

Many people ask, in the period of Creation, was חושך *choshech* [darkness] created or did it exist merely as the absence of light? We prove that even darkness was a creation of G-d by reciting the Beracha of *Yotzer Ohr U'vorei Choshech* [He forms light and creates darkness].

In our parasha we are given a greater dimension to the concept of darkness. HaShem says to Moshe, “Stretch out your hand toward the heavens, and for three days there will be darkness upon the land of Egypt,...”. [Shemot 10:21]. Rashi quotes a Midrash that the darkness was tangible, and that during the final three days of the plague, no Egyptian was able to move. Seforno adds that the darkness was so thick that it would not allow a candle to be lit or ray of light to cut through it. Ralbag further adds that the darkness went into the Egyptians’ nostrils and mouths, making it hard for them to breathe. It was a miracle that they even survived.

Meanwhile, during the Egyptians’ dreadful pain and suffering the Torah stresses, *ULechol Yisrael Haya Ohr Bemoshé’votam*, “And for all Bnei Yisrael there was light in their dwellings”. [Shemot 10:23]. The Ohr HaChayim explains that even in the homes of the Egyptians, where darkness was everywhere, when a Jew entered there was light. The Torah Temima poses two questions on this, “How can one imagine that there was darkness in the room for one and not for the other? And if the sun did not come out for three days then G-d must have altered the order of creation which had established the sun to rise every 24 hours, and G-d promised that “Day and Night shall not cease” [Bereishit 8:22]. To which the Torah Temima answers, that the plague was NOT a visible darkness all around Egypt, but rather, the Egyptians were stricken with severe eye illness [cataracts?].

The Midrash Aggada [Bo:10] states the we were instructed to “borrow” as many riches from the Egyptians as we could, but the Egyptians would hide their precious jewels in cracks of their walls and then deny possessing any at home. During the darkness, which did not affect our people, we entered their homes and looked for the hiding places of these jewels. When they later denied having them, we said that we saw A and B in x and y places. We pointed out that we could have taken them, but instead we gave the Egyptians an opportunity to “lend them”, as a fulfillment of G-d’s promise to Avraham Avinu, “And afterwards they will leave with great wealth.” [Bereishit 15:14]

One of the goals of the plagues was to teach the Egyptians and, through them, the world at large, the basics in the belief in One G-d. The Makka of darkness had a central role in reaching that goal.

May we be inspired to look for the “light” in our daily lives.