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THE COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

Never Wrong!

Rabbi Jonathan Tawil



Shabbat Begins 16:17 Shabbat Ends 17:30

I once heard a saying from someone who felt he was infallible: "I'm never wrong. The only time I was wrong was when I thought I was wrong - but it turned out I was right."

Children nowadays are very vocal.

They have rights and in some cases, greater knowledge of the modern world than adults. It's not as easy as it used to be for a parent to convey a message.

Nowadays the child will ask, inquire and might even tell you that you are wrong.

It's not just adults that have made up viewpoints; increasingly it's becoming a phenomenon amongst the youth.

One of the children I teach recently told me that he went to Thorpe Park and had the opportunity of going into a 'special 3D theatre', where he put on 3D glasses and saw a fantastic animation.

"It was so realistic, I really felt I was there", he told me.

I asked him to imagine someone coming to the animation and not putting on the special glasses, or putting them on wrong. Consequently, he's disappointed with his "way" of seeing the adventure. Furthermore, he can't understand how anybody else can enjoy it. After all, he thinks everyone sees it the way he does.

When someone tries to show him his error, if he's smart enough to admit that he was wrong, then he can finally enjoy the adventure to its fullest.

But if he's stubborn and refuses to admit that he could possibly be mistaken, then he will never really enjoy what a lot of other people are enjoying immensely.

And it's all because he doesn't have enough guts and intelligence to admit when he is wrong.

Our sages make an interesting observation when Moshe warned Pharaoh of G-d's tenth plague – the killing of the first born.

Moshe was told to go to Pharaoh and tell him that G-d would kill every firstborn at midnight.

Remarkably, Moshe seems to change the words of G-d and instead tells Pharaoh that the plague will hit **ap-proximately** at midnight.

How could Moshe change the word of G-d? And why did he deem it necessary to do so?

Rashi explains that Moshe was faced with a predicament. If he were to say the exact time of midnight, and the servants of Pharaoh were watching, perhaps they would not have exact measuring tools to calculate the time. Perhaps they would see the time as 11.55pm or 12.05am.

In such a case, even though all the firstborn would die, the servants of Pharaoh would say that because Moshe claimed it would happen at midnight and it DID NOT, that the whole plague was a farce and didn't really emanate from G-d.

Thus in not allowing for any misinterpretation, Moshe kept his words

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ambiguous, saying that the plague would occur *around* midnight.

Although this answers why he changed the time, we are still left with some confusion.

In our modern world we have wristwatches that are accurate to hundredths of seconds, but in the ancient world, how did they tell the time? It wasn't so accurate. Maybe it entailed gazing at stars, or seeing the projection of the moon.

Putting this into perspective, if you lived at that time in Egypt and you were an astrologer, what would you think the odds were that you were right?

For the past ten months, time after time, whatever Moshe said, happened.

So if Moshe would have said at midnight and you would have had a different time, wouldn't you have believed that it was **you** making the mistake?

Moshe understood fundamental human nature: we don't like being wrong.

"My opinion, whether I have substantiated it or not, will not change."

"Once I reach a conclusion it's difficult to change."

I am reminded of a sign that I once saw on the desk of a prominent public figure that said: "Don't confuse me with the facts; my mind is already made up!" He was joking about it (I think) but that danger lurks in all of us.



Once we are convinced of the absolute rectitude of our position, we are not only tenacious in maintaining it; we become downright blindly stubborn.

Moshe realised that they would be obstinate; they could not admit to being wrong and would quickly point the finger at Moshe's wrong timing.

Thus Moshe cleverly averted the issue, stating that this plague would *approximately* occur at midnight.

The prophets tell us that there will be a special judgment: "hineni nishpat otach al omrech lo chatati" – "Behold I am entering into judgment with you because of your saying, 'I have not sinned'" (Yirmiyahu 2:35), for the fact that you convinced yourself that you did not sin.

No one likes to sin; therefore when they find themselves sinning, they come up with all sorts of reasons to justify their acts.

Deep down there is no justification and it requires a mighty warrior to fight off the bad tendencies and admit at times to their mistakes.

When we are in the heat of a debate, or when we are speaking to family and friends, let's make sure that we are not shy to fix our vision.

We are not always right, and should ask what we think is the truth and what we think *really* happened.

When we are able to put away our personal agenda then we are able to see the truth.

Towards the end of this week's parsha, we find a very famous passuk, which we say every year during the Seder. We are instructed to perform the mitzvot of the Korban Pesach and the matza. After this, the Torah tells us the mitzva of 'sippur yetziat Mitzrayim'. We are instructed to tell our sons (13:8) "ba'avur zeh asa HaShem li, betzeisi miMitzrayim" – "because HaShem did this for me when I went out of Egypt." The Beit HaLevi (Rav Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik, 1820-1892) points out that the words in this passuk are not written in the way one would expect. The intention seems to be that one should tell one's son that these mitzvot are performed "because this is what HaShem did for us." However, for this meaning one would expect it to say, "ba'avur shezeh asa HaShem li." There would need to be a shin prefixed to the word 'zeh'.

Based on this, the Beit HaLevi suggests that this is not the whole intention of this passuk. The Zohar (Teruma 161b) says that HaShem looked into the Torah and created the world. The simple meaning of this is that this world is

created so as to enable humankind to fulfil HaShem's Will, and thus merit Olam Haba. For this to be feasible, the world must be created in such a way as to facilitate people being able to perform mitzvot. If the world were created without wool and linen, we

"If the world were created without wool and linen, we could not fulfil the mitzva of shaatnez. Thus, the world must be designed in a way that the mitzvot are possible."

could not fulfil the mitzva of shaatnez. Thus, the world must be designed in a way that the mitzvot are possible. The Beit HaLevi adds that even those mitzvot that appear logical, and

seem to have a straightforward explanation, are still also included in this understanding. We cannot assume that the obvious reason is the sole basis of the mitzva, for were this the case how could the mitzva be the determinant of the design of the world, rather than the opposite. For this reason, the Gemara (Bava Metzia 115a) says that we may not interpret a mitzva based on our understanding of the reason for it - "lo darshinan taama d'kra."

To apply this understanding, even to those mitzvot which are apparently based on historical events, argues the Beit HaLevi, we have to understand that although the mitzva appears to be solely a commemoration of the event; this is not all that it is. In fact, the events of history must have been manipulated so as to give a rationale for

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Rabbi Raphael Goldblatt



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the existence of the mitzva. Even the Avot, who lived long before Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, kept the mitzvot of Pesach, despite having no relevance to any commemoration of Yetziat Mitzrayim. The Mishna says that Avraham Avinu kept the whole Torah (Kiddushin 82a). Rashi refers to Lot baking matzot (Vayera 19:3) and to Yitzchak eating a Korban Pesach (Toldot 27:9). It is clear that the mitzva exists even without reference to the historical event it apparently commemorates. This is the meaning of the passuk. The father is to explain to his son that Yetziat Mitzrayim happened in order to bring about

these mitzvot; not that he should think that the rationale for the mitzva is to commemorate the events of long ago, which one might consider being no longer necessary. For this reason also, the following passuk refers to the mitzvot of Pesach as a "chuka" – a mitzva with no apparent logical reason.

This is also the reason for the fact that this passuk is used in the Haggada as the response to the wicked son, despite his question not being mentioned here. The fact that the response refers to a suggestion that the mitzva is created by the event, rather than the reverse, makes it clear

that it is answering the question of a son who wishes to deny the obligation of the mitzva, based on the fact that, to his mind, the reason is no longer as valid. Therefore, besides the simple meaning, which is that this is the explanation given to a son who does not even ask (the "she'eino yodea lish'ol," as we say in the Haggada), it is also clearly the answer to the wicked suggestion of the rasha. The Beit HaLevi concludes that this is a clear indictment of those "innovators" who believe that we can abrogate any mitzva that we choose, simply by arguing that we understand its basis, and it is no longer relevant to our times.

Halachot Of Kiddush Of Shabbat Morning

Rabbi Dov Levy



The Rabbis instituted making Kiddush on Shabbat morning. It is referred to as Kiddush Rabbah - the great Kiddush, so that people would not belittle it, being of Rabbinic origin.

When is the correct time to make Kiddush?

Kiddush should be made before eating on Shabbat morning.

So if I have a drink before going to pray should I make Kiddush first?

No, the Rabbis instituted Kiddush to be said after one has prayed Shacharit. Once you have prayed the Amida of Shacharit (Yismach Moshe), you must not eat without making Kiddush.

So before praying I can eat what I want?

You have to bear in mind the general prohibition to eat before praying. If this prohibition doesn't forbid you to eat then, yes, you can eat without Kiddush. For example having a coffee before prayers is usually acceptable, and so no Kiddush should be made since you haven't prayed yet.

- What was Pharaoh's excuse for not releasing the Jewish children?
10:11 - Since children don't bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go.
- How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel?
10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species.
- How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three?
10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians couldn't see. During the last three days they couldn't move.
- When the Jews asked the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, the Egyptians were unable to deny ownership of such vessels. Why?
10:22 - During the plague of darkness the Jews could see and they searched for and found the Egyptians' vessels.
- Makat bechorot took place at exactly midnight. Why did Moshe say it would take place at approximately midnight?
11:4 - If Moshe said the plague would begin exactly



at midnight, the Egyptians might miscalculate and accuse Moshe of being a fake.

- Why did the first-born of the animals die?
11:5 - Because the Egyptians worshiped them as gods, and when G-d punishes a nation He also punishes its gods.
- How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the first-born?
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.
- G-d told Moshe "so that My wonders will be multiplied" (11:9). What three wonders was G-d referring to?
11:9 - The plague of the first-born, the splitting of the sea, the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers.
- Why did G-d command the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh to Aharon, and not only to Moshe?
12:1 - As reward for his efforts in bringing about the plagues.
- Up to what age is an animal fit to be a Pesach offering?
12:5 - One year.

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Reb Shneur Zalman sat in prison day after day, with nothing to eat but a few fruits and vegetables. He would not eat non-kosher food, even though he was so hungry and weak!

The warden (head of the jail) tried to get him to eat some cooked food. "I will not eat non-kosher food under any circumstances!" declared the Rav. "Well," said the warden, "if I get you kosher food, will you eat it?" The Rav replied, "Yes, but only if it is cooked by a Jew, and you personally take it from him and bring it to me!"

So the warden searched secretly for a reliable Jew, and found a Chassid, Reb Mordechai, who could give him the food. He didn't

tell Reb Mordechai who it was for, though!

Of course, the Chassid wondered. He decided to put a note on the bottom of the jar of food to find out if Reb Shneur Zalman might be getting this food, because then he can tell the Chassidim that the Rav is alive! He hoped the warden wouldn't catch him by finding the note, because then he would probably be arrested, too.

The next day the jar was returned. Reb Mordechai looked inside excitedly – and found that the mysterious prisoner had left some

food at the bottom, and sure enough, underneath it was a note!

Reb Shneur Zalman wrote that he was the prisoner receiving the food and that there were certain things the Chassidim could do to help him get out of prison.

Sure enough, soon afterwards the Rav was let out of jail — and all because he wouldn't eat non-kosher food, even at the risk of his own life!

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