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# HEMDAT YAMIM

## PARASHAT HASHAVUA

Bo, 4 Shvat 5775

### Good Darkness Chases Away False Light

Harav Yosef Carmel

We find several explanations in *Chazal* for the unique contribution (other than a show of Hashem's strength and punishment to Egypt) of the plague of darkness.

The Midrash Aggada (Bo 10) says that there were rich and wicked Jews who cooperated with the Egyptian oppression of their brothers, and Hashem decided to kill them along with the Egyptians. Had Hashem killed them at a normal time, the Egyptians would have said that the plagues affected the Jews the way they affected the Egyptians. Therefore, during the plague of darkness was the opportune time for the demise of these Jews, so that the matter could go unnoticed by the Egyptians.

The same source cites another possible benefit of this plague. The Israelites were instructed to borrow as many riches from the Egyptians as they could, but the Egyptians were likely to deny possessing as many gold and silver jewels and utensils as they did. During the darkness, which did not affect the Jews, they looked for hiding places of these objects in the Egyptians' houses, so that when they later denied having them, the Jews said that they saw *A* and *B* in *X* and *Y* places. The Jews pointed out that they could have taken them, but instead the Egyptians were being given an opportunity to lend them, which they indeed ended up doing to a very broad degree. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive, as "these and those are the words of the living G-d." Indeed Rashi cites both.

There is a third explanation. The darkness was a *midda k'neged midda* (particularly fitting) punishment. The P'sikta (11) tells a story that apparently occurred with variations several times. An Egyptian would grab a Jew and make him stand still (at the threat of execution) with candles burning down on his head, while the Egyptian was eating.

We will try to light up the darkness with the help of a prophecy by Yeshaya about Egypt (see Yeshaya 19:1, 18). Hashem promised to smite the idols of Egypt and said that the city of Cheres (meaning, sun) would turn into *heres* (destruction). That city was a center of worship to the sun. Yirmiya (43:13) also speaks about the destruction of the Egyptians' monuments in their city of Beit Shemesh (the House of the Sun), which the Greeks called Heliopolis. The center of worship known to the Egyptians as *Anu*, which in *Tanach* is called *On* (see Bereishit 41:50), was central to the Egyptians. The priests based in this city set the Egyptian calendar, which was solar.

Based on this background, we can suggest that the plague of darkness was intended to show the Egyptians that even the sun, with all its power, is under the dominion of Hashem. Hashem may decide to allow its light to spread, and He may decide that its light will have no effect. One of the goals of the plagues was to teach the Egyptians and, through them, the world at large the basics of belief in one G-d. The Plague of Darkness had a central role in reaching that goal.

Let us pray that all who live in the world will recognize Hashem's Kingdom and realize that all the powers of nature serve Him.

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by Rav Daniel Mann

## Using a Shabbat Clock for an Urn

**Question:** My hot water urn has a Shabbat setting, in which the water is heated at a constant level and the switch for boiling the water is disabled. The socket where I plug it in is on a Shabbat clock that is off at night. When it goes on in the morning, the water that has become cold heats back up. Is that permitted?

**Answer:** Although we accept the opinions among *Rishonim* that it is forbidden to reheat boiled water that has cooled down (Shulchan Aruch and Rama, Orach Chayim 318:4,15), you would not be considered cooking since this is done automatically.

The question is whether your setup violates the Rabbinical prohibitions of *shehiya* or *chazara*. *Shehiya*, leaving food on the flame from before Shabbat, is sometimes forbidden, out of a concern one will raise the heat. It is permitted if the heat source is covered in a way that reduces its efficiency (Shulchan Aruch, OC 253:1) or (likely) regarding a non-adjustable heat source (Hilchot Shabbat (Eider), p. 340). However, neither lenient factor exists here (one can raise the heat from Shabbat to normal mode). It is usually permitted to use this urn when the water has already been boiled, as further boiling causes unwanted evaporation (see Shulchan Aruch *ibid.*). Your case could possibly be more problematic since one may desire the extra heat to heat the cold water.

*Chazara*, returning food on Shabbat that had been removed from the heat, has more stringency, including that it is forbidden on a normal, adjustable heat source even if raising the temperature is detrimental (*ibid.* 2). Is your case considered *chazara*, considering that the heat is returned to function by a machine rather than a person? The answer may depend on the reason of the stringency of *chazara*. Rabbeinu Tam says it is a heightened concern one will raise the heat since the food was returned after time off the flame. The Ran says that returning cooked food to a heat source can be confused with cooking. In this case, Rabbeinu Tam's reason seems to apply, while the Ran's does not since you do nothing on Shabbat.

Let us examine discussion about a parallel case. The Pri Megadim (OC, EA 253:41) and the Chazon Ish (OC 37:21) wonder about the permissibility of various cases similar to what the Rama (OC 253:5) allows. A non-Jew may put, on Shabbat morning, cold cooked food near a fireplace, which a non-Jew will be permitted to light due to the great cold, thereby also heating the food. Why are we not concerned that after the fireplace is on, a Jew will stoke the coals? The Pri Megadim suggests that this must rely on the opinion that reheating liquids is permitted, and so too the reheating is not significant enough to prompt one to stoke the coals. The Chazon Ish gives a few possible answers. One is that we treat a case where the food is put down when there is no heat as equivalent to *shehiya*. This helps since the Chazon Ish claims elsewhere (37:27) that the concern of raising the flame regarding *shehiya* does not apply to fully cooked food even if it is now cold. On the other hand, reheating cooled water may be worse than reheating other cooked foods (Orchot Shabbat 2:(11)). There is further room for leniency considering that Shabbat started with the urn operating and there was no action since then (see Am Mordechai, Shabbat, p. 51). Still, the Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata (1:40) is stringent when the water has cooled off totally, and the Orchot Shabbat (2:(49)) is uncertain.

Your urn has a feature that provides further grounds for leniency – when the Shabbat mode is on, one cannot raise the heat. This is similar, in some ways, to one who seals an oven where food is heating, which is permitted even though the seal can be removed (Shabbat 18b). It is unclear if the Shabbat-mode button that is deactivated by a simple press is sufficient deterrent (see cases in Orchot Shabbat 2:18-19). It is also unclear if this leniency applies when elements of *chazara* exist (see *ibid.* 55). However, combining this factor along with the aforementioned grounds for leniency, it is not difficult to justify leniency.



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# Ein Ayah

(from the writings of Harav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, z.t.l.)

Bo

## The Relative Values of History and Torah

(condensed from Ein Ayah, Shabbat 1:68)

**Gemara:** Rav Kahana said: When Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yossi became sick, they sent to him [the following message]: “Our master, tell us two or three things that you told us in the name of your father.” He sent back: “This is what Father said: ...” [The teachings were all about the history of the latter part of the Second Commonwealth.]

**Ein Ayah:** There is a difference between the study of Torah, which is fundamental within Judaism, and other areas of study, even those that are necessary. All other areas of study that have practical purposes are of value according to their use and the necessity for them. Exaggerating the value of the subject matter is counter-productive. In contrast, the improvement that Torah makes in one who studies it exceeds the practical value of the knowledge he absorbs by virtue of his involvement in Torah study in and of itself, as the *pasuk* says: “The Torah of his G-d is in his heart” (Tehillim 37:31).

The exact details of national history must be known by some within the nation. The unfolding of events is part of a nation’s heritage, which has a positive impact on the love people have for their nation. However, one cannot compare the value of knowing Jewish history to the value of knowing the intricacies of the Torah. Knowing every detail of the Torah is a special value that emanates from the sanctity of Israel, which separates us from every other nation. That is different from knowledge of national history, which applies to every nation. While it is true that our knowledge of our history is more important than others’ for theirs, that is because of the special role we have in the world.

In summary, knowledge of national history is dear to us, but it is important to be careful to realize that it should not be placed on the same pedestal as the sanctity of the words of Torah. The one exception to this is those historical events which Hashem chose to write directly in the Torah. About these we say that “the words of the servants of the forefathers” are themselves considered words of Torah because the Divine Providence saw fit to include them in the Torah. However, in regard to the basic concept of the recording of events, it must always be remembered that there is a difference between the sacred and the mundane. Then people will not make the mistake of thinking that all matters of Torah are valuable specifically by virtue of their connection to that which is national.

It is important to show that involvement in Torah study is special, beyond the knowledge that it provides. That is why our *beracha* before Torah study is “... to be involved in the words of Torah.” That is not the case regarding history. While our love of the nation makes it important that certain facts about it not be forgotten, that should be done without equating its value to that of Torah.

For that reason, Rabbi Yishmael, who was a repository of historical information transmitted by his father, did not place stress on teaching these matters to his disciples during his lifetime. It was enough that the information would survive, which it did within his mind. It did not pay to waste precious moments of Torah study to share them. However, when he became ill with what was apparently the disease from which he died, and there was a chance that valuable information could become lost for eternity, his disciples requested of him to relay certain matters of history to them.

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of all those that fell in the war for our homeland.



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# P'ninat Mishpat

## Can the Old Window Stay?

(based on Sho'el U'meishiv II:IV:79)

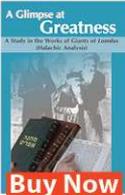
[This responsum is uncharacteristically low on halachic sources and its final recommendation seems to be based more on "common sense" than on rigorous halachic analysis. It is telling that it concludes as follows: "This is what appears to my humble opinion without looking at books."]

**Case:** Reuven and Shimon had adjacent houses on identical properties, but Reuven's house extended beyond Shimon's because Shimon had insufficient money for further construction. 35 years ago, Reuven's house burned down, and when he rebuilt it according to its previous size, he built a large window facing the empty section of Shimon's property. 20 years later, Reuven died, and recently Reuven's inheritors sold the property to Ephrayim Shmuel. Many years ago, Shimon died, and Shimon's inheritors subsequently sold it to Moshe Elazar. Moshe Elazar extended the house to the length of Ephrayim Shmuel's and left four *amot* space in front of the latter's window. Now, Moshe Elazar is demanding of Ephrayim Shmuel to seal up the window, claiming that Reuven built it without authorization. Witnesses state that there was no window prior to the fire. One witness says that Shimon took Reuven to *beit din* over this, and *beit din* ruled that he had no right to such a window. It is not known if subsequently the two compromised, Reuven paid Shimon for rights, or Shimon relinquished his claim. Ephrayim Shmuel says that since he bought the house with the window from the inheritors, *beit din* should extend claims they could have made for the inheritors to him as their successor.

**Ruling:** If Moshe Elazar, the plaintiff, had not brought a witness about a *din Torah* regarding the window, we would have said that Shimon had not complained because he was unaware of his right to do so at a time when he had not built on that section of the property. Although the Netivot Hamishpat states that one can always protest about a permanent window, Shimon may have been unaware of that halacha. (See Tosafot, Bava Metzia 16, who says that it is sufficient for there to be one opinion holding a different way in order for a litigant to say that he was unaware of the halacha.)

Although we would not have initiated this line of defense if Shimon were alive, we would have raised it on behalf of his inheritors, as they are likely to have been unaware of what transpired. If so, Reuven's side would not have had a *chazaka* on the use of the window. The fact that Moshe Elazar kept his building four *amot* away from the window could have been because he did not know the halacha, as opposed to relinquishing his rights. Even though a witness said that there had been a *din Torah* on the matter, we could say that the *din Torah* had ruled that he had to close the window, but Shimon had just not succeeded in having it enforced.

Why don't we say that we make the claim on behalf of Reuven's successors that he got Shimon to agree to the window? Since one witness says that there was a *din Torah* whose ruling went against Shimon, even though one witness does not suffice, it still strengthens Shimon's side enough to give the advantage to his successors over Reuven's. Had Reuven elicited a concession from Shimon, he should have received confirmation in writing. Although one does not usually guard documents for more than three years, after a *din Torah*, he should have kept it. In any case, the claims of those who bought from Shimon's family are stronger, and the window should be sealed.



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