

Shabbat Times

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London	16:38	17:44	Cambridge	16:32	17:47
Manchester	16:38	17:48	Leeds	16:34	17:45
Birmingham	16:40	17:54	Liverpool	16:41	17:57
Oxford	16:39	17:53	Jerusalem	16:38	17:52

SHABBAT



תנועת בני עקיבא
BNEI AKIVA UK

LASHEM שבת לה'

פרשת בו
PARASHAT BO

The most widely distributed weekly Torah periodical written by our youth in the United Kingdom.

מכות בכורות?

This week's Parshah contains the last three plagues. Miraculously, these plagues only affected the Egyptians, whilst the Jews were left unscathed. The final and by far worst plague was "מכות בכורות – Death of the firstborns". The Passuk states: "It was at the middle of the night that Hashem struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Paroh who sits on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who is in the dungeon, and every firstborn of livestock". This plague caused Paroh to change his mind and let the Jewish people go. The question is why this plague was chosen by Hashem to inflict on the Egyptians?

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin in his book on the Parshah: 'Torah Lights', brings an amazing answer to this by quoting an idea expressed by Rav Kook. Rav Kook quotes a Gemara in Sanhedrin (Daf נט.) which asks how we know that even an idolater who engrosses himself in Torah is worthy of respect like a Kohen Gadol? The Gemara answers that the passuk says: "אשר ינעשה אתם האדם וחיי בהם" – a man should keep them and live by them". As the Passuk says that "a man" should keep the laws and not just someone of higher stature, like a Kohen Gadol, we see how anyone even an idolater can be like a Kohen Gadol if he learns Torah and performs good deeds. Rav Kook learns from this how it is not our genealogy that matters, but rather it is the merit of our actions that really defines our character.

Rabbi Riskin explains how throughout the Torah, Hashem emphasises how it is not our genealogy but merit that makes us true leaders. The Torah does this by constantly preventing firstborns from automatically inheriting their rights. An example of this is Eisav, who despite being the firstborn was not given the firstborn blessing which went to his younger and more meritorious brother Yaakov. It was Yaacov who became the leader of the Jewish people. Another example is Yishmael and Yitzchak. Rabbi Riskin says that Hashem portrays the death of the firstborn as the ultimate plague because He wants to show Pharaoh and the Egyptians that just because they were born into a powerful nation, this does not mean that they will automatically become leaders who can rule over others. By killing all the firstborns Hashem proves to the Egyptians that the fact they were born first does not give them automatic precedence over others. Leaders should be chosen based on merit and character alone. We can learn from this message that rather than focussing on our own self-importance, we should concentrate on improving our own character and deeds.

Josh Zeltser is in Shevet Lehava and was sgan on Ma'apilim Machane 5777

Coming up....

- Limmud continues next week at the London Bayit on Monday starting at 7:30
- Drash and Dram this month is on the 9th February, "from single cask to blends"
- Ha'irgun season continues next week with Mill Hill and Chigwell

Shabbat debate

Every week we will be writing weekly debates to discuss over Shabbat. The debates will then be continued on Facebook, on Sunday at 2pm.

Do you think the plagues were for the benefit for the Jews or punishment for the Egyptians?

BNEI AKIVA
NATIONWIDE HA'IRGUN TOUR

UK INVASION 2K17

MONTH	DATE	LOCATION
JANUARY	18	BOREHAMWOOD
	21	SALFORD FFN
	21	EDGWARE
	25	BUSHEY
	25	LEEDS
	25	KINLOSS
FEBRUARY		MARCH
	4	PINNER
	4	WOODSIDE PARK
	4	WHITEFIELD
	4	HENDON
	4	GOLDERS GREEN
	25	SALFORD
	31	CHIGWELL
	31	MINI MACHAME
	11	MILL HILL
	11	TBC BARNEY

E-MAIL: ZECHARIAHS@BANK.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION



Some photos from Leeds Ha'Irgun from last Shabbat



Power of Youth

Belief in the youth is central to any society's development. Youth empowerment is at the core of a healthy society. At the heart of education is cultivating their belief in themselves and, endowing them with self-confidence. Beatrix Potter once remarked, "Thank goodness I was never sent to school; it would have rubbed off some of the originality." Indeed, it is a shame society – and education – often stifle the youth, instead of empowering them.

In our *parasha*, the showdown between Moshe and Paroh reaches its crescendo. With *Makkat Bechorot* – the plague of the first born – Paroh releases his slave-nation, and Bnei Yisrael go free.

From the onset, the Egyptian first-born were set as Hashem's target. Before even arriving in Egypt, Moshe is commanded to warn Paroh of the impending decree against his people; Israel is likened to Hashem's first-born, and this is contrasted to that of Paroh (Shemot 4:22-23):

“So said Hashem, My firstborn child is Israel ... Send out My child [Bnei Yisrael] that they may serve me. But as you refuse to send them; behold, I shall kill your firstborn son.”

The other nine plagues are not mentioned here. Surely Paroh should have been warned in the chronological order that the plagues were carried-out; why is only the last one singled-out? This seems to indicate that *Makkat Bechorot* was destined to occur, regardless of the other plagues and Paroh's reaction to them.

Makkat Bechorot is different to the other plagues. Its goal is not to pressure Paroh to reconsider and free Bnei Yisrael, rather it represents the essence of the battle between Paroh and God. This plague is unavoidable, it is the direct result of Paroh's behaviour; the consequence of the destructive *weltanschauung* of the Paroh-esque society.

The theme of children is central to the narrative of the suffering and redemption from Egypt. In the initial phases of his crushing oppression Paroh decrees for the death of the children, sending new born babies to their graves (1:16,22). Now, as the people prepare for their exodus from Egypt, they are told specifically to engage the children in the grandeur of the redemption (10:2):

Continued on next page.....

The Week that Was...

Last Shabbat was the Leeds Ha'irgun, well done to all those involved!!

Shabbat Shalom to all those at the Golders Green, Pinner and Whitefield Ha'irgun

Continued from previous page

“That you may relate in the ears of your children and your children's children that I made mockery of Egypt, and My signs that I placed among them.”

Moreover, there is a specific *mitzvah* to captivate the children in the story of the exodus every year, when we celebrate the Seder Night (13:8):

“You shall tell your children on that day, saying, ‘It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt.’

Why are the children such a central theme of the narrative? Why are they such a fundamental component to the redemption story? Why is it so important to engage them in retelling - and reliving –the events every year?

The Egypt of the Parohs is a place where creativity, introspection and free expression are subdued. All that is important in Egypt is the completion of the workload, and filling the daily quota. It is a world where everyone lives just to get by; where success is determined only subjectively, in comparison to the success and failure of others. In Egypt the human production line charges along as fast as that of the bricks. In Egypt you cannot be yourself, you cannot be free.

In this kingdom of despair, where everyone is measured-up by standardised testing and is enslaved to the mechanics of advancing our labour, who suffers the most? The children. The youth. In such a cynical and corrupt system, the youth lose hope; they begin to believe that the world cannot change, that they must work within the system or be considered failures. In Egypt, the youth lose their inner self, their aspirations and their belief in themselves. In Egypt, the children are killed – by Paroh.

