

I

As I survey the shul this morning I am fairly certain that a good percentage of you decided to go out and buy a powerball ticket this week, in advance of the Thursday night drawing. I'm also fairly certain that no one in this room is a winner. [If you are, may I remind you that we are still looking for a Kiddush sponsor for next week.] That being said, I also don't see too many downtrodden faces. You bought your ticket, you hoped to win, but you knew you wouldn't. The aftermath of that conclusion is hardly dramatic.

You may have heard the story of L.A. philanthropist Shlomo Rechnitz, who decided to purchase 18,000 tickets for the drawing, one for each of his nursing home employees. Early Friday morning, the world heard about his generosity when news stations started reporting that one of his nurses had actually one with the ticket he bought her. It was heralded a true act of Chessed, a great Kiddush hashem!

However, a few hours later, it came out that in fact, the woman's son had called his mom and told her that her numbers were winners, but the son was only pranking his poor mother. The nursing home was already celebrating, [the woman had already lied like all other winners and said she would continue going to work every day], but in truth she had won nothing. When Rechnitz was informed of the prank, he said but one word: "DISPICABLE!"

You see, to loose in Powerball is to be in the majority, but to think you had won, only then to have reality set in that you didn't, we can only imagine how painful that is.

II

In the darkness of night, Pharaoh fears that his own son will be killed in the plague of the first born. Desperate for the Makkah to end he runs through the

streets of Goshen, knocking on every door, looking for Moshe and Aharon. (See Rashi 12:31) When he finally finds them, he implores them to make it stop! He begs them to leave! But Moshe and Aharon tell Pharaoh they won't leave until morning, after all they were busy celebrating the first Pesach of Jewish History.

If you pause and analyze the context of the "leil shimurim", the timing makes very little sense. Time and again, Pharaoh has granted permission only to renege. You would think that the Jewish people had learned not to get their hopes up by this point. Yet here we find them, well within the borders of Egypt, eating the Pesach, drinking the wine, leaning like free men in close vicinity of their taskmasters! Why were they celebrating on that night? Why couldn't the celebration wait for the far banks of the Yam Suf?

III

The stark difference between the first half of Yetziat Mitzraim and the second, between Parshat Vaeira and Parshat Bo, is that everything that happened in last week's Parsha happened in the light of **day**, while everything that happens in Bo, happens in the darkness of **night**.

When Moshe first confronts Pharaoh at the Nile, he meets him at morning. When he and Aharon deliver the first half of the plagues, they happen at day. The Egyptians see clearly how their water is red, but not of the Jews. Their cattle have passed, but not the cattle of the Jews. "...That Hashem will distinguish between Egypt and Israel."

As we turn to Parshat Bo, everything seems dark. The locusts cover the sky with such great numbers that they darken the earth beneath them. The plague of darkness, and the death of the first born also at night. The Pesach is eaten at night, and indeed it is the "leil shimurim" - the night of freedom and redemption.

But this is about more than visibility. Everything that happens in Parshat Vaeira, everything that happens at day plays out on a national level. The punishments are directed at all of Egypt's people, to all of its crops, to all of its fields. But with the darkness of night comes vulnerability and isolation. "No man could see his friend" - in the singular. The plague of the first born attacks, not the

nation, but each and every family on its own. The Korban Pesach is eaten, not by a free people, but families preparing for their respective futures.

IV

This distinction between night and day, between national and personal narratives, is the answer to our question. The Mitzvah of *Sippur Yetziat Mitzraim* and of *V'higadditat l'vinacha* both emerge from the limitations of darkness. On the day that followed the Jewish people would celebrate their freedom. Together they would sing at Yam Suf, one nation on the banks of the sea. But the night before, in the peace and quiet of their own homes, fathers and mothers addressed sons and daughters. Families sat and reflected on their sorrows and their hopes of realizing the divine promise given to their patriarchs. Surely in one sense, the night before freedom was too early to celebrate, but at the same time it offered a unique moment of privacy for each family to share.

V

Much like the Exodus story, we celebrate the milestones of our lives in both the public sphere and the private. We have birthday parties at the office and throw a community Kiddush to celebrate a bar or bat mitzvah. We might take our sons to the Kotel to put on Tefillin for the first time, or invite cousins of an old friend to our daughter's wedding because... well because they invited us.

Yet, with all the glitz and glamour of the public celebration we lose out on the precious opportunity to celebrate for ourselves. That celebration is quite different. Not only is the price tag somewhat more manageable, but the tone of the experience is dramatically different as well.

I saw a cartoon recently of a chef leaving the restaurant kitchen to visit the table of two patrons. He looked at the man and woman and said: "I hope your meal was satisfactory. I haven't seen you take any pictures yet?"

It is with greater and greater ease that we share our smachot with the entire world, and with that it becomes harder and harder to celebrate with those who matter most. The night of Pesach was a much smaller affair than what was in store the next day, but it was the never ending family discussion, that we continue with our children to this very day.

שמות פרשת בא פרק יב

(יג) וְהָיָה הַדָּם לְכֶם לְאֹת עַל הַבְּתִימִים אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶם שָׂם וְרָאִיתִי אֶת־הַדָּם וּפָסַחְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם וְלֹא־יְהִי בְכֶם נֶגֶף לְמִשְׁחִית בְּהַכְתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:
(יד) וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לְכֶם לְזִכְרוֹן וְחֻגְתֶּם אֹתוֹ חֹג לִיקְוֹק לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם חֻקַּת עוֹלָם תִּחְגְּלוּ:

(ל) וַיִּקַּם פְּרַעֲהוּ לַיְלָה הוּא וְכָל־עַבְדָּיו וְכָל־מִצְרַיִם וַתְּהִי צָעֲקָה גְדֹלָה בְּמִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֵין בֵּית אֲשֶׁר אֵין־שָׂם מֵת:
(לא) וַיִּקְרָא לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן לַיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר קוּמוּ צְאוּ מִתּוֹךְ עַמִּי גַם־אֶתֶם גַּם־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּלְכוּ עַבְדוּ אֶת־יְקוֹק כְּדַבְּרֵיכֶם:

(מב) לֵיל שְׁמַרִים הוּא לִיקְוֹק לְהוֹצִיאֵם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הוּא־הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה לִיקְוֹק שְׁמַרִים לְכָל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְדֹרֹתָם: פ

רש"י שמות פרשת בא פרק יב:לא

ויקרא למשה ולאהרן לילה - מגיד שהיה מחזרט על פתחי העיר וצועק היכן משה שרוי היכן אהרן שרוי:

רמב"ן שמות פרשת בא פרק יב

...והיה יום גדול, ומשם נסעו ביד רמה ומשה בראשם, כמו שנאמר (במדבר לג ג) ויסעו מרעמסס בחדש הראשון בחמשה עשר יום לחדש ממחרת הפסח יצאו בני ישראל ביד רמה לעיני כל מצרים. והכתוב שאמר (דברים טז א) הוציאך ה' אלהיך ממצרים לילה, כי מעת שפטרם פרעה יקראו יוצאים:
... וכך אמרו בספרי (ראה קכח) והלא לא יצאו אלא ביום, שנאמר (במדבר לג ג) ממחרת הפסח יצאו בני ישראל, אלא מלמד שנגאלו מבלילה. ובגמרא במסכת ברכות (ט א) הכל מודים כשנגאלו לא נגאלו אלא בלילה, שנאמר (דברים טז א) הוציאך ה' אלהיך ממצרים לילה, וכשיצאו לא יצאו אלא ביום, שנאמר ממחרת הפסח יצאו בני ישראל ביד רמה לעיני כל מצרים.
ויש אומרים שיצאו ממצרים בלילה, ומארץ מצרים שהיא רעמסס ביום, כי רבים מהם יושבים בעיר מצרים, ויצאו בלילה ונאספו עם אחיהם ברעמסס.
ואינו נכון, כי הכתוב אמר (פסוק כב) ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר, שהיו אסורים לצאת כלל מן הבתים בלילה, וכך אמרו במכילתא (פסחא יג) ויקרא למשה ולאהרן לילה ויאמר קומו צאו, אמר לו משה כך נצטוינו ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר, וכי גנבים אנחנו שנצא בלילה, לא נצא אלא ביד רמה לעיני כל מצרים.