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Parashat Bo **6 Shevat 5783 – January 28, 2023**

In the laws concerning visiting the sick, we learn that an “enemy”, of the one who is sick, shouldn’t visit the sick so that people do not think that he is “happy” because the sick person is stricken. However, each case must be judged individually, and some say that an enemy may visit the sick enemy because it could bring about peace.

Our parashah contains within it the last three plagues. The second to the last plague is darkness. The text says, “and darkness will extend over the land of Egypt.” The words used are “ve-ya-mesh choshech”. Rashi tells us that this means that the darkness was something tangible, something that could be felt. The sages divided the plague of darkness into six days. During the first three days the Egyptians who were standing could sit, and the ones who were sitting could stand. During the final three days of the plague, no one could move. What we learn is that in the first three days, the Egyptians could not see, the darkness was settling in, and it was physical. The last three days affected the heart and soul. Pharaoh, thinking himself a god, was “dark” both in body and soul.

Pharaoh was given ample opportunity to let B’nai Yisrael leave. G-d saw the darkness in his heart and pushed him along. Peace was not possible with Pharaoh.

In the last plague, the slaying of the firstborn is a “measure for measure” punishment. Just as Pharaoh decreed to throw the Israelite male children into the Nile so too did the Egyptian slaying of the firstborn as an equivalent. What we see is that Pharaoh had no intention of releasing B’nei Yisrael nor making “peace” with G-d.

When it comes to illness many emotions fill the person who is ill, their family, friends, and their enemies. It is often a challenge to visit the sick because the whole of the person is affected. The sick person makes peace with G-d, and the enemy has the potential to make peace with both.

Shabbat Shalom! Good Shabbos!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer