

BO 2 - TO PROTECT THE LIGHT OF THE EXODUS

At the precipice of the final plague in Egypt, Moshe informs Par'o of the prophecy he received of the upcoming events. Namely, that around midnight of the 15th of Nisan - every first born of Egypt will die. While there will be a great cry of anguish amongst the Egyptians - there will be no such thing amongst Israel. As the verse reads - but among Israel a dog will not even bark. 1 Later on when Moshe describes the exodus to Israel, he explains exactly why the dog will be silenced - "for it is a night of watching - *Lel Shumurim* - that God is and will be responsible for; now as well as in all future generations. 2 The Talmud cites R. Eliezer who explains that on this night for all generations Israel was and will be protected from all harmful spirits. 3 R. Yehoshua adds that the protection or watching is imbedded or has its origins in the six days of creation. 4 It appears as if Israel is required to contribute to this *Shemira* or protection. This is to ensure that no access to the powerful light of the exodus be given over to the harmful spirits. The initial act for protection - *Vehaya Lakhem Lemishmeret* - comes via Israel holding onto the lamb. 5 The Torah then obligates us to *Ooshmartem Et HaMassot* - or to protect the Massot. 6 Later on *Ooshmartem Et HaDavar* - to protect the matter; 7 and then to protect access to the Divine Service - *Ooshmartem Et HaAvoda Hazot* - 8 Finally we are to be reminded that each year we are to remain on guard as the light of the exodus is revealed annually - *Lemo'ada Miyamim Yamima* - 9 All of this has its source in the divine command at Gan Eden - And Hashem took man and placed him in Gan Eden - *Le'ovda Oolshomra* - to work or draw down the light of Hashem and to watch and protect it. 10 Apparently from the tongue of the serpent.

THE ORIGINS - TO PROTECT THE LIGHT IN GAN EDEN

A major service of Israel on Pesah is to ensure that no harmful spirits gain access to the Divine Light of the exodus. Hence the continuous biblical reminders that the light needs protection, and we are to deter the negative powers from accessing this Holy force. The job description of Adam which includes the need to protect the garden - serves as the prototype of what is required by Israel - to each year safely exit from their national or personal Egypt. Adam was advised to *Le'ovda* - or take on the responsibility of drawing down the Light or watering of the Garden - And then to *Oolshomra* - to protect it from the harmful forces. The *Ohr Hahayyim* writes that just as the physical environment requires protection against harmful substances that damage the plants - so does the spiritual environment of Gan Eden 11 along with the abode of Israel demand protection. Armed with the idea that the service of Israel in this world is to mimic to some extent that of Adam in Gan Eden - it behooves us to learn more about the required protective activity. Non-observance of the instruction to "protect and watch" is apt to destroy the fabric of our spiritual environment. The Sages of the Talmud teach that a transgression removes the protection - giving up access to the *Misva* generated power source to the harmful forces. 12 Adam was clairvoyant in Gan Eden in that he was able to detect how the harmful forces can gain access to God's light of the garden if it was not being watched. Once he had been expelled from the Garden - he and all future generations lost the ability to perceive what occurs as a result of a failure to take precautions to watch.

ISRAEL MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT THE LIGHT

God agrees to participate with Israel in offering protection from the harmful spirits from gaining access to the tremendous light of the exodus. Israel will first offer its own protection by holding onto and controlling the paschal lamb from the 10th day of Nissan until the 14th. This of course was to suffocate the deity of Egypt. The Zohar cites a verse from Yishaya that parallels the smiting of Egypt with the healing of Israel. 13 It had been the intent and action of Par'o to siphon off the light meant for Israel at the juncture of the spiritual neck. 14 This can only have occurred as a result of Israel being forcibly confined during that period to an embryonic fetal spiritual position. 15 The inverse relationship between Egypt and Israel - requires the power of Egypt to likewise spiritually shrink in order for us to reascend and mature. 16 Hence the process in the roasting of the Qorban Pesah includes placing its head, legs and innards in a fetal like position. 17 Egypt's siphoning also included preventing Israel from fully accessing the four general lights or *Mohin* to grow and advance spiritually. 18 To counter - God commands Moshe to take a lamb associated with the Egyptian deity or the Mazal of Aries and tie it to the legs of the bed specifically four days prior to its slaughter. The intent here according to R. Natan Shapira was to force Egypt and its deity downwards via the Qorban Pesah to the level called the legs of the bed in order to nullify it during the night of Pesah and at the same time elevate Israel. 19 It is regarding this activity that the Torah warns - *Vehaya Lachem*

Lemishmeret - It is a requirement for you that it be watched - 20 We were then to take of the blood or Dam which is numerically 44 placing it on the door posts to further negate the power of the Egyptian deity - the Taleh - Aries of the same numerical value. 21 We are to also - offer protection of the Massot - The wheat thru which the light of the exodus will be revealed must be protected to close off access by the harmful forces. This is the secret of the Massa Shemura as the verse warns - Ooshmartem Et HaMassot - You must watch the Massot. 22 As Rava instructs those engaged in harvesting wheat - when you tie the bundles of wheat make sure they remain suitable for use for the Misva of Massot. 23 The other rituals are likewise put into place to offer protection; finally, the Torah reminds us that each year Hashem renews and brings forth the Holy powerful light force of the exodus - hence Israel is bound to renew its watching each year. As the verse attests Veshamarta Et HaHuqa Hazot Lemo'ada Miyamim yamima - 24 The protection for the light must be offered annually - during the Pesah season when the light once again is revealed and needs to be watched.

GOD'S PROTECTION - THE DOGS REFRAIN FROM BARKING

Moshe summons the elders of Israel to gather the people. He details the preparations required to facilitate God's protection on the night known as Lel Shimurim - They are to place the blood on the door posts as prescribed, and not a single Jew should leave the house until morning. Parenthetically the home is the dwelling place of the Shekhina and henceforth related to one's wife. The protection was required for benefit of two aspects of the Shekhina - hence a pluralistic biblical term is used - as in a night of watchings. 25 God will pass over the door and not let the Mash'heet or force of destruction to enter the homes. We are taught that on that night - Lo Yeherass Kelev Leshono that the dogs did not bark. The Talmud teaches that usually when destructive forces abound on earth - dogs can be heard barking seeing that they are sensitive to such activity. 26 From a verse in Sefer Yishaya we are taught that dogs are particularly greedy. 27 Similarly greedy writes Rabbenu Bahya is the Satan or destroyer who according to Mishle chants Hav Hav - not ruff ruff but rather "give give". He points out that just as the celestial destroyer was prevented from attacking the first born so its terrestrial counterparts were forced to remain quiet. The Torah relates that we were specifically protected from the tongue of the dog. No doubt the tongue reference is to remind us of the original serpent who inflicted so much damage upon the world and man via his tongue. 28

OTHER APPLICATIONS TO PROTECT

We must recall that our obligation to protect the light from access of harmful forces extends beyond the rituals of Passover. We know of our obligation to Shomer Shabbat - to watch and protect the awesome light of Shabbat - 29 Furthermore R. Yashia teaches on the verse Ooshmartem Et HaMassot - that it should not only be read as regards to massot but also, we are equally obligated to watch the misvot. 30 Just as the massot are not permitted to become Hamess - (given access to harmful forces) - so to Misvot which activate the light from above - should not be given access to negativity - Hence we learn - that if the opportunity of a misva presents itself - perform it immediately! As a delay in the baking process allows the dough to become Hamess - so a delay in performing Misvot can open up its light to be accessed by negative forces or husks. All of our divine service is to draw the tremendous lights down below - whether that of the Shabbat, Pesah or other Misvot - hence the laws often include an obligation to watch and protect them. This charge which was initiated for Adam in Gan Eden remains in force for his descendants all the more so in this - an obviously more hostile environment.

Shabbat Shalom

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