



Bo

Freedom From Slavery

The great moment had come: After 210 years of cruel slavery, Hashem was just about to carry out the 10th of the ten plagues, the slaying of the firstborn, following which the Israelites would experience the exodus from Egypt - but how was this to be announced?

Hashem appeared to Moshe, who conveyed the words of God to the people:

כְּחֹצֵת הַלַּיְלָה אֲנִי יוֹצֵא בְּתוֹךְ מִצְרַיִם -

At about midnight, I will come into the midst of Egypt.

The passage goes on to describe how Hashem would carry out this Makah, this plague. But why does it start with: כֹּ - at about? God is telling us: I will do this at approximately midnight. But Hashem doesn't do approximate things. He knows what he's doing - He does *exact* things. So why did Moshe convey the message "כְּחֹצֵת" "at approximately midnight"?

Rashi gives the explanation as presented by our sages in the Gemara, Masechet Brachot. God wouldn't get it wrong, but the Egyptian astrologers might have got it wrong. Once the slaying of the firstborns began, the astrologers would say "He said that it would be at midnight, and the slaying began 5 minutes before, or 5 minutes after."

But would that really matter, after such an impactful event? I think the answer is yes.

Nitpickers often spoil things. Moshe is a great leader, with lots of experience. There were outstanding, wonderful occasions that happened under his leadership – but then there could be comments from people who might not appreciate how outstanding everything was.

Take the example of a simcha, a celebration, where someone might say, "Wasn't that amazing?" And others might say, "Oh, the soup was too salty." Or, "Wasn't that a brilliant speech the person gave?" "Yes, but, his grammar wasn't so good." There are some people for whom nothing is ever perfect enough. There was potential for that to happen with this 10th plague. And that's why Moshe covered himself and Hashem's reputation by saying, "כְּחֹצֵת". At "approximately midnight".

So from Moshe we learn: let us not be amongst the nitpickers. Let us appreciate the greatness of situations. Let us not be the spoilers. And in addition, particularly when it comes to the acts of Hashem, let us always appreciate His greatness. He does indeed always get it right. And thanks to him: Am Yisrael Chai! The Jewish people live. And we will thrive forever.

Shabbat Shalom.