



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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Among the many important passages in our *Sedra* this week, we read the *pesukim* related to *Makat Choshech*- the plague of darkness.

The *Torah* tells us:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה נָטָה יָדְךָ עַל-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ
עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּמָּשׁ חֹשֶׁךְ: וַיְט מֹשֶׁה אֶת-יָדוֹ עַל-
הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ אֲפֹלָה בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁלֹשַׁת יָמִים:
לֹא-רָאוּ אִישׁ אֶת-אָחִיו וְלֹא-קָמוּ אִישׁ מִתַּחַת יָדוֹ שְׁלֹשַׁת
יָמִים וְלֹכֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אֹר בְּמוֹשְׁבֵיהֶם:

Then Hashem said to Moshe, "Hold out your arm toward the sky that there may be darkness upon the land of Egypt, a darkness so dense that it can be touched." Moshe held out his arm toward the sky and thick darkness descended upon all the land of Egypt for three days. People could not see one another, and for three days no one could get up from where he was; but the Jewish People had light in their dwellings...

The *Degel Machane Ephraim*, *Rebbe Moshe Chaim Ephraim of Sudilkov zy'a*, the grandson of the *Baal Shem Tov* , points out that our

meforshim explain that there was no physical difference between what physically was unfolding throughout *Mitzrayim* and what physically transpired within the Jewish homes. The actual darkness was equally dense throughout all of Egypt.

However, explains the *Degel Machane Ephraim*, what was different is that the Jewish people saw light, even within this intense utter darkness! What was the source of this heightened ability to see and perceive light even within total darkness? The *Rebbe* explains that since the Jewish people kept *Shabbat*, which is a source of light and spiritual clarity, the light of *Shabbat* remained with them, and sustained and protected them from the danger of the utter darkness that had descended upon all of Egypt.

Indeed, *Shabbat* is a source of great light and protection to the Jewish people, and has both identified , kept us together and sustained *Am Yisrael* throughout many periods of darkness, turmoil and tragedy.

The *Netivot Shalom*, the *Slonimer Rebbe zy'a*, explains:

"Shabbat is the source of light for all the days of the week. For on Shabbat a unique Divine light shines forth—a light of rest and of wholeness. One who merits to properly receive the light of Shabbat draws forth from it, illumination for all six days of the workweek."

Similarly, the *gemara* in *Masechet Shabbat (118b)* presents to us the following passage about

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the inherent redemptive power of *Shabbat*:
 אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מִשּׁוּם רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחִי: אֶלְמָלִי
 מְשַׁמְרִין יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנֵי שַׁבָּתוֹת כְּהִלְכָתוֹן – מִיָּד נִגָּאֲלִים,
Rebbi Yochanan said in the name of Rebbi
Shimon ben Yochai: If only the Jewish people
would fully keep two Shabbatot they would
immediately be redeemed.

How exactly are we to understand this teaching, does it mean any two *Shabbatot*, does it mean two successive *Shabbatot*, does it mean every single Jew must keep those two *Shabbatot*?

In a beautiful teaching, the *Piasieczna Rebbe*, *Rebbe Kalonymus Kalmish Schapira zy'a*, explained our *gemara*. The Rebbe taught the first *Shabbat* we must observe fully is *Shabbat* itself. The second *Shabbat* our Sages are speaking of, explained the Rebbe, is the *Shabbat* that we bring into the other seven days of the week. **If we are able to bring the light of *Shabbat* into our week, if we bring the *achdut* we experience on *Shabbat* into our week, if**

we bring the spiritual consciousness and closeness to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* that we feel on *Shabbat* into the rest of our week, then we can indeed redeem our entire week, experience a taste of *geula*.

Yehi Ratzon, during these days filled with so much darkness and confusion, may we merit to appreciate and be guided by the great light that sustains us, the great redemptive light of *Shabbat Kodesh*.... ■



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