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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

**DIRECTOR
TAL**



SEEING IN THE DARK

The lights could soon be going out all over Britain. The National Grid has warned that demand for electricity could reach 95 per cent of available supplies if the UK is hit by a prolonged cold spell as was the case last year. The last time the UK experienced a massive black out was 40 years ago.

The crisis started in October 1973 when Arab states launched a surprise attack on Israel. The war in the Middle East quadrupled oil prices. Arab countries reduced supplies to the West. With the price of coal rising too and stocks dwindling, Britain's miners went on strike. These unexpected circumstances led to Britons having to get used to living under candlelight as power cuts became a feature of everyday life.

How do you fair in the dark?

What's your reaction to a sudden black out?

Most of us are afraid of the dark and finding ourselves in the shadows. We are scared of what may happen and the things that wait for us in the dark.

The ninth plague to hit the Egyptians was the plague of Darkness.

This was not the usual darkness but rather "There was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. One did not see his own brother." (10:22-23)"

The Egyptians couldn't see anything for three days and then there was an even stronger darkness – a thick darkness which didn't enable the Egyptian's to move for a further three days.

The commentators are baffled as to why if the Egyptians were unable to see anything is there an emphasis on not seeing "one's own brother"?

Nothing we know or can imagine approximates the darkness that overcame Egypt. It was miasmic; there was substance and body to it, not merely the absence of light. So different in character was this darkness that the Midrash Rabah (14:2) labors to understand its provenance. From where did such darkness come? The Midrash offers a source: the darkness came from on high, from the Heavens themselves.

But what could this possibly mean? What darkness is there above, where there is only light?

The Torah relates that, "Hashem said to Moshe: Stretch forth your hand over the Heavens, and there will be darkness upon the land of Egypt." Shemot (10:21)

Moshe was told to stretch his hand over, above the Heavens. We would have expected him to be instructed to lift his hand towards Heaven. Moshe, however, was not meant to point with his hand in the direction of a higher place. He was told to reach above the Heavens, take hold of some lofty and elevated spiritual level, and bring it down to Egypt. There, explains the Toldot Yaakov Yosef, this wonderful light would turn to painful darkness for the Egyptians.

Consider a thoroughly evil person, somehow finding himself in Gan Eden (Garden of Eden), moving about among the righteous, who all sit there resplendent in their crowns of glory, basking in the radiance of the Shechinah. The righteous there experience this as indescribable pleasure; he suffers immeasurably. Completely unaccustomed to spirituality, he experiences this Gan Eden as unbearable discomfort.

This, then, is the essence of the plague of darkness. Moshe took some of the light from above. It plunged Egypt into darkness like no other.

The Jews experienced the very opposite. Unlike the Egyptians, they were not overcome by palpable darkness. On the contrary, the illumination that Moshe brought down from on high bathed them in light. "For all the Bnei Yisrael there was light in their dwellings."

We speak of Hashem as "yotzer/ fashioning light and borei/ creating darkness" (Yeshayahu 45:7). ►

27 TEVET 5779

SHABBAT BEGINS: 3:47 PM

SHABBAT ENDS: 5:04PM

> MAZAL TOV

Guila Vaz Mouyal & Eitan Elbazis
on their engagement

Chantelle Nosrati & Ariel Weinstein
on their engagement

THE WEEKLY QUOTE
"With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts."

> UPCOMING EVENTS

For our upcoming events
check our website
www.torahactionlife.com

• 18th-20th JANUARY 2019

International weekend for Young Professionals

• 3rd-7th MARCH 2019

Young Professionals Ski Trip



DVAR TORAH

Seeing in the Dark
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

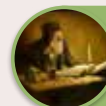
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This newsletter contains Divrei Torah and may contain Shemot - Please dispose of accordingly

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"Creation," we are told is on a higher plane than "fashioning." Why, then, is darkness linked to Beriah?

The Kabbalists explain that the "darkness" linked to Beriah in this verse is actually light – light that is even brighter than what is connected with yetzirah. Some light is so powerful, that staring at it leaves one blinded, incapable of seeing anything else. People who stare at the sun for even a brief moment are temporarily left unable to focus properly. One who is not equipped to handle the light loses his vision because of it. Our Sages (Avoda Zara 3) tell us that in the future, Hashem will take the sun out of its sheath. It will then inflict punishment upon the evil, while simultaneously curing the righteous. The righteous, accustomed to spiritual illumination, will make good use of it. They will find it curative and redemptive. The evil, unaccustomed to such illumination in their lives, will be overwhelmed and pained by it.

So it was to the Egyptians. Moshe did not bring darkness from above, but light. Unable to bear what their souls were

unaccustomed to processing, the Egyptians were paralyzed by the overdose of light, and they were unable to see each other or rise up from their places for three days. The dwellings of Bnei Yisrael, however, were suffused with light.

The story is told many years ago that a man emigrated from a small town in Russia to the United States. His business enterprises were blessed with success and he became very wealthy. A few years later, his brother arrived, found his way to the successful brother's house, and presented himself to the doorman as the brother of his master. The doorman directed him to the waiting area and afterwards came back with a message that his master had no brother. He sent back a number of signs hoping that his brother would recognize him. Again the doorman came back: "Sorry, my master says he has no brother and does not know you." Disappointed and hurt, he told the doorman to tell his master, "I advise him to make a will immediately, because he does not have much time left to live."

Petrified, the brother rushed to the door and asked in alarm, "How can you make such a statement? My doctor proclaimed me in excellent health!" The immigrant brother looked his brother in the eyes and said, "The city in which we grew up as brothers was very small and poor. The townspeople were unable to afford a full-time physician. I studied first-aid and administered their medical needs. From my experience I learned that when a patient can no longer 'recognize' his own brother, his situation is extremely serious and he has little time left to live."

When Jews dwell together, when they band together as a group to bring down Hashem's light, they are able to jointly receive it. Even in a blackout – when we sit in unity there is only light!

This is why next Shabbat we look forward to hosting hundreds of young Jews from around the world at the TAL International Shabbaton. The energy formed by uniting Jews from around the world on Shabbat holds the secret key to enlighten the world. ■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI FHIMA - RABBI IN ANSHEI SHALOM



THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN FOR THE JEWISH NATION

When I became the Rabbi in Anshei, Rav Basous told me "place all your energy on the children and get them involved in the Tefila and in the service". A successful community is a community that takes care of the children.

In this week Parasha, we see how Moshe Rabenou refused Pharaoh's offer to leave without the children. I found a beautiful Dvar Tora from Rabbi Dovid Green from the USA that I want to share with you.

This week's parsha contains the last three plagues which Egypt was smitten with. Before the 8th plague – locusts, Pharaoh temporarily agrees to send the Jews, and asks Moshe who he wants to take along on the trip to the wilderness to serve G-d. "Go and serve G-d, who and who is going?" "And Moshe said 'with our young and old we will go, with our sons and our daughters... because we have a celebration of G-d'" (Exodus 10:8-9). Pharaoh then replies "not so, let the men go and serve G-d, because that is what you are requesting" (Exodus 10:11).

The problem is that nowhere do we find that Moshe requested that only the men should go while everyone else remains. This question is addressed by the author of the work "Kometz Mincha". He quotes a midrash which explains on a deeper level why Pharaoh used the word "who" twice. Pharaoh asked "who and who is going?" This is figuratively referring to what is stated in Psalms (24:3), "WHO may ascend the mountain of G-d, and WHO can stand (remain) in His holy place?" The

Psalm goes on to explain the strength of character of he who is great enough to ascend G-d's mountain and remain there.

The midrash conveys to us that this is why Pharaoh erroneously assumed that only adult men would go. Not to say that Pharaoh knew those two passages from Psalms (which had not yet been composed). The passages are quoted in the midrash because their theme depicts what was on Pharaoh's mind. He thought that service of G-d is really only for those few people completely dedicated to serving G-d with every fiber. Pharaoh felt that he was being generous to let all of the men go. He could not conceive of the possibility that men, woman, and children would all have a part in the service. Moshe had never requested that only the men go, but that was Pharaoh's understanding of Moshe's request.

But Moshe's resounding words still echoed: "...with our young and old we will go, with our sons and our daughters...because we have a celebration of G-d."

In the traditional Jewish experience everyone participates. Everyone has a role to play; no one is exempt, and no one is insignificant. Everyone has an opportunity and an obligation to carry out their part in serving G-d. The young escort the old and they participate and learn from the experience. Moshe even placed the young before the old ("with our young and old we will go") to show the importance of the youth being present. Our relationship with G-d is a shared relationship. So too, the experience is meant to be shared. Particularly where people would be participating enthusiastically in serving G-d, at the mountain where He appeared to Moshe, was it an ideal atmosphere for all to witness and share in.

The Talmud says "if there are no kids, where will the old goats come from?" The Talmud also describes how things were in the days of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Gamla. "If a boy had a father, then his father would teach him Torah. If

he had no father, he wouldn't learn. The Rabbis saw the danger in this, and they set up teachers in Jerusalem for those boys to come and learn from." Eventually, teachers were arranged all over Israel to teach the boys who had no one else to teach them. Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Gamla was at the helm of this, and he virtually saved Torah observance.

Why did they originally institute the teachers only in Jerusalem? Shouldn't education be an equal opportunity for all, in every locality? The reason is that Jerusalem was filled with people dedicated to serving G-d. It was the perfect atmosphere for a young man to grow and see examples of people he could emulate. It was better that the students should come to Jerusalem, than that teachers should go to them.

A large segment of the emigrating European generation sought a better life for their children on the shores of the "New World". They made great sacrifices to expose their children to new experiences which they could use to better themselves financially. They succeeded. Were they, perhaps, too successful?

The lesson Moshe teaches us is that we're all in it together. The Jewish people wherever they may be, comprise one body, as it were. So too, from the beginning of Jewish history to the end – all of the generations – make up one unified body. Our service of G-d through Torah observance is what makes us a cohesive unit. Torah observance remains where positive examples are set for the young, and where Jewish education is provided. This is the approach which Moshe initiated for us 3,300 years ago.

Pharaoh's concept of how to serve G-d is pronounced dead on arrival. Moshe proclaims for all to hear "with our young and old we will go, with our sons and our daughters..." This is the only way to carry Jewish ideals over into the next generation.

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI MOSHE SOLOVEITCHIK

Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik was born on the second day of Rosh Hashanah in the year 5676 (1915) in the city of Brisk. His father, the Gaon Rabbi Israel Gershon, was the son of the Maran Rabbi Chaim Halevi of Brisk, who was his Sandek. It was within this illustrious family that Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik grew up. From his youth he was known for his exceptional gifts: His perseverance, his diligence, and his fear of Heaven (which had no equal other than his wisdom and lofty virtues).

In 5695 (1935) he fled from Russia with a group of Brisk Talmidim, among whom was Rabbi Aaron Leib Steinman, who would remain one of Rabbi Moshe's most faithful friends. Rabbi Moshe settled in Switzerland at the Montreux yeshiva. Despite the anguish and distress that he experienced over the fate of his Jewish brothers caught in the tempest of World War II, he devoted his days and nights to the study of Torah and even gave, though he was still very young, shiurim to the bachurim. Rabbi Israel Zimmel Rottstein recounts that one day, a group of Jewish refugees coming from Buchenwald, broken both physically and emotionally, arrived in Switzerland. Rabbi Moshe assembled the entire group, and under the pretext of providing them support and encouragement he gave a Davar Torah. He cited the following Psalm: "A psalm by David, as he fled from Absalom his son" [Psalms 3:1].

He then told them, "The Gemara asks the following question: How are we to understand that David sang while escaping from his son

Absalom, who was chasing behind in order to kill him? It would have been more appropriate for David to have moaned and cried. In fact, David sang because when he realized that it was his son Absalom who was personally chasing him (and not simply Absalom's servants), he foresaw and understood that it could only be the will of G-d behind this event, that this could not possibly be the result of a human response. In the same way," Rav Moshe told them, "you who have suffered martyrdom in your bodies and souls, this too cannot be conceived as belonging to the realm of man, but emanates from Hashem. Therefore be strong and courageous and follow the way of Hashem."

Rav Moshe returned to Switzerland in 5709 (1948/49), where he married the daughter of Rav Shemuel Zanzil Neuman of Lugano and settled in that city. There he founded a yeshiva and worked to strengthen Swiss Judaism. Several years later he founded a yeshiva in Lucerne.

His only goal was to arouse in his young students the desire to become yeshiva bachurim. All that was required for this to happen was for his students to see him sitting down and studying with his usual enthusiasm, which would inspire a love of Torah in them. In this way, he inculcated in them an attachment to Torah and a fear of Heaven that was never to leave them. His classes focused on giving deep thought to the literal sense of the text, and he always pushed the Talmidim to go deeply into the texts in search of the truth. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

TAKING FERTILITY OR BIRTH CONTROL PILLS ON SHABBAT

Halacha forbids ill patients from taking medications on Shabbat under certain circumstances, as discussed by the Shulhan Aruch (Orah Haim 328). The Sages enacted this prohibition out of concern that a person in need of medication might grind herbs to prepare the medicine, and since grinding constitutes a Torah prohibition, the Sages forbade taking medicine as a safeguard against Shabbat desecration.

Maran, in Bet Yosef (Orah Haim 328; listen to audio recording for precise citation), addresses the situation of a healthy person who wishes to take medicine as a preventative measure, or to strengthen his body. If one does not suffer any ailment, but nevertheless wants to ingest medication to help him maintain good health, may he take medicine on Shabbat? Maran writes that the Sages' enactment forbidding medication on Shabbat does not apply in such a case. The prohibition was enacted only for those who require medication for some ailment, but not for those who are perfectly healthy. Therefore, it is entirely permissible to eat foods or drink beverages that are made especially for medicinal purposes, or to take pills and the like, if one is not sick and simply wishes to strengthen his body and maintain good health. This Halacha is noted by Rabbi Moshe Halevi (Israel, 1961-2001) in his work Menuhat Ahaba (p. 515; listen to audio recording for precise citation).

By the same token, it is permissible on Shabbat to take medications that have no healing effect, but serve to regulate certain functions of the body. Common examples are pills taken by women to increase fertility, and contraceptive pills. (Needless to say, we refer to situations where the woman received Rabbinic approval to use birth control.) These pills do not heal or cure any ailment, and serve simply to regulate hormones. As such, a woman is allowed to take these pills on Shabbat, as they are not included under the prohibition of medication. This is the ruling of several authorities, including the Helkat Yaakov (Rabbi Mordechai Yaakov Breish, Poland-Switzerland, 1895-1976; Siman 23), Shemirat Shabbat Ke'hilchatah (Rabbi Yehoshua Neubert, contemporary; Siman 34), and Rabbi Moshe Halevi (Menuhat Ahaba, ibid.). Rabbi Moshe Halevi adds that a woman may even begin taking these pills on Shabbat. Even if she had not been taking them before Shabbat, she may begin on Shabbat, since these pills are not included under the prohibition against taking medication.

Summary: Halacha forbids taking medication on Shabbat under certain circumstances. This prohibition does not, however, apply in cases of a healthy person who takes pills to maintain his health, or pills that regulate certain functions of the body. Hence, a woman may take birth control pills (assuming she received Halachic permission to use birth control) or fertility pills on Shabbat. ■

KidsTime



TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 Why did the firstborn of the animals die?
- 2 How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the firstborn?
- 3 Hashem told Moshe "so that my wonders will be multiplied" (11:9). What three wonders was Hashem referring to?
- 4 Why did Hashem command the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh to Aharon, and not only to Moshe?
- 5 Up to what age is an animal fit to be a Pesach offering?

Answer

1 11:5 - Because the Egyptians worshiped them as gods, and when Hashem punishes a nation He also punishes its gods. 2 11:8 - Moshe warned that "All these servants of yours will come down to me" when, in fact, it was Pharaoh himself who actually came running to Moshe. 3 11:9 - The plague of the firstborn, the splitting of the sea, the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers. 4 12:1 - As reward for his efforts in bringing about the plagues. 5 12:5 - One year.

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