

# Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmeni zy"l, 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.



תשפ"ד Pesach

• Zera Shimshon - the Limud that brings Yeshuos •

ז'יין 287

## אמרות שמשון

### מכות מצרים

#### Why the fish died during the plague of blood

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בֶן מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' וַיִּדְּמוּ בַּמַּטֵּה וַיִּדָּךְ אֶת הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּאֵר לְעֵינֵי פְרַעְיָה וּלְעֵינֵי עַבְדָּיו וַיִּהְיֶה כֹּל הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּאֵר דָּם וַהֲדָגָה אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּאֵר מָתָה ... (זכ - כא)

Moshe and Aharon did so, as Hashem had commanded, and he held the staff aloft and struck the water that was in the river in the presence of Pharaoh and in the presence of his servants, and all the water that was in the river changed to blood. And the fish that were in the river died...

It would seem that the reason the fish died during the plague of Blood, was simply due to the lack of oxygen in the river's waters when they turned into blood. What we need to understand is; if the fish died naturally when the water turned to blood, why did the Torah see it important to tell us about it, being that it was nothing more than a natural outcome?



We need to understand why indeed the fish died, as the Gemara in Megillah (יב ע"ב) says, במדה שאדם מודד, בה מודדין לו - *With the measure that a man measures, the Heavenly tribunal measures out to him*, i.e. in the manner that one deals with others, Hashem will deal with him. Accordingly, because the Egyptians bestowed goodness upon the Jews by freely providing them with fish, as the Jews clearly acknowledged when they said, זכרנו את הדגה אשר נאכל במצרים חנם - *We remember the fish that we would eat in Egypt for free*, therefore, this merit in itself should have sufficed to prevent the fish from dying, so that the Egyptians should not bear a loss in that distinct entity with which they had bestowed goodness upon the Jews.

The answer seems to be that when the Jews said זכרנו את הדגה אשר נאכל במצרים חנם - *We remember the fish that we would eat in Egypt for free*, it doesn't mean 'free of charge' as the Gemara in Yuma explains, rather is referring to something else entirely, as the Midrash, quoted in Rashi, explains. *If you would say that this means that the Egyptians would give them fish free of charge, this cannot be so, for has it not already said, 'Straw will not be given to you'; if the Egyptians would*

not give them straw free of charge, would they give them fish free of charge? What, then, did they mean when they said 'free'? They meant, 'free from any obligations to perform the commandments of the Torah'.

Nonetheless, it is still hard to understand why the fish died, for although the Jews might have not eaten the fish entirely free of charge, nevertheless, they definitely were nourished from those fish, as the Jews themselves proclaimed, 'We remember the fish that we would eat in Egypt'; therefore that in itself should have sufficed to keep the fish alive, so that the Jews should continue to have from where to eat and be nourished.

We can explain this phenomenon according to the Midrash (ש"מ"ר)

which expounds on it as follows. **And the fish that**

**were in the river died.** The great scholar, R' Avin the

Levite, said: The Jews became wealthy from the

plague of Blood. How so? Picture an Egyptian

and a Jew living together in one house, and

the barrel there is full of water. When the

Egyptian would go fill his ladle from inside

the barrel, he would take it out full of blood,

while the Jew is drinking water from inside

the barrel. The Egyptian says to him, "Give

me a little water from your own hand", but

when the Jew gives it to him it becomes blood.

The Egyptian then says to the Jew, "Let you and

I drink from one bowl", and even so the Jew drinks

water while the Egyptian drinks blood. However,

the Egyptian would purchase the water from the Jew with money,

he would drink water. From these transactions the Jews became

wealthy.

We need to grasp how Rav Avin was able to discern, from the fact that the fish died, that the Jews had become wealthy. We can explain that Rav Avin was bothered by this very question that we just posed; he found it hard to understand why the fish would die when that was the source of the Jew's livelihood. Consequently, he surmised that the Jews must have become rich from this very plague, and thus no longer had any need for the fish to sustain them.



We can now understand why the Torah felt it to be significant to tell us that the fish died. For we can say that, in truth, the water never actually turned into actual blood, rather it only appeared that way as a way to punish the Egyptians by making them be repulsed from drinking the water. Therefore, naturally speaking, the fish did



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not have to die. But nevertheless, they did die as punishment to the Egyptians. And as for the livelihood of the Jews? No need to worry, for the Jews all became wealthy during this plague, and no longer had any need for the fish.

זרע שמשון פרשת וארא אות ה

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

**וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה כֹּה אָמַר ה' כַּחֲצַת הַלַּיְלָה אֲנִי יוֹצֵא בְּתוֹךְ מִצְרַיִם: וּמָת כָּל בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר פְּרֹעֶה 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 (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 (שבת פ"ד 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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Translated and written by Rabbi Moshe Spira - yomospira@gmail.com

To receive the Seforim of the Zera Shimshon or for sponsorships and donations please contact:

USA - Rabbi Menachem Binyomin Paskesz 347-496-5657 mbpaskesz@gmail.com  
Zera Shimshon c/o Rabbi B Paskesz 1645 48th Street, Brooklyn NY 11204

Eretz Yisroel - Rabbi Yisroel Silberberg  
052-716-6450 zera277@gmail.com



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