

## Shabbos - January 22nd

Candle Lighting	4:42
Friday Night Minyan	4:45
Shachris	8:50
Chassidus Shiur (R' Avi)	4:05
Mincha Shabbos Day	4:35
Maariv	5:52
Father-Son Learning	7:00

## Weekday Schedule

Shachris on Sunday	8:00
Shachris (Mon-Fri)	7:00
Mincha / Maariv	4:50
Nightly Shiur (Mon-Thurs)	8:40
Maariv (Mon-Thurs)	9:00



We are pleased to announce that the Hashevaynu simcha hall is available for rentals.

For more information please contact  
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## Bo - The Power of Hope

R' Avi Zakutinsky

In this week's parsha, we are told of the plague of choshech, darkness. The medrash explains that one of the reasons for the darkness was that there were Jews who did not deserve to be freed and needed to die. Hashem, therefore, provided the darkness so that the Egyptians would not see their death and claim that the plagues affected Jews and Egyptians alike.

One would assume, based upon the previous medrash, that the Jews that merited leaving Egypt were righteous and observant of Jewish law. However, there is another medrash that indicates the exact opposite. We are told that the waters of Yam Suf did not want to split for the Jewish people due to their assimilation and lack of observance. The medrash goes so far as to say that the Angel of the Yam Suf claimed that he was not able to discern between the Jews and the Egyptians. "These (Egyptians) perform idolatry and these (Jews) also perform idolatry".

It is clear that even many of those Jews that left Egypt were deficient in their religious observance. What exactly separated those that merited Egypt from those that passed away during choshech if it was not religious observance alone? The Rishonim (refer to Rosh on Torah) explain that the Jews that left Egypt merited leaving simply because they had hope and belief that Hashem would take them out. They hoped to leave Egypt. They hoped for salvation. While the Jews that passed away had completely given up hope of ever tasting redemption, those Jews that merited redemption never gave up hope in Hashem's salvation. It is in the merit of hoping for redemption, and in that merit alone, that the Jews were able to leave Egypt. And it will be in the merit of our hope that we will be zoche to greet Mashiach.

## Bo - The Light of Emunah

Reb Dov Elias

### "...that you shall know that I am Hashem"

A second week of amazing and wondrous signs and miracles. Hashem continues to reveal His control over all - to all. The Exodus was not a mere relocation from one geographical location to another - it was a complete change of mindset: from being subject to the rules of nature to living with Divine Providence. The Jewish people were chosen to be the nation of Hashem after being extracted from the depths of the false belief in observable nature and happenstance and replanted within a framework of pure emuna that there is nothing aside from Hashem (אין עוד מלבדו).

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*continued - The Light of Emunah*

The redemption from Egypt is the redemption of the soul of every Jew, in every generation. It is redemption from the ravages of nature, the restrictions of space and time - it is a clinging to the orchestrations of Hashem and His miracles.

All of the plagues that were intended to illustrate Who was in charge, to convey that there is a King of the World, a supervisor. "... That you shall know that I am Hashem." "In order that you shall know that there is none like Me in all the land." Pharaoh needed this message - and so do we. We do not always feel like thanking. We find ourselves in the King's chambers but do not realize that there is a King. We fail to integrate the fact that at every moment we are completely dependent on Hashem and must turn to Him for everything we wish to undertake.

All of the plagues (difficulties) that we receive are only to remind us that everything is exclusively in accordance with Hashem's will and nothing can exist outside of His decrees.

Rebbe Chanina ben Dosa's daughter lit Shabbos candles with vinegar in place of oil. It is not oil that ignites; it is whatever Hashem commands to burn that kindles. Vinegar is just as able to burn as oil. Much emuna was needed to escape Egypt - forsake everything that you know and follow Me. Everyone else follows statues and idols - you follow Me. When we left Egypt, we ate matzos because matzos are made hurriedly, without additives for flavor. Matzo is bitachon in Hashem's direction without any work or involvement on our part. When we flee from Egypt there is no time to contemplate, to worry - if we would stop to ponder, we might remain, G-d forbid. This is what essentially happens to every baal teshuva - they receive an invitation - a great light is dispatched to them for one moment - they start to pursue the light and desert everything else behind them - for it is not every day that Hashem sends a person these flashes of inspiration. At these moments, he recognizes that there is nothing aside from Hashem. He proceeds to spend the rest of his life struggling to internalize this concept. From the moment that a child is born we teach him Shema - "Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One" - he learns that everything that happens in life, whether obviously good or less obviously so, is all essentially good because Hashem is all good. Our discernment between good and less good is a result of our lack of comprehension that it is all from Hashem.

Our primary service in this world is to nullify our egos - not to attribute anything to our own abilities - to recognize that everything is from Hashem. We must be the exact opposite of Pharaoh - who had the supreme arrogance to claim that he had created himself - the pinnacle of arrogance and heresy.

## **The Makkos: A Response To The Pharaoh Within**

Meira Zakutinsky

In his week's Parsha, we read about three the final makos that Hashem sent the Egyptians. As the Pesukim are read, one can feel liberation and redemption for the Jewish people in the air. These 10 plagues were a response to a conversation which took place between Moshe and Pharaoh. In last week's Parsha, Hashem sent Moshe to tell Pharaoh that the time has come to let the Jewish people go. Pharaoh responded with a rhetorical question "Mi Hashem Asher Eshma Bkolo?" who is this G-d, and why do I have to listen to Him? With this remark, Pharaoh was in essence saying that even if there is a G-d, is He still involved in this world, making me obliged to listen to Him right now? This question asked centuries ago is used as ammunition by the Yetzer Hara as he whispers this every day. Through understanding the way in which Hashem responded, we can learn how we too can respond to our "Pharaoh" within.

*continued - A Response To The Pharoah Within*

Subsequent to this conversation, Hashem sent the first of the 10 makos. Why? "L'aan Yeidu Ki Ani Hashem" in order for the entire world to know that I am Hashem. The question that remains is, what message did the makos give that we can use as arsenal when we are attacked as well?

The Nesivas Shalom says that with each passing Makah, Hashem was showing His constant dominion over every aspect of creation, from minute to large, from earthly to heavenly. The first plague, Dum, involved the water. More than seventy percent of earth's surface is composed of water. Through Dum Hashem showed His dominion over even the earthliest substances (the most mundane, earthly aspects of life). Tzefardeah and Kinim are a step above earth and water, as they are small creatures who live on the ground. Through Arov, Dever, and Shchin Hashem showed that He is not only the ruler over small animals who live on the earth, but He is in control over large animals and humans as well. Hashem then took things to the next level by showing His dominance over the atmosphere, through Barad and Arbeh. Hashem didn't stop there. He then showed that his reign does not stop at earth. Through Choshech, He show that He is also in control over the celestial beings as well. And finally, through Makas Bechoros Hashem shows that He has power over everything, even human life itself. Through the MaKos, Hashem was telling Pharoah, the entire world, and all generations to come that not only did He create the world, but He is still involved with and in control of absolutely every aspect of creation, from the earthliest, such as water, to the most spiritual, such as separating the body and soul.

Through living vicariously with the Parsha and experiencing the miracles that Hashem performed with our minds eye, we have the ability to respond to the Pharoah inside, that not only does Hashem exist, but he is involved in absolutely every aspect of creation, from large to small. Just as Hashem said to Pharoah that the time has come to let the Jewish people go, there will very soon be a time where Hashem will say that it is time to let His people experience true redemption with the coming of Moshaich, quickly in our days.

## Using Secular Dates in Halacha

R' Avi Zakutinsky

1) **Secular Months-** There is a debate regarding the best way to identify the secular months when writing invitations, documents etc.. Harav Ovadia Yosef zt"l (Yabia Omer 3 YD 9) cites the Ramban (on the above verse) who stresses the importance of counting months according to the Jewish calendar. When the Torah says that Nissan is the first month of the year, it is implying that one may not consider any other month to be the "first." Therefore, Harav Ovadia concludes, when writing the secular months one should not refer to them by number, but by name. For example, one should write January, 12, 2016 and not 1/12/2016.<sup>25</sup> A similar ruling is expressed by Harav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt"l. (Shalmei Simcha page 687)

2) The Tzitz Eliezer (8:8) disagrees with the ruling of Harav Ovadia Yosef zt"l. He writes that because the months are named after gentile gods, one may not mention the months by name, but should instead refer to them by number.

3) Harav Hershel Schachter shlit"a, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchonon, in a letter addressed to the author, writes that he feels that it is preferable to write the name of the month than to reference it by number. Harav Noach Isaac Oelbaum shlit"a, in a letter addressed to the author, explains that it is difficult to advance a clear halachic ruling. However, he personally adheres to the view of Harav Ovadia Yosef zt"l and refers to the secular months by name and not by number.

*continued - Secular Dates in Halacha*

4) **Secular Years**- 1. The poskim stress the importance of using the Jewish calendar for calculating years (ex. 5774), as apposed to using the Gregorian calendar (ex. 2014). The Chasam Sofer (Drashos Chasam Sofer 7 Av year 5570) writes that by counting our years back from the creation of the world we are reminding ourselves of our Creator and of our divine rights to Eretz Yisroel.

5) It is generally assumed that the calendar system currently in use dates back to the birth of Yeshu Hanotzri. Therefore using this calendar system may not be hallachically permitted. The Maharam Shick strongly objected to using secular dates on tombstones. He explains that the Torah says (Shemos 23:13) that we may not mention the names of other gods. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 63b) understands this prohibition to include one who tells his friend to meet him near a particular avodah zara.

6) The Maharam Shick (Yoreh Deah 171), in turn, extends this prohibition to any action that would cause people to think about avodah zara, even without mentioning it by name. Therefore, he argues, since the secular calendar year is counted from the birth of Yeshu, it is biblically prohibited to use the secular calendar year. A similar stringent ruling is expressed by other poskim (see Sefer Get Pashut 127:30, Hillel Omer Yoreh Deah 62, Yayin Hatom Orach Chaim 8, Beer Moshe 8:18).

7) Harav Ovadia Yosef zt"l (Yabia Omer Yoreh Deah 3:9), however, proves that there exists a very strong possibility that the secular dates do not correspond at all to the birth of Yeshu Hanotzri. He argues that if the dates have nothing to do with the birth of Yeshu Hanotzri, there would be no hallachic issue with the secular date.

8) Some object to this leniency on the grounds that as long as people think the date relates to avodah zara, they will be reminded of the avodah zara, and one will then violate a Torah prohibition by bringing the avodah zara to people's attention (Beer Moshe ibid. This is also the view of Harav Nosson Gestetner zt"l printed in Tzitz Eliezer 9:14).

9) The Tzitz Eliezer addresses this objection and explains that if the date really has no relevance to the avodah zara, and people only mistakenly equate the two, there would be no prohibition in using the secular date. One is not responsible for the thoughts of others and as long as he does not mention the avodah zara, or something related to the avodah zara, he has not transgressed any prohibition. In addition, most people are not reminded of Yeshu Hanotzri when told the date. Therefore, he rules leniently and allows others to use the secular date.

10) The Sefer Yereim(75) writes that, "There is no prohibition (of mentioning avodah zara) except when the name is given as a divine name that suggests divinity. But if it is a secular name, then even if this being is treated as a god, since the name does not suggest lordship or divinity, and it also was not given in that context, then it is permitted. For the Torah says, 'The name of other gods you shall not mention' - the verse is only concerned with divine names." According to the Yereim one would be permitted to utter the name of Yeshu outright, and therefore there should be no prohibition of reminding others of his name, so long as one does not reference any "godly characteristics" of Yeshu. (Harav Azriel Hidsheimer zt"l (Yoreh Deah 180) writes, that even if the position of the Yereim is granted, this would certainly not extend to the second part of Yeshu's title [beginning with the letter "c"], which definitely suggests a "divine status.") Harav Ovadia Yosef zt"l continues to cite that many achronim, including the Shach, Chasam Sofer, and Maharm Padwa, have dated letters using the secular dates. Harav Ovadia Yosef zt"l and Harav Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg zt"l both conclude that when necessary, it is permissible to use the secular date. When possible, however, one should try to use the Jewish year. Furthermore, it would seem that one who uses both the Jewish and Gregorian years next to each other is clearly indicating that the Jewish date is meaningful to him, and that he is only using the secular dates for practical reasons.