, it was the details of that suffering, as experienced by each and every Jew in his or her own way, that I had difficulty with. While there are many approaches to this subject, I'd like to focus on some comments of the Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter; 1847-1905). He quotes his grandfather, the Chiddushei HaRim (Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Rotenberg-Alter; 1799-1866), as having said the following: "After the Egyptian bondage, the Ten Utterances through which the world was created were transformed into the Ten Commandments, through the medium of the Ten Plagues."

These are extremely cryptic words; let us try and understand them through the explanation of the Sfas Emes. The mishnah (Pirkei Avos 5:1) explains that G-d created the world through ten utterances. These are known as the *Asara* (ten) *Ma'amaros* (utterances). The *Asara Mamaros* represent the system of nature that G-d brought into being during the Six Days of Creation. The Sages explain that G-d created the world in ten stages in order to give reward to the righteous, who, through their mitzvos, uphold all ten aspects of existence.

As the Zohar explains, G-d looked into the Torah and created the world. Although hidden from obvious sight, the world's inner engine, its life force, is the Torah. This was to be revealed at Sinai; with the Ten Commandments, the world would now know that it is the word of G-d alone that sustains all of existence. How did this shift come about? It would happen through the Ten Plagues. As Egypt was punished in miraculous ways, the fact that G-d not only created the universe but also

continued to sustain it became known to mankind.

Returning to the question we started with: How do we make sense of the suffering of the Egyptian exile? In case one may think it isn't all that important to focus on the suffering, consider this: One of the most important aspects of Seder night is the eating of the bitter herbs that remind us of this very suffering. The Sfas Emes explains that the very act of Creation itself brought about a great darkness. Creation, a natural world whose functioning can be defined and understood, conceals the reality that there is a Master of this universe. The purpose of this darkness was that humanity uncover the light concealed in nature. Through faith and trust in G-d, man has the ability to see G-d in daily life. As a result, G-d would become known to the world.

The Jews in Egypt had an even greater darkness to contend with, as they had to deal with the suffering that each and every day brought. Through a very deep faith in G-d, they managed to uncover the light of G-d in all of their difficulties. The results were nothing short of miraculous; the revelation of G-d through the Ten Plagues, and, ultimately, the Ten Commandments. Not only did the Jews in Egypt change the world through their faith, they also implanted this ability in their descendants. We, the heirs of this rich legacy, possess the ability to do the same. While we work to appreciate the Hand of G-d in our lives, let us remember that our faith will change the world for the better. There are no difficulties that are in vain; every person and every unique situation brings a different opportunity for revealing G-d's presence.

The day will yet come when the entire world recognizes G-d's presence. At that moment, we will look back and appreciate how our faith played an integral role in making this happen.

Stories for the Soul

Burial Plot

Based on a story on revach.net

A man was found lifeless in his home, and, though he had been a member of the local synagogue, no one seemed to know of any relatives. The rabbi of the synagogue searched the man's apartment and eventually discovered a phone number of what appeared to be a son.

The son was contacted and informed of his father's death, but he had no interest in having anything to do with his father, even in death. "I haven't had any contact with my father in twenty years!" he shouted into the phone. "I am not observant, I don't believe in any of that stuff, and I am not coming to say *kaddish* for my father!"

The rabbi did not give up. He described the importance of *kaddish*, of this opportunity for the son to make amends for all the anguish he had caused his father. After much convincing, the son reluctantly agreed to attend the funeral and recite *kaddish*.

The son was a successful businessman who worked in Manhattan, and the funeral had to be arranged around his busy schedule. It was set for September 11th at 8 am. The son arrived, said *kaddish* with little emotion, and prepared to be on his way as the funeral concluded.

It was then that word filtered through of the enormous tragedy of the destruction of the World Trade Center. And the son was stunned - for he worked in the Twin Towers. His presence at his

continued on back

Kollel Happenings

PUT TO THE TEST: THE ETHICAL ISSUES OF PRE-NATAL SCREENING

Join Dr. Reid Goodman, MD, obstetrician and gynecologist, Mile High OB/GYN and Rabbi Akiva Stern, Associate Scholar for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore the ethical issues of pre-natal screening. Wednesday, February 7th, at 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

RABBANIT MIZRACHI AT THREE LOCATIONS!

The Women's Division of the Denver Community Kollel present a video for women, *Planting the Seeds* Three Locations & Times! **Sunday**, Jan. 28 at Aish Denver, 9550 E. Bellevue Ave. **Monday**, Jan 29 at Beth Jacob High School, 5100 W. 14th Ave. **Tuesday**, Jan 30 at the Halpern Home, 210 S. Oneida St. Sponsored by Kathy Kaufman in honor of the birth of her first granddaughter, Devorah Kaufman, born on Shabbos, the 21st of Kislev, in Yerushalayim, to the proud parents Adam and Shaindy. No charge, suggested donation of \$5 to help cover costs of future video presentations.

WINTER GARDENS WOMEN'S NIGHT OUT FEB. 12TH

The Kollel Women's Division is excited to announce that its 6th annual Women's Wellness Workshop will be held on Feb. 12, 2018. *Winter Gardens Women's Night Out* will feature noted speaker Esther Wein, great food and camaraderie. Don't miss the most unique event of the year! For more info or to reserve, visit denverkollel.org, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Does the *Shir Shel Yom* (daily psalm recited each morning) precede the 'Aleinu' prayer, and why?

A: Nusach Ashkenaz communities recite *Shir Shel Yom* after *Aleinu*, while Sefardic and *Nusach Sefard* communities recite it before *Aleinu*. Some explain this difference based on kabalistic teachings to end the prayers with *Aleinu*. Sefardic and Nusach Sefard communities tend to follow more kabalistic customs than their *Nusach Ashkenaz* counterparts. There may be, however, a simpler reason for this difference. The custom of reciting the *Shir Shel Yom* (or other post-prayer psalms) began among many *Sefardic* communities hundreds of years before their *Ashkenazic* counterparts (it only appears in *Ashkenazic* siddurim

printed after the mid-18th century). While the daily recital of *Aleinu* is also not mentioned in the Gemara or by the *Geonim* (early post-Talmudic scholars), its insertion may have predated the *Ashkenaz* communities' recital of the *Shir Shel Yom*, but not the *Sefardic* communities'! (See Rambam, end of Sefer Ahava, and Tur, O.C. 133)

This week's question: The *Shir Shel Yom* (daily psalm recited each morning) is generally preceded with the statement: "Today is day ___ for which the *Levi'im* recited the following (psalm) in the *Beis Hamikdash* (Temple)". Why do we recite this, and what is its source?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschütz - Part III

Rabbi Eybeschütz's brilliance earned him a position in the yeshiva of Prague in 1711, but he soon left and spent two years in Hamburg living in the home of Elkele's maternal grandfather, a Torah scholar named Mordechai HaKohein. During this period, Rabbi Eybeschütz studied Torah undisturbed. Sometime during 1714-15, Rabbi Yonasan returned to Prague and established his own yeshiva. His genius and reputation as a great teacher and orator attracted many students.

Rabbi Eybeschütz was held in high regard by the local non-Jewish populace, as well, including a Jesuit bishop by the name of Hasselbauer. Rabbi Eybeschütz used his influence with Hasselbauer to obtain permission to print the Talmud, which had been previously forbidden by the Church. However, he had to omit all passages deemed problematic by the Church, generally those they felt were anti-Christian.

Stories for the Soul

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father's funeral to say *kaddish* had likely saved his life. And for the first time in decades, he felt a closeness with his father as he whispered, "Abba, I received the gift of life in your merit."

As the Jewish People busied themselves collecting the treasures of Egypt

prior to departing Egypt, Moshe busied himself with a mitzvah, as he sought out and retrieved the coffin containing Yosef. The mitzvah of burying the dead properly is a priceless mitzvah for which much sacrifice has been made through the ages.