



Torah Insights this week is sponsored in honor of the Bar Mitzvah of Noam Gersten

A few years ago, the father of a seven-year-old boy posed the following question on behalf of his young son who was learning Sefer Shmos in school: Why was it necessary for Hashem to bring all ten Makkos. Hashem told Moshe to tell Paro from the beginning, "You shall say to Paro, 'So said Hashem, My firstborn son is Yisroel. So I say to you, send out My son that he may serve Me, and if you refuse to send him out, behold, I shall kill your firstborn son'." (Shemos 4:22-23)

The Panim Yafos explains that the answer is found in the beginning of Parshas Bo, "In order that you may tell over in the ears of your son and your son's son that I made a laughingstock of Mitzrayim, and My signs that I placed within their midst, in order that you may know that I am Hashem". (Shemos 10:2). According to the simple understanding, the primary purpose of these miraculous plagues, signs and wonders was in order for future generations to relay the entire narrative with all of its details when fulfilling the Mitzvah of Sipur Yetziyas Mitzrayim at the Seder on the first night of Pesach. As commanded at the end of Parshas Bo, "And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt...for with a strong hand Hashem removed you from Mitzrayim'". (Shemos 13:8-9)

As the Gemara says, "In every generation a person must see himself as if he came out of Mitzrayim" (Pesachim 116b). As it says, 'and you will give signs...and a name will be made for you like this day' (Nechemia 9:10), 'this day' refers to the day of Yetziyas Mizrayim as the Torah says, "Remember 'this day' that you came out of Egypt" (Shemos 13:3). Notice that it does not say 'Remember the day you came out of Egypt', rather it uses the phrase 'this day'. This is why we are commanded each and every year until the Geulah Shlayma to feel and act as if we are leaving Mitzrayim on that very day, the first night and day of Pesach, as every year on that day the light of the Yetziyas Mitzrayim gets reactivated and awakens. As we say in the Navi, "And the faith of your times will strengthen salvation" (Yeshayahu 36:6). 'And the faith of your times' refers to the Moadim, the festivals, such as the festival of Pesach, 'will strengthen salvation', meaning that each year on the night of Pesach, the degree of our faith in what happened on that day in Mitzrayim will be the degree to which our salvation will be strengthened, measure for measure. The reason for all the Makkos and miracles is for the sake of having a substantial narrative to tell the next generation on the night of the Seder.

As we look forward on the Jewish calendar, before we get to Pesach, we see Purim coming up in Adar. Although we celebrate the holiday of Purim in Adar and juxtapose the Geulah of Purim with the Geulah of Pesach, even when the Jewish year has two Adars, it is important to remember that the 'Nahafoch Hu' miracle of Purim (where Mordechai rose from the literal ashes and sackcloth to becoming the viceroy of Persia and Haman went from the viceroy to being hung on his own gallows that were intended for Mordechai) actually happened on Pesach. More specifically, it happened on Yom Tov Sheini Shel Galiyus Pesach, as Purim takes place in Shushan during the Diaspora.

This explains an important part of the Purim story found in the Megillah. Why did Esther fast for exactly three days? On one hand, if there was an urgency, then she should have pleaded to Achashveirosh immediately. On the other hand, if there was no rush, because the doomsday date of Haman was eleven months away, why was the date to approach Achashveirosh only three days later? More importantly, at the first feast where Esther is together with Achashveriosh and Haman, why doesn't Esther make her claims against Haman at that moment? Why does she push everything off with another feast for the following day? "The King said... 'what is your request, it shall be granted to you, and what is your petition...it shall be fulfilled. So, Esther answered and said, 'My request and my petition, if I have won the King's favor and if it please the King to grant my request and to perform my petition....'" (Esther 5:6-8). The king said he would grant her any request and she says come back tomorrow?!?!

One approach is that Esther understood that 'the light of the Yetziyas Mitzrayim gets activated on Pesach'. She organized that the request would come on Pesach day, but at the first feat she did not perceive any confirmation from Heaven that salvation was imminent, so she postponed her request until the following day of Pesach. That night the Jews were no longer fasting and recited the HaGadah along with the eating of Matzah and Marror and Four Cups of Wine. 'And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of this'.' As Purim is the festival of Torah Sh'B'Al Peh, it was specifically the Second Seder night in Shushan that activated the miracle that began at midnight when Achashveriosh couldn't sleep, continued with Mordechai's royal ride around Shushan, indicating to Esther that the moment had come to 'point the finger' at Haman, which led to his hanging on the gallows he had just built the night before in his own backyard.

May our reading of Yetziyas Mitzrayim this week in Parshas Bo and the coming festivals of Purim and Pesach this year help us to finally activate the Geulah Shlayma, speedily in our days.