

Pshats for Shots

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Who Was Affected by the Plague of Blood?

When it comes to the first plague of blood that affected the drinking water of the Egyptians in this week's parashah (Ex. 7.14-25), we find a curious midrash (שמות 9.10 רבה):

אמר רבי אבין הלוי ברבי, ממפת דם העשירו ישראל, כיצד, המצרי וישראל בבית אחד והגיגית מלאה מים, ומצרי הלך למלאות הקיתון מתוכה מוציאה מלאה דם, וישראל שותה מים מתוך הגיגית, והמצרי אומר תן לי בידך מעט מים ונתתן לו ונעשו דם, ואומר לו נשתה אני ואתה מן קערה אחת, וישראל שותה מים והמצרי דם, וכשהיה לוקח מישראל בדם, היה שותה מים, מקאן העשירו Rabbi Aveen, the Levite, son of Rabbi, said: "From the plague of blood, the Israelites got

rich. How? An Israelite and Egyptian living in one house and a barrel would be full of water; the Egyptian would go to fill the jug from it and it would be filled with blood. The Israelite would drink water from the barrel, and the Egyptian would say, 'Give me a little water in your hand' and he would give him, but it turned into blood. And he would say, 'You and I both drink from the same platter!' The Israelite would drink water and the Egyptian blood, but when he would purchase it from an Israelite with money, he would be drinking water. From here, the Israelites became rich."

While it is an interesting read by this third-century rabbi, it is not the only read of this text, as Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1167) was not particularly fond of this understanding: "אם כן למה לא נכתב אות זה בתורה. ולפי דעתי כי מכת הדם והצפרדעים והכנים היתה כוללת המצרים והעבריים. If so,



why isn't this point written in the Torah? In my opinion, it is because the plague of blood, frogs, and lice included both the Egyptians and the Hebrews, because we should follow what is written" (אבן עזרא).

This read makes quite a lot of sense, since the target of the plague was the economic lifeblood of the region, The Nile, which is where Moshe approached Pharoah (7.15), and where the plague was primarily targeting (see 7.17-18, 7.20-21, &

Continued on the next page

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{continued from previous page}

7.24-25), along with the surrounding bodies of water (7.19). The Scriptural text does not distinguish between Israelite or Egyptian in being affected.

Before we cry for those that had to endure this water-less week, they still would have been able to drink other beverages, such as beer and wine. So feel free to shed your crocodile tears, but both the Egyptians and Israelites still would have been able to drink during the week of the first plague.



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Drinking Halakhah of the Week

Can one's blessing over wine in the course of a meal cover other diners' wine-blessing?



According to Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) in his *Shulhan Arukh*: “על יין שבתוך המזון כל אחד ואחד מברך לעצמו” Everyone blesses for oneself upon wine amidst a meal, even if they are dining together, since they are concerned lest it were to enter the trachea before the esophagus.” (שו"ע או"ח (קעד:ה).

However, Rabbi Moshe Isserles (1530-1572) glosses Rabbi Karo's words by writing “ויש אומרים דאם אמר להם סברי רבותי וישמעו ויכוונו לברכה ולא יאכלו אז ויענו אמן אחד מברך לכולם וכן נוהגין. And there are those who say that if he said to them, ‘Pay attention, my masters’ and they listen, pay attention to the blessing, and don't eat, then they will answer ‘amen’, one blessing for all of them. And that's how we are accustomed.”

Thus, while one need not say one wine-blessing to cover one's fellow diners' wine-blessing when saying it, it can be a helpful move to give them a heads-up and have one wine-blessing to cover them all.

“Because man does not live on bread alone” (Deut. 8.3)

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