

# Parsha Q&A



## Parshas Bo

For the week ending 6 Shevat 5759  
22 & 23 January 1999

### Parsha Questions

1. What was Pharaoh's excuse for not releasing the Jewish children?
2. How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel?
3. How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three?
4. When the Jews asked the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, the Egyptians were unable to deny ownership of such vessels. Why?
5. *Makas bechoros* took place *exactly* at midnight. Why did Moshe say it would take place *approximately* at midnight?
6. Why did the firstborn of the animals die?
7. How did Moshe show respect to Pharaoh when he warned him about the aftermath of the plague of the firstborn?
8. Hashem told Moshe "so that my wonders will be multiplied" (11:9). What three wonders was Hashem referring to?
9. Why did Hashem command the mitzvah of *Rosh Chodesh* to Aharon, and not only to Moshe?
10. Up to what age is an animal fit to be a *Pesach* offering?
11. Prior to the Exodus from Egypt, what two *mitzvos* involving blood did Hashem give to the Jewish People?
12. Which parts of the *Pesach* offering (as distinguished from other offerings) were the Jewish People forbidden to eat?
13. Why were the Jews told to stay indoors during *makas bechoros*?
14. What was Pharaoh screaming as he ran from door to door the night of *makas bechoros*?
15. Why did Pharaoh ask Moshe to bless him?
16. Why did the Jewish People carry their *matzah* on their shoulders rather than have their animals carry it?
17. Who comprised the *erev rav* (mixed multitude)?
18. What three historical events occurred on the 15th of Nissan, prior to the event of the Exodus from Egypt?
19. What is the source of the "milk and honey" found in *Eretz Yisrael*?
20. The only non-kosher animal whose firstborn is redeemed is the donkey. What did the donkeys do to "earn" this distinction?

### Sherlox Holmes

"The new butler from the Shirewood estate disappeared along with thousands in cash and jewels," said Watstein.

"Well," said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes, "I imagine we'll find him in Grampa Hastings' apartment."

"Grampa Hastings? The sickly man who took an apartment in Shirewood last year, who lies in bed all day with his curtains drawn?"

"Ever had a close look at him?"

"His doting spinster sister never lets anyone too near."

"Curious how his room is always so dimly lit, isn't it?" said Sherlock.

"Are you suggesting that he and the missing butler are ..."

"One and the same. It's remarkable what dim light can reveal."

"Speaking of dim light," said Watstein, "Can you explain this text: 'There was pitch darkness in all the Land of Egypt for three days; A person couldn't see his brother, and a person couldn't stand from his place for three days...'" (Shemos 10:22-3).

"For the first three days the Egyptians couldn't see, and for the next three days they couldn't even move. Miraculous, but is it harder to understand than the other plagues?" asked Sherlock.

"My question exactly!" said Watstein. "Why, then, does Rashi comment? Rashi says: Why did G-d bring darkness on the Egyptians? Because among the Jews there were some wicked ones; they died during the three days of darkness so the Egyptians wouldn't see their downfall. Also so that the Jews could search for the Egyptians' precious vessels."

"Good reasons for darkness" said Sherlock.

"But Rashi doesn't spell out the reason for the other plagues. Why does he need to explain the reason for this plague?"

"It's remarkable what dim light can reveal," said Sherlock.

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## Answer

“Rashi isn’t explaining the reason for the darkness,” said Sherlock.

“He’s not?” asked Watstein.

“No. He’s explaining why the darkness changed intensity in the middle of its duration.”

“Yes, the darkness was unique in that sense. The first three days were of less intensity — ‘for three days a person couldn’t see his brother’ — and the last three days were of greater intensity — ‘and a person couldn’t stand from his place for three days.’ We don’t find this phenomenon regarding any other plague; no other plague changed intensity in the middle of its duration.”

“Rather odd,” said Sherlock.

“Indeed,” said Watstein. “Therefore, Rashi explains the reason for the different levels of darkness: The first three days hid the demise of the recalcitrant Jews, while the latter, thick darkness allowed the Jews to search the Egyptian households free from any resistance, even from the slightest groping of the owners, who couldn’t even move.”

“Brilliant, dear Watstein.”

*(Based on Maskil L’David; Sherlock” is by Reuven Subar, inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s “What’s Bothering Rashi”)*

## I Did Not Know That!

**“At approximately midnight I go out amidst Egypt, and every first born will die...” (11:14)**

Hashem’s ‘clock’ is set to Jerusalem. The plague of the first-born took place at exactly midnight, Jerusalem time. But because Egypt is west of Jerusalem, midnight there occurs later. When Moshe said the plague would be at ‘approximately midnight,’ he was referring to local, Egyptian time.

*Kehillas Yitzchak; thanks to Rabbi Sholem Fishbane*

## Recommended Reading List

### Ramban

10:14	Locusts and Crocodiles
10:23	A Different Darkness
12:2	Jewish Months
12:3	Symbolism of the <i>Korban Pesach</i>
12:31,51	Timetable of the Exodus
13:5	Five and Two – Seven Canaanite Nations

### Sefer Hachinuch

7, 16	Eating Like Kings
18	Recognizing Hashem’s Gifts
21	The Significance of the Exodus

## Answers to this Week’s Questions

*All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated*

- 10:11 - Since children don’t bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go.
- 10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species.
- 10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians couldn’t see. During the last three days they couldn’t move.
- 10:22 - During the plague of darkness the Jews could see and they searched and found the Egyptians’ vessels.
- 11:4 - If Moshe said the plague would begin exactly at midnight, the Egyptians might miscalculate and accuse Moshe of being a fake.
- 11:5 - Because the Egyptians worshipped them as gods, and when Hashem punishes a nation He also punishes its gods.
- 11:8 - Moshe warned that “All these servants of yours will come down to me” when, in fact, it was Pharaoh himself who actually came running to Moshe.
- 11:9 - The plague of the firstborn, the splitting of the sea, the drowning of the Egyptian soldiers.
- 12:1 - As reward for his efforts in bringing about the plagues.
- 12:5 - One year.
- 12:6 - Circumcision and *Korban Pesach*.
- 12:8 - The bones and the sinews.
- 12:22 - Since it was a night of destruction, it was not safe for anyone to leave the protected premises of their homes.
- 12:31 - “Where does Moshe live? Where does Aharon live?”
- 12:32 - So he wouldn’t die, for he himself was a firstborn.
- 12:34 - Because the commandment of *matzah* was dear to them.
- 12:38 - People from other nations who became converts.
- 12:41 - The angels came to promise that Sarah would have a son, Yitzchak was born, and the exile of the “covenant between the parts” was decreed.
- 13:5 - Goat milk, date and fig honey.
- 13:13 - They helped the Jews by carrying silver and gold out of Egypt.