



"ויקם פרעה לילה" (פרק י"ב פסוק ל')

Rashi is bothered by the question; from where did Pharaoh get up? Rashi answers that he got up from his bed.

Everyone knows the song children sing by the Pesach seder "Pharaoh in pajamas in the middle of the night", and as we know all of our minhagim have sources. The source of this song is from this posuk. How do we see from this posuk that Pharaoh was in his nightclothes? Rashi tells us that Pharaoh got up from his bed, so it must be that it was clear to all that that is where Pharaoh got up from - must be that he was in his pajamas, hence the song.

However we have to understand, if the Posuk and therefore Rashi are stressing that Pharaoh was in his pajamas there must be a lesson to be learned from here. What is so important about Pharaoh running the streets in his nightclothes?

Perhaps we can offer two explanations.

Pharaoh as we know wanted everyone to believe that he was a god, to the extent that he claimed never to need the bathroom, which is why Hashem told Moshe to visit Pharaoh as he bathing in the river, to show him that he was human after all. If so it would follow that Pharaoh claimed he never slept as only mortals need sleep. Similarly we find by Eliyahu on Har Carmel with the prophets of the Baal. Eliyahu told them to yell; perhaps your god is sleeping, for a real god never sleeps. If so, for Pharaoh to be caught running through the streets in his pajamas is the biggest proof that he is nothing special and a human like everyone else. Therefore the children like to sing "Pharaoh in pajamas in the middle of the night".

Another explanation can be that the Torah is telling us how bad Pharaoh really was. By the time Makas Bechoros came everyone knew that Moshe was truly a Navi of Hashem and what he predicted will definitely take place. The Medresh tells us that when Moshe announced Makas Bechoros and Pharaoh publicly refused to let the Bnei Yisroel out; a civil war broke out with all the firstborns fighting against Pharaoh to let the people go.

The Medresh also tells us that Pharaoh himself was a firstborn. And yet not only did he ignore Moshe's warning but he also went to bed, in his pajamas with no concern whatsoever as to what will happen at midnight. This is what the children are making fun of; how such a Rasha can totally disregard Hashem's Navi and go to sleep like any other night...



והעתירו לה' אלוקיכם ויסר ממני רק את המות הזה

(י', י"ז)

"and daven to Hashem your G-d that he remove form me only this death "

R' Avrohom Yafen (Rebbe's grandfather) once met with the Satmer Rebbe and in the course of their conversation the topic of the Balai Muser of the previous generation and their honest ethics came up. R' Yaffin related to the Rebbe a story with R' Zundel Salanter. R' Zundel received a letter from a talmid out of the country asking him to daven for the recovery of his sick wife. R' Zundel instructed his assistant to draft a brief note to the talmid acknowledging the letter and reply that he will daven for her recovery. When he saw the draft R' Zundel got very upset and told his assistant that the letter was dishonest and he could never sign such a thing. Upon closer examination of the letter it appeared that the assistant had written "we are davening for her", to which R' Zundel argued that only he himself will be davening and no one else.

R' Avrohom pointed out to the Rebbe that although it is an accepted form of humility to speak of oneself in a plural form, as not to imply I am the one who brought on the recovery, yet R' Zundel in his honesty could not sign on such a thing.

The Ramban points out that although Pharaoh asked both Moshe and Aharon to daven to remove the plagues, this was a mere formality, a courtesy to Aharon for he knew Moshe was the one davening to Hashem. The Ramban brings numerous examples that when Moshe replies to Pharaoh he always does so in the singular form, I will daven. Concludes the Ramban, Moshe would never speak of himself in the plural form as never to let a lie escape his lips.



ויהפך ה' רוח ים חזק מאוד וישא את הארבה

י' י"ט

"Hashem turned back a very powerful west wind and it carried the locust swarm"

It is interesting to note that when Hashem brought the locusts to Egypt, the posuk only speaks of an eastern wind. Yet when Hashem removed the locusts the posuk tells of a very strong western wind. Why was harder to remove them than to bring them?

We can answer that when the locusts arrived they flew on their own accord. However locusts were a local delicacy and the Egyptians killed them and stored them to be eaten at a later date; these dead ones required a strong wind to remove them. In addition Chazal say "a live person carries himself" even if they didn't fly in on their own accord, they still weighed less than dead.

Another possible answer is when they came the posuk says the wind blew all day and through the night. When Hashem removed the locusts however he did so at once, therefore it required one strong wind.



ויאמר משה כה אמר ה' כחצות הלילה אני יוצא בתוך מצרים, ומת כל בכור בארץ מצרים

י"א, ד

"And Moshe said so says Hashem at about midnight I shall go out in the midst of Egypt. Every firstborn on the land of Egypt shall die"

Rashi points out that when Moshe repeated Hashem's message to Pharaoh he said about midnight in case Pharaoh's astrologers will err in their calculations. Hashem however who knows the exact times said I will go out at midnight.

What exactly was the concern that the astrologers will err. There are two possible ways to err, either to say the plague arrived before midnight or the plague arrived after midnight.

However what is the problem with this, either way there will be a massive plague that will instantly kill every firstborn. Does it really make a difference if it came a minute off? What we must say is undoubtedly there were big things going on here, however there was a window to say that they did not come from Hashem. Rather Moshe was a foreseer with an ability to predict the future, and not a true prophet of Hashem. The difference being that while a foreseer can indeed predict the future, he can't do so with exact detail, there will always be slight differences in the way events play out to the way he foresaw them. A prophecy from Hashem will be exact down to the last detail.

We know the Egyptians possessed powers of magic that were able to mimic the signs Hashem gave Moshe, they too were able to change staffs into snakes, turn water to blood, bring in frogs. This was the Egyptians retort, what you are doing is not from Hashem rather magic or an ability to predict the future, but not an act of Hashem.

For the same reason when Pharaoh asked Moshe to remove the wild animals Moshe asked Pharaoh to pick a time that he wants them out. Moshe wanted to give additional proof that this was a plague controlled directly by Hashem, hence the accuracy of when it will end.

Therefore by The Death of the Firstborns, if the plague wasn't carries out exactly as Moshe said it would be, the impact would be lost by the retort that it did not come from Hashem, rather by magic.

However there is another way to understand the concern that the Astrologers would err, and according to this concern they would only err by thinking midnight passed and there was no plague. For that brief minute that they would think Moshe was a fraud there would be a Chillul Hashem, even though the plague would arrive in all its force in sixty seconds, but for that brief minute there will be an irreverence of Hashem's name. For that minute Moshe was concerned and told Pharaoh about midnight.

This idea of a Chillul Hashem even for minute is illustrated in a story with Rav Baruch Ber, the Rosh Yeshiva of Kamintz. The Rosh Yeshiva was once by a Drasha given by a local Rav when he needed to step out for a moment to use the facilities. Rav Baruch Ber was concerned that if he were to walk out the local Rav would feel bad that the Rosh Yeshiva is leaving in middle of his speech, even though he would return in mere moments and he would understand where he went. Therefore he chose to leave his hat on his shtender as in indication that he was indeed returning momentarily. Not to cause someone discomfort even for a moment.

Another story is told with Rav Baruch Ber; the Rosh Yeshiva's custom when giving Smicha, ordaining young torah scholars as Rabanim, was after he gave them a practical exam on the Halachos, he would ask them to remain in Kaminetz for a month so he could observe their behavior to see if they were indeed worthy and only then would he give the smicha. One day a young scholar by the name of Chaim Pinchos Schienberg arrived in Kaminetz for smicha. After Rav Baruch Ber gave him the exam he asked him if he could remain in town for a month. R' Sheinberg asked if it would be possible to return home to inform his wife that he would be staying another month and then return to Kaminetz for the month. Rav Baruch Ber in an exception to his usual custom did some discreet questioning into R' Sheinberg's background and gave him the smicha right away before he returned home. When questioned by his son as what could cause him to step out of his usual routine Rav Baruch Ber explained. When R' Sheinberg will return home, undoubtedly his wife's first question will be "did you get the Smicha". If she were to hear a no, even though it will be followed up with a valid explanation, for that brief moment her husband will get knocked down a few notches in her eyes. He wasn't able to get the smicha. This was not something Rav Baruch Ber wanted to cause even if only for a brief moment.

This idea can also explain a question in next week's Parsha. Hashem said that the Mann will not fall on Shabbos. Dasan and Aviram in an attempt to discredit Moshe in the eyes of the people kept their mann from Friday to spread it on Shabbos so it will appear that it indeed did fall even though Hashem said it wouldn't. Along came the birds and ate up every last crumb so that there would not be a chillul Hashem, and until today we thank them by putting out food for the birds every Parshas Shira.

If we think about it, the amount of man that fell every day was enormous, a three mil circumference around the camp in a depth of two amos of man. How much man could Dasan and Aviram have possibly kept and put out? A tiny amount in comparison, everyone would clearly see that this was not the work of Hashem. Yet this is the difference between a prophet and a foreseer or magician. The word of Hashem must be exact down to the last detail. The slightest discrepancy can give a window of opportunity to discredit Moshe and to say this is not the doing of Hashem.

(Adapted from R' Nissan Kaplan's Keshet Shel Kayama)