

## **Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim Vaera 5784**

### **Completely Separate from the Nations of the World**

#### **Introduction**

In this week's parasha the Torah records how after Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to allow the Jewish People to leave Egypt, HaShem sent Moshe and Aharon to be the instruments that would afflict Pharaoh and the Egyptians with the ten plagues. It is noteworthy that each of the plagues had a specific lesson to teach the Egyptians and simultaneously, the Jewish People were able to glean insight into their own misdeeds. An example of this is that the Medrash (Shemos Rabbah 1:8) states that at the onset of the Egyptian exile, the Jewish People nullified the mitzvah of Bris Milah, circumcision. Thus, to demonstrate to the Jewish People that they had sinned in this area, HaShem sent the plague of dam, blood, upon the Egyptians, and this served as a reminder to the Jewish People that they were required to circumcise themselves and their children, which requires a spilling of blood. It is noteworthy that the

word dam in mispar katan, digit sum, equals 8, alluding to the eighth day of a child's life when he is circumcised. In a similar vein all the plagues had a certain effect on the Jewish People.

#### **The plague of Arov is akin to the onset of Shabbos during the week**

The fourth plague is referred to in the Torah as arov, which means a mixture of wild animals descended upon Egypt. What was the lesson inherent in this plague for the Jewish People? It would appear that the idea of Arov being the fourth plague is parallel to the idea expressed in the Gemara (see Shabbos 19a) that Wednesday, Thursday and Friday are referred to as the three days "prior to Shabbos," whereas Sunday, Monday and Tuesday are referred to as the three days that "follow Shabbos." Thus, the plague of Arov symbolized that the Jewish People were now being distinguished from the Egyptians. Indeed, there are some commentators (Ibn Ezra to Shemos 7:24; see Avi Ezer Ibid who refutes this commentary being attributed to Ibn Ezra; see also Rambam's commentary to Avos 5:4 and Rabbeinu Yonah Ibid) who

posit that the first three plagues affected Egyptians and Jews alike. Thus, the plague of Arov was the harbinger for the Jewish People that they would now recognize their distinction from the Egyptians. It is for this reason that the Torah states (Ibid 8:18) *vihfleisi vayom hahu es erez Goshen asher ami omeid aleha livilti heyos sham arov limaan teida ki ani HaShem bikerev haaretz*, and on that day I shall set apart the land of Goshen upon which My people stands, that there shall be no swarm there; so that you will know that I am HaShem in the midst of the land. In addition to the lesson contained within this plague for the Egyptians, there was an evident lesson for the Jewish People also, and that was that the Jewish People are different than the nations of the world.

**The fifth plague teaches us that as we come closer to Shabbos we become more alive**

It is interesting to note that the fifth plague was *dever*, an epidemic in the livestock of the Egyptians. Here too it is said (Ibid 9:4) *vihiflah HaShem bein miknei Yisroel uvein miknei Mitzrayim vilo yamus mikol livnei Yisroel davar*,

HaShem shall distinguish between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, and not a thing that belongs to the Children of Israel will die. This idea is parallel to the idea that as we come closer to Shabbos, we leave behind the "dead" of the gentiles and we arrive closer to the Source of Life, which are HaShem and His Holy Shabbos. It is noteworthy that the words (Ibid verse 3) *hinei yad HaShem hoyah bamiknicho asher basadeh*, behold, the hand of HaShem is on your livestock that are in the field, (1157, when adding the words themselves) equal in gematria the words *yom chamishi liShabbos*, the fifth day towards Shabbos (1156).

**The sixth plague alludes to an aura of spirituality**

The sixth plague was *shechin*, boils, and regarding this plague it is said (Ibid verse 11) *vilo yachlu hachartumim laamod lifnei Moshe mipnei hashechin ki hayah hashechin bachartumim uvichol Mitzrayim*, the necromancers could not stand before Moshe because of the boils, because the boils were on the necromancers and on all of Egypt. This verse alludes to the idea that with the onset of

Shabbos, the gentiles cannot approach the Jewish People, as HaShem envelopes us in a cloud of holiness.

### **The seventh plague alludes to the synthesis of physicality and spirituality**

The seventh plague was barad, hail, which was a combination of water and fire. The fire and hail went from heaven towards earth. Similarly, the Holy Day of Shabbos reflects the idea that we are engaged in physical acts of eating, drinking and sleeping. Yet, all of our actions on Shabbos are infused with an overwhelming spiritual force that dominates the physical aspect of our actions.

### **The Shabbos connection**

We have seen how in a deeper sense the plagues certainly had an effect on the Jewish People, and it was through the plagues that the Jewish People were allowed to taste salvation and victory over the Egyptians, who were the forces of evil at that time. Similarly, throughout the week we are faced with trials and tribulations, and we also witness the suffering that the nations of the world undergo. We must be cognizant of the fact that

HaShem seeks to awaken us to the idea that everything that occurs in the world is ultimately for our benefit. It is with the onset of Shabbos, when all harsh judgments depart, that we recognize the greatness of HaShem and the beauty of the gift of Shabbos that He bestows upon His beloved nation every week. Hashem should allow us to merit an end to the suffering of the Jewish People and to witness the arrival of Moshiach Tzidkienu, speedily, in our days.

### **Shabbos in the Zemiros**

#### **Tzama Lecho Nafshi**

This zemer was composed by the great medieval commentator and poet Avraham Ibn Ezra whose name is found in the acrostic of the verses

הַבְּדִיל נִינִי תָם. הַקִּים לְהוֹרוֹתָם. אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָם.  
הַאֲדָם וְהִי, He separated wholesome  
Yaakov's offspring, to teach them  
decrees, which man should  
perform that he may live. While  
Avraham and Yitzchak certainly  
studied and observed the Torah,  
Yaakov was unique in that he was  
tested often in matters of ethics  
and faith. Rivka compelled Yaakov  
to disguise himself as Esav so he  
should receive the blessings from

his father Yitzchak. Furthermore, according to some commentators, Yaakov engaged in subterfuge when he was dealing with Lavan and the sheep. Thus, Yaakov is truly the Patriarch of whom it can be said that he "studied the Torah which man should perform that he should live by."

## **Shabbos Stories**

### **The Smell of Gan Eden**

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky writes: Rabbi Chaim of Sanz was once walking in a small shtetl with his shammass (sexton). Suddenly he stopped in front of the home of a simple Jew. "There is a certain spirituality that I sense here. I'd like to stop by this man's home."

His shammass knocked on the door, and as it opened the holy Rebbe exclaimed, "There is a smell in this home that must be from the Garden of Eden. It is sweet and pure. Pray tell me, where does it come from?"

The simple Jew did not know what to answer, but allowed the Rebbe to roam freely through his humble abode and open any door he chose. Suddenly the Rebbe pointed to a closet. "What is in that closet? The holiness comes from within."

The man was reluctant to open the door, but the Rebbe urged him. The man opened the door and in the closet hung the vestments of a priest! The Rebbe turned to the man once again and asked. "Please tell me. What is a holy Jew doing with those clothing?"

The poor Jew told his tale: "Years ago, I was asked to help raise money for a family thrown into jail by a poritz (landowner) to whom they owed rent. My Rebbe asked me to raise the funds, and I immediately agreed. After all, I thought, with the Rebbe's wishes it would be an easy task. Everyone would give to save a Jewish family! I was wrong. Everyone in town had an excuse not to give. There was a deadline approaching, and I had no choice but to approach the wealthiest Jew in town who was known for his malevolence toward Chassidim. "The man told me he would give me the entire sum that day on one condition. I must parade through the town, dressed as a priest singing psalms in Hebrew and asking for tzedakah (charity) in Yiddish. At the end of the day, he would pay the ransom.

"I did what I had to do, while a group of his friends followed me around, laughing and mocking me

wherever I walked. I got the money and I never returned the vestments he gave me.”

The Rebbe turned and said, “Yes. These clothing are truly holy. They are the source of the spirituality I sense.” Legend has it that the Rebbe told the man to be buried in those clothes. ([www.Torah.org](http://www.Torah.org))



## Yehuda Fell!: My Lesson in Gratitude

As my son lay below me, silent and motionless, thoughts raced through my mind.

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The weather outside was that unique Israeli blend of crisp winter air and warm sunshine. My daughter and I were marveling at how quickly we’d completed the Shabbat cooking early that Friday afternoon. But the peace was suddenly shattered by the sound of my son bursting through the front door and frantically exclaiming: “Yehuda fell!”

Something about the urgency in his voice propelled my husband and me down our building’s four flights of stairs at top speed.

For months, my boys had been building a clubhouse with some friends atop a flat-roofed shed adjacent to our building. Rushing to the site, my husband and I discovered our seven-year-old son lying prone on the cold stone steps beside the shed, his head at the bottom of the stairs, a river of blood gushing from it and flowing down the cobblestones below.

Apparently, Yehuda had lost his balance and fallen backward from a height of eight feet, landing head-first on the unforgiving stone stairs. Our neighbor was taking out his garbage at that exact moment, so emergency services were summoned immediately. By the time my husband and I arrived on the scene moments later, a volunteer medic was already assessing Yehuda’s condition and an ambulance was on its way.

I stood by helplessly, watching the scene in horror. Yehuda lay below me, silent and motionless. With my training in first-aid, I was all too

aware that even if Yehuda would survive, I had no guarantee that he would ever walk again – or even be able to think normally again. As I gazed down at him, my heart thudding in my throat, the following thoughts raced through my mind.

Yehuda. The name “Yehuda” is derived from “*hoda’ah*” the Hebrew word for gratitude. At Yehuda’s brit milah, my husband expressed that the name “Yehuda” is meant to serve as a constant reminder to us to thank God for the myriad gifts that He generously bestows upon us – and especially for the gift of this precious child. Even when he wakes us in the middle of the night (again!). Even when we are telling him for the third (or thirteenth!) time to get into pajamas. Even when we catch him scribbling on the walls (with permanent marker!). Even then, we should keep our focus on our appreciation for our precious child.

*Have I lived up to this mandate?* I wondered. At that moment I was being scathingly honest. *No*, I admitted to myself with shame. All too often, I have fallen into the

trap of pining for things that I feel I lack instead of focusing on my innumerable blessings.

*Please, God, I begged wordlessly. Restore Yehuda to full health, and I will try my utmost to always thank You. For Yehuda and for all of the many, many blessings You have showered upon me.*

Just at that moment, as I continued to gaze down at my son, he started to cry – inaudibly, but hard. He was conscious! Seconds later, while the medic was still awaiting a brace to immobilize Yehuda’s neck, Yehuda turned his head to the other side, and then moments later, astoundingly, raised himself to a sitting position!

He spent Shabbat in the hospital with my husband at his side, and miraculously Yehuda’s most serious injury was the large gash to his head which required stitches. Mere days later, he was back in school, and the following Shabbat we celebrated with a blessing party for the neighborhood children – to give thanks, *hoda’ah*, to God for our miracle.

And then... life went on. In the immediate aftermath I had but to glance at Yehuda's head to remind myself, "I have Yehuda, healthy and whole – how could I ever want anything more?" Yet I knew that in order for this inspiration to truly take root within me, I must carefully nurture the tender new shoots of gratitude that had so recently been planted.

Yehuda's stitches came out... and my mind began to return to its habitual thought patterns, focusing on my problems, daydreaming longingly about things I wished I had. But I made a conscious effort to glance down at the bloodstains still discernible between the cobblestones and to remind myself to channel my thoughts in more positive – more *honest* – directions.

Weeks passed, and then months. The sun and rain faded the stains on the ground and Yehuda's scar was hidden by his hair. But I noticed that my mind was gradually being trained to move on its own toward counting my blessings instead of just the items on my wish list.

It is now a year later, and this is not a challenge I can mark off as "Done." But I have reached a point where I feel like I can stand before God and honestly say, "I heard Your message. I am trying to change my focus, I am working on gratitude, I am improving.

"And most importantly: Thank You, God." ([aish.com](http://aish.com))

## **Shabbos in Halacha**

### **מוליד – Creating a new Entity**

#### **1. The Prohibition**

There is a difference between bringing about the new state of an object manually (directly by one's own hand) and doing so indirectly (by merely *causing* the change to come about without applying the energy for the transformation with one's own hand.)

#### **A. מוליד (Molid) – Creating a New Entity**

One is prohibited to crush ice (or any frozen liquid) on Shabbos, as when one crushes the frozen liquid one is creating a new entity: liquid. This same prohibition applies to other methods of dissolving an

item, such as pouring hot water over it, shaking, rubbing or stirring.

Similarly, one is prohibited to pour hot water over congealed gravy, because when one dissolves the gravy, one creates a new liquid.

By the same token, some Poskim prohibit discharging whipped cream from a pressurized can as that is tantamount to manually transforming the liquid cream into a solid whip.

If this prohibition is violated it is further prohibited to derive any benefit from the newly created entity until after Shabbos.

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