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Parashat Shemot **21 Tevet 5783 – January 14, 2023**

“Hava Nitchakma lo...”, “Let us deal wisely with them...”. Within two verses of a “new king (Pharaoh)” arising in Egypt, this Pharaoh makes harsh decrees against the Jews. Rashi explains; “Let us deal wisely with them...” as a preparation for something specific, a planning phase. Pharaoh is not only planning to deal with the Children of Israel, by sentencing newborn males to be drowned, but Pharaoh is also planning to “deal wisely” or shrewdly with HaShem. While the term “deal wisely” is used as the translation for “Nitchakma”, the word “scheme” might be more appropriate.

Nachmanides (Ramban) says that Pharaoh schemed against them in a way that B’nei Yisrael wouldn’t know until it was too late. Pharaoh decided with his advisors not to kill them by the sword, because that would be a great betrayal, to destroy a nation that had come to the land by invitation of the last Pharaoh. Even the common people wouldn’t give consent to the Pharaoh to do such a crime. Pharaoh then advised that the nation of Israel have become numerous and mighty and would fight back in a great war. Pharaoh continued, saying; they should act cleverly so that the nation of Israel should not feel that the Pharaoh is acting out of hate. Pharaoh then levied heavy taxes upon B’nei Yisrael, and this was the gateway to slavery.

When the nation of Yisrael received the Torah, at Mt. Sinai, the Torah tells us that the sound of the Shofar grew continually stronger. Why did the sound grow stronger? Just as Pharaoh opened a gateway to slavery by starting the taxes, HaShem opened a gateway to freedom with the Torah. As the Torah increased, freedom the sound of the shofar grew stronger. The more that we are afflicted the more that the Torah gives us a strong response.

Shabbat Shalom!
Good Shabbos!
Rabbi Nathan W. Langer

