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*Shabbat Bo*

*January 23, 2010*

*8 Shevat 5770*

## News

### Jews in the World

**J**ews are a famously accomplished group. They make up 0.2 percent of the world population, but 54 percent of the world chess champions, 27 percent of the Nobel physics laureates and 31 percent of the medicine laureates.

Jews make up 2 percent of the U.S. population, but 21 percent of the Ivy League student bodies, 26 percent of the Kennedy Center honorees, 37 percent of the Academy Award-winning directors, 38 percent of those on a recent Business Week list of leading philanthropists, 51 percent of the Pulitzer Prize winners for nonfiction...

If you want to know more, read the article "The Tel Aviv Cluster" at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/12/opinion/12brooks.html>

### Immersion in Israel

**L**ast Shabbat, January 16 was a wonderful Shabbat for the community of Rehovot. We had an outstanding time in the Jordan River for the immersion of our new brother for that congregation, and after a very good potluck we went to visit the traditional places of Capernaum (the town of Peter, Andrew, John, James, Matthew and where Jesus used to live during his ministry). This picture is special in order to protect the identity of the people.



Immersion in the Jordan, Photo: R. Elofer

Tabgha, the traditional site of the multiplication of bread of fish and the Mount of Beatitudes where Jesus pronounced his famous speech of Matthew 5 to 7. We read the Beatitudes while it was sunset we had a wonderful end of Shabbat. After this day, everyone was happy to go back home knowing that on that day there was a great joy in heaven (Luke 15:7-10).

### Special Training in Copenhagen

**I**am right now in Copenhagen for a special training with Rachel Hyman and next week David Barzola will come to follow up with this training.

We must remember the very special and moving story of Jews during the WWII, the almost total Jewish population, 7,500 people escaped from Copenhagen to Sweden and were saved.

My first impression is that the members of this congregation in Copenhagen are people who really want to know more about the Bible and the Jewish people.

The first evening, Rachel Hyman conducted a quiz in order to know better the attendance. We discovered that many in the attendance had already some experiences with the Jewish people, some had already visited synagogues or have Jewish friends, some others lived in Israel for a while or experienced a Kibbutz life. The first evening was dedicated to the sanctuary. At the second meeting on Thursday I ask the question "Why a Jewish Ministry and help them to understand the necessity of this special ministry giving them the biblical, historical and prophetic reason for a Jewish ministry.

I eager to have the Friday service with them and to share the Shabbat and to continue the training until Sunday evening.

Thank you for praying for this group and the Jews living in Denmark who are approximately 6,000 today.

# Overview



Bo

## Exodus 10:1-13:16

**G**-d tells Moshe that He is hardening Pharaoh's heart so that through miraculous plagues the world will know for all time that He is the one true G-d.

Pharaoh is warned about the plague of locusts and is told how severe it will be. Pharaoh agrees to release only the men, but Moshe insists that everyone must go. During the plague, Pharaoh calls for Moshe and Aharon to remove the locusts, and he admits he has sinned.

G-d ends the plague but hardens Pharaoh's heart, and again Pharaoh fails to free the Jews.

The country, except for the Jewish People, is then engulfed in a palpable darkness. Pharaoh calls for Moshe and tells him to take all the Jews out of Egypt, but to leave their flocks behind. Moshe tells him that not only will they take their own flocks, but Pharaoh must add his own too.

Moshe tells Pharaoh that G-d is going to bring one more plague, the death of the first-born, and then the Jews will leave Egypt. G-d again hardens Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh warns Moshe that if he sees him again, Moshe will be put to death.

G-d tells Moshe that the month of Nissan will be the chief month.

The Jewish people are commanded to take a sheep on the 10th of the month and guard it until the 14th.

The sheep is then to be slaughtered as a Pesach offering, its blood put on their door-posts, and its roasted meat eaten. The blood on the door-post will be a sign that their homes will be passed-over when G-d strikes the first-born of Egypt.

The Jewish People are told to memorialize this day as the Exodus from Egypt by never eating chametz on Pesach.

Moshe relays G-d's commands, and the Jewish People fulfill them flawlessly. G-d sends the final plague, killing the first-born, and Pharaoh sends the Jews out of Egypt.

G-d tells Moshe and Aharon the laws concerning the Pesach sacrifice, pidyon haben (redemption of the first-born son) and tefillin.

## First months, Nissan and Tishrei

**I**n this week's portion the Almighty gives the first commandment to Israel as a whole—to decree the beginning of the Jewish month. This is important for setting the date of each Jewish holiday. It is so important that when the Romans were persecuting us at the time of the Hanukah story, they forbade the Jewish court to decree the beginning of the new month. The Torah states: **"This month (Nissan) shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you"** (Exodus 12:2).

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein commented that the month of Tishrei (September-October) is the month of the creation of the world. The month of Nissan (March-April) is the month of the exodus from Egypt. Both months are lessons in our awareness of the Almighty's power.

Rabbi Packouz says in the name of Rabbi Zelig Pliskin that the first lesson is that the Almighty is the Creator of the universe. The second lesson is that of Divine Providence. The Almighty controls the events of the world and therefore He is the One Who allowed that the Children of Israel to be enslaved and He is the One Who freed them. The Torah is telling us in this verse that the lesson of the Almighty's guiding historical events is even more important than the lesson of the creation of the world.

One can believe that the Almighty created the world and this might not make any difference in a person's behavior and attitudes. However, once a person is aware of the supervision of the Almighty in daily events, he will improve his behavior. Moreover, his trust in the Almighty will free him from worry. The month of Nissan is the first month of the year and by remembering this we remember all that is symbolized by the Exodus. This will have a major effect on what we do and think.

## The Tenth Plague

**T**he Torah states, **"And God said to Moshe, 'There is one more plague that I will bring upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; after that he will let you leave this place; when he shall let you go, he shall actually thrust you out of here altogether. Speak now to the people discreetly (literally: in the ears of the people), and let every man borrow from his neighbor, and every woman from her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. And God gave the people favor in the sight of**

the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moshe was greatly respected in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people. (Exodus 11:1-3) This, we are told, said Rabbi Ari Kahn will be the final plague. However, nowhere in these verses does God say what the plague will be. God tells Moshe to instruct the people that the time has come to take valuable goods from the Egyptians, and the verses may be construed as saying this "cleaning out" of Egypt's silver and gold is, itself, the final blow. It is only when Moshe continues his remarks to the people that he adds—almost as an afterthought—that a devastating plague that will bring Pharaoh and Egypt to their knees, is still on the way. And Moshe said, "Thus said God, "About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt; And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the maidservant who is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there never has been, nor shall there ever be again. (Exodus 11:4-6) Moshe quotes God: "Thus said God." As we turn the pages back, looking for the speech which Moshe quotes, we are hard-pressed to find it. In this instance, unlike the other plagues, the verses do not seem to record the words that God said to Moshe; this communication seems to have been preserved only as it is reflected in Moshe's words to the people. According to the Jewish tradition as reported by Rabbi Ari Kahn, Moshe was told about the ten plagues, before the first one started. Rabbi Ari Kahn said, "if we widen the parameters of our search, we find that God's instructions regarding the tenth plague were given to Moshe first, before Moshe began his journey back to Egypt to confront Pharaoh: And God said to Moshe, "When you go to return to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in your hand; but I will harden his heart, so that he shall not let the people go. And you shall say to Pharaoh, "Thus said God: 'Israel is my son, my firstborn; And I say to you, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your son, your firstborn.' " (Exodus 4:21-23) Before Moshe confronted Pharaoh for the first time, before any of the first nine plagues, God told Moshe how the story would end. The tenth plague was, in fact, the first to be foretold, and theoretically Moshe warned Pharaoh, from the outset, that this would be the consequence if he did not cooperate. When we note that the Plague of the Firstborn appears in the text prior to Moshe's return

to Egypt, we may posit that this plague represents basic justice and punishment for Pharaoh's decree, approved and enforced by the Egyptian People, to murder all male Jewish infants. This tenth plague was retribution, "earned" by the Egyptians for their unparalleled, unnecessary cruelty toward the Jewish slaves.

## Ingredients of Jewish Matsa

The Torah states, "So shall you eat it: your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand. You shall eat it in haste. It is a Passover offering to God" (Exodus 12:11)

The idea of haste is a recurrent theme throughout the Exodus story. As Jews have not been able to bring the Passover offering for over 2,000 years now, the Passover holiday that commemorates the Exodus has become inextricably associated in Jewish consciousness with the eating of Matza, the unleavened bread that constitutes their main food over the holiday. And this too is associated with haste. "The people picked up its dough before it could become leavened, their leftovers bound up in their garments upon their shoulders . . . They baked the dough that they took out of Egypt into unleavened cakes, for they could not be leavened, for they were driven from Egypt for they could not delay... (Exodus 12:34,39)

Rabbi Noson Weisz reminds us that "Not only is Matza eaten in commemoration of haste, it is the very embodiment of this quality. Unleavened bread is composed of a dough of plain water and flour with absolutely no added ingredients.

In order to be ritually acceptable to carry out the commandment of eating Matza, the dough must be in the oven within 18 minutes of the first contact of the flour with the water. Any piece of dough that does not make it in time is automatically rejected as chametz - i.e. dough that has risen and therefore does not qualify as unleavened.

Whoever has watched the baking of Passover Matza walks away with the realization that the main ingredient in its preparation is haste." In his most famous work, "Mesilat Yeshorim," Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto describes the steps of character formation and development that need to be taken by Jews who want a close relationship with God. The very first step he describes is associated with haste. In the second testament of the Bible, "hasting" is in connection with the discovering of the Messiah ( Luke 2:16)

## STUDY, LEARN AND TEACH

**R**abbi Baruch Leff said: What's the difference between belief and knowledge? I have never visited Australia. Yet, I have a strong belief that it exists. I don't believe there is a worldwide hoax about its existence. I have been in Israel, though, so I KNOW that Israel exists. Through teaching about God's existence and His involvement in the world, my belief in God becomes stronger and stronger until I can come close to actual knowledge.

William Glasser, Ph.D., once conducted a study in which he concluded that people learn 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they see and hear, 70% of what is discussed with others, 80% of what they experience, but 95% of what they teach to others.

The Talmud (Taanit 7a) said it first: "Rabbi Chanina said: 'I have learned much from my teachers, from my colleagues even more, but from my students I have learned the most.'"

The Torah instructor is really instructing him/herself through his/her teaching.

For the Jewish tradition learning Torah and teaching Torah are not two separate commandments. Rather, you have not fulfilled your obligation within the realm of Torah study if you do not teach.

**So, learn a lot. Study a lot. But don't forget to teach it to others.**

## SILVER ON YOUR GLASS

**A** man once became rich and his lifestyle changed. Previously, he gave charity, cared for others and helped them as much as he could. Now he had become hardhearted and miserly. He cared only for himself and never had time for others anymore. One day he was visited by a famous rabbi. The rich man showed off his beautiful home and boasted to the rabbi about his great wealth. The rabbi called him to the window. Pointing to the outside, the rabbi asked, "What do you see?"

"I see poor people passing by trying to earn a living," he replied.

Walking over to a large mirror the rabbi told the rich man to look in. "Now what do you see?" Asked the rabbi.

"I see myself, of course," he replied, wondering what the rabbi was aiming at.

"I don't understand," said the rabbi. "The window and the mirror are made of glass. So why, when you look through the window, you see the poor people outside but when you look at the mirror, you see only yourself!"

"The reason is simple!" Said the rich man. "The mirror has a silver coating which prevents you from seeing through. However, the window has no silver coating, so you can see through."

"Exactly!" The rabbi nodded. "It seems that when the silver gets in the way all you see is yourself! Maybe you'd be better off without the silver!"

The rich man now got the message. He promised not to let the "silver" get in the way. That he would see and feel the pain of others and again give charity as before.

## TEACHING TORAH TO CHILDREN

The following sayings of our Talmudic sages indicate the importance of teaching children Torah:

**"The world endures only because of the breath of school children, for their breath is without sin."**

Another saying,

**"One may not interrupt the study of schoolchildren even for the construction of the Holy Temple."**

The Talmud says,

**"A city that has no school in which children are learning Torah will not endure."**

## EDITOR

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## Haftara

# Jeremiah 46:13-46:28

**PARASHA:** Pharaoh does not want to repent and to let God's people go... Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Take care that you do not see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die." (Exodus 10:28). Egypt will receive his punishment, not only by the plagues but also an exile far from Egypt.

**HAFTARAH:** Announces the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon upon Egypt: "This is the message the L-RD spoke to Jeremiah the prophet about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to attack Egypt." (Jeremiah 46:13).

Even though Egypt has been a great nation, with a great army, they will not resist the Babylonian invasion, the L-rd has decided to give Egypt to the Babylonian: "Why will your warriors be laid low? They cannot stand, for the L-RD will push them down. They will stumble repeatedly; they will fall over each other." (Jeremiah 46:15-16).

Egypt will go to Exile, they will not live anymore in their country, even great cities like Memphis will be without its original inhabitant. "Pack your belongings for exile, you who live in Egypt, for Memphis will be laid waste and lie in ruins without inhabitant. Egypt is a beautiful heifer, but a gadfly is coming against her from the north." (Jeremiah 46:19-20). Today the people living in Egypt are not descendents of the ancient Egyptians.

What happened to Egypt is presented by the prophet as a punishment from God: The L-RD Almighty, the G-d of Israel, says: "I am about to bring punishment on Amon god of Thebes, on Pharaoh, on Egypt and her gods and her kings, and on those who rely on Pharaoh." (Jeremiah 46:25)

Even though G-d will punish also Israel for her sin He will not destroy her completely: "Do not fear, O Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, O Israel. I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid... "Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished." (Jeremiah 46:27-28)

## Besorat Yeshua

# Mark 14:32-44

**PARASHA:** Moses announces the last plague, the death of the firstborn of Egypt. "Moses said, "Thus says the L-RD: About midnight I will go out through Egypt. Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the female slave who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the livestock. Then there will be a loud cry throughout the whole land of Egypt, such as has never been or will ever be again. But not a dog shall growl at any of the Israelites—not at people, not at animals—so that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. " (Exodus 11:4-7). Even though Moses has said that no one from the Israelites will die, there is a great anguish during this special night.

**BESORAH:** Yeshua go to Gethsemane for a special night of prayer and anguish: They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." (Mark 14:32)

Moses took with him Aaron and Joshua to perform his ministry and miracles in the Besorah Yeshua also took with him his most intimate disciples: "He took with him Peter and James and John" (Mark 14:33).

The last night of the presence of the Israelites in Egypt was a night of prayer, and the night of the sacrifice of the lamb, Yeshua knew that he was himself the sacrifice, the cup of the anger of God which is served at Passover but not drunk by anyone, only the mashiach can drink it : "And said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." (Mark 14:34-36). But finally Yeshua accepted to drink this cup of suffering and sacrifice even though the disciples did not understand what was special on that night.

