

Moshe proclaims of the coming final makko / plague.

וַיִּמַּת כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר פַּרְעֹה הַיֹּשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּאוֹ עַד בְּכוֹר
הַשֹּׁפְתָה אֲשֶׁר אַחַר הָרְחִים וְכֹל בְּכוֹר בַּהֲמָה:

“And every firstborn in the Land of Egypt will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne until the firstborn of the slave-girl who is behind the millstones, and every firstborn animal.” (Shemos 11:5).

This passuk tells us plainly that every firstborn in the entire country of Mitzrayim was to die during the last makko; from Pharaoh’s own son, his servants, and all the people. The passuk uses a more poetic verse than the usual, “Pharaoh, his servants, and the entire nation” as is used throughout the narrative when it talks about the plagues. (see Shemos 7:28, 8:27,10:6). Instead it says *from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on the throne all the way down to the slave-girl’s first child*. Why does it use the more flowery language by this plague?

The passuk also defines Pharaoh as “sitting on the throne.” Was there another Pharaoh? The previous passuk of the declaration says that it was ‘around midnight’ but the later passuk said it happened at midnight. Why the time change? Further, this passuk is repeated but slightly different when the plague actually occurs. “And it was, at midnight, and HaShem struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on the throne until the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of every animal.” (Shemos 12:29). When the plague actually is recorded it changes slave-girl to the captive. Why the change?

Gemara Berakhos 9a says, *it was taught in a baraisa with regard to the verse discussing the mitzva to eat the Paschal lamb: “And they shall eat of the meat on that night; roasted over fire and matzot with bitter herbs shall they eat it” (Shemos 12:8); Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya says: Here it is stated: “On that night,” from which we cannot determine when night ends. The same expression is encountered later in the same chapter: “And I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and I will strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from person to animal” (Ibid 12:12). We know when the firstborns were struck down based on the verse “So said HaShem: about midnight, I will go out into the midst of Egypt and every firstborn in Egypt shall die” (Ibid 11:4–5). Therefore, just as in the verse below, the striking of the firstborns took place at*

midnight, as stated explicitly in the verse, so too in the verse here, the mitzva to eat the Paschal lamb continues until midnight.

Yerushalmi Berakhot 1:1 says, we have stated “the eating of the Pesach sacrifice”. Some people do not formulate “the eating of the Pesach sacrifice” to be all night. Who formulates “the eating of the Pesach sacrifice” to be all night? The Chachomim. Who does not formulate “the eating of the Pesach sacrifice” to be all night? Rabbi Eliezer. What is the reason of Rabbi Eliezer? It is written here (Shemos 12:8) “in the night”, and it is written there (Shemos 12:29) “in the night”. Just as there it means midnight, so also here it means midnight. Rabbi Huna says: “The eating of the Pesach sacrifice” cannot be here even for the Sages since we have stated (Pesachim 10:9) “the Pesach sacrifice after midnight makes one’s hands impure.”

According to these Gemaras the term midnight is very important in teaching us how long one has until to eat the Korbon Pesach (and these days, the Afikomen). It is until midnight when HaShem struck the firstborn. There is a connection, then, between ceasing to eat the Paschal offering and the plague.

In Gemara Smochos, it says, R. Yochanan said: Although He smote them with the plague of death at midnight, the souls writhed within them until morning. A common proverb says, ‘If you give a morsel of bread to a child, inform his mother.’ Likewise, the Holy One, blessed be He, said, ‘I will inform My children of the death of which their enemies are dying. Let their souls await the morning before expiring, so that My children shall look upon the fate of their enemies’.

This Gemara seems to say that the death commenced at midnight but did not complete then until the morning.

Gemara Yevamos 72a teaches, the Chachomim taught in a baraisa: All those forty years that the Jewish people were in the wilderness there was not a day in which the north wind did not blow at midnight, as it is stated: “And it came to pass at midnight, that the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt” (Shemos 12:29). The Gemara asks: What is the biblical derivation? How is it derived from this verse that speaks of the exodus from Egypt that a north wind blew at midnight during the forty years that the Jewish people wandered in the wilderness? The Gemara answers: This comes to teach us that a time of favor is a significant matter. Since midnight had once been a time of divine favor at the beginning of the geula from Egypt, it continued to be a time of favor throughout the forty years that the Jewish people sojourned in the wilderness.

The night seems to be a time of redemption for all time.

Sforno says, *“And HaShem struck” (12:29), means while the Jews were busy with preparing and eating the Pesach offering, HaShem was busy with killing the firstborn of Egypt and orchestrating the redemption of His people.*

HaShem, however, according to the plain reading of the Torah and the Gemara, did not kill while the people were eating. They ate until midnight and at midnight and “the second half of the night” (Ibin Ezra) HaShem struck down the firstborn. Perhaps he means HaShem was busy preparing for the killing.

The Midrash teaches, *why were the captives smitten, for they had not enslaved the Israelites? In order that these might not say that their god had claimed satisfaction for the humiliation imposed upon them and had brought this punishment upon the Egyptians (Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael 12:29).*

Even captives and slaves were struck because they should not say it was on their behalf that the plague occurred. If so, what about the other plagues? Why did the already subjugated deserve that their offspring die just so they not take credit? If we answer that it is because this plague did not come with a warning, and Pharaoh would not definitively know it was from HaShem, but neither did the makkos of lice, boils, or darkness. Would not the slaves and imprisoned take credit for them? Yet, Pharaoh knew those were HaShem’s doing.

Another Midrash clarifies, *our verse mentions slave-women because all who were of less importance than the firstborn of Pharaoh and of more importance than the firstborn of the slave-woman are included in this description. And why were their sons stricken? Because they, too, treated them (the Israelites) as slaves and/or rejoiced at their misery (Midrash Tanchuma, Bo 7).*

This Midrash seems to state that all those that were struck deserved it in a way.

Likewise, the Midrash says, *the animals were smote because the Egyptians worshipped these as gods. When the Holy One, blessed be He, exacts punishment from a nation, He punishes their gods at the same time (Bereishis Rabbah 96:5).*

It is still not the animals’ fault that they were worshipped. I am also not sure this is literal as the Torah uses the word “beheima” which means domesticated animal. I have seen no evidence of domestic animals being worshipped in Ancient Egypt. Their gods were in the human form or monsters that had wild animal / chaya heads, such as crocodiles, dogs, and aardvarks.

Rashi says, *Pharaoh too, was a firstborn, but he alone was allowed to remain of the firstborn; and regarding this it states,* "But for this cause I have maintained you in life in order to show you my power." (*Shemos 9:16*). Further, *the firstborn of the slave-woman, threatened with death in but not mentioned in the later passuk as having been slain, is included in those stated to have been slain since it enumerates those slain from the most important amongst all of them to the least important, and the firstborn of the slave-woman as belonging to the Egyptian people, is certainly more important than the firstborn of the captive.*

According to this, why did the proclamation come short? If the slave-woman is better than the captive and the captive still had its firstborn die, then why did the proclamation not include the captive?

Ibin Ezra says, *it mentions Pharaoh who sat on the throne because who is fit to sit upon Pharaoh's throne after him? Moshe mentioned the most honored of all the Egyptians, namely, the son of their lord whom all of them serve and also the lowest of them all, namely, the firstborn of the maid-servant, who is himself a slave. Thus, the beginning comparing Pharaoh whose son has rights to the throne corresponds to the slave whose child is a slave. As to the slave and the imprisoned, Yefet says that the captives who grind the millstone in prison during the day are put at night into a pit whose opening is covered with the millstone. They are the same person and this is the meaning of 'behind the millstone.'*

Sforno says, *from the highest layer of Egyptian society to the lowliest, i.e. from the most severe sinner to the relatively least guilty sinner. HaShem struck regardless of level of guilt.*

Chizkuni says, "every firstborn." *Both the firstborn of a mother and the firstborn of a father were included. "From the firstborn of Pharaoh," (male) i.e. a firstborn of the father "including the firstborn of a slave woman (female)" i.e. the firstborn of a mother. Seeing that most commentators here understand the words בכור השפחה, to be identical to בכור השבי in 12:29, they use that term in their commentary on this verse. They assume that Rashi agreed seeing that nearly all prisoners of war become slaves. Another reason for the two terms being used by the Torah for slave women; when the firstborn sons of slave maids heard Moshe use the term שפחה in our verse, they decided to become captives so as to escape the threat of being killed. Upon noticing this, HaShem said: while it is true that I had only spoken about the firstborn of the servant maid being killed, now I must include also the firstborn of a woman prisoner. A different interpretation: the expression 'the imprisoned' is subordinate to the general heading of slave.*

The prophets in their way of expressing themselves (as opposed to the Torah itself) do not bother with stylistic effects but are concerned with the basics. (Chizkuni then gives several examples which are redacted here). Both expressions convey the same basic thought.

Still another explanation (also brought down by Bartenura on the Torah and Kli Yakar): when Moshe said: “and every firstborn will die,” the firstborn of the maidservants rejoiced noting that they are not considered in the eyes of the Jewish god from the firstborn of the nobility. When their masters noted their joy, they threw them in a dungeon to teach them a lesson and not to forget their place in the Egyptian hierarchy. As a result they died, while still in the dungeon. In effect what happened is simply that the firstborn who had been only slaves at the time the plague had been announced had become also prisoners by the time the plague became effective.

“Who walks behind the millstones” to help grind. When the plague was over the Torah describes these people as having been in a dungeon. This is another example of what we discussed earlier on this page. Some commentators believe that these two verses are actually to be understood as a single verse, i.e. that these lowly slaves performed one kind of task by day and another by night. We find an example of this in the Book of Judges when Shimshon had to perform the task of pushing the millstone by day, whereas at night he was put back into the dungeon and the millstone was placed on to prevent him from escaping. (Shoftim 16:21).

“And every firstborn of the domestic animals.” According to Rashi, HaShem first punishes a people’s deities and then the people themselves. We see this from Shemos 7:17, where the river Nile, a major deity of the Egyptians was struck before the people suffered as a result of this.

It appears that Moshe proclaimed the warning that day. He says, “at about midnight.” Certainly he was talking about that same evening. Accordingly, it is hard to say that the slave-women or their masters had time to devise the plan to have the slaves put in jail so quickly.

Rabbeinu Bechaya and Tur HaAruch elaborates further on Chizkuni’s explanation of the slave behind the grindstone and then the term the imprisoned. As Rabbeinu Bechaya says, *I have heard a reason given for the Torah changing the description of the people at the low end of the social scale being that male slaves used to be employed by day to rotate the millstones whereas at night they were brought back to the dungeons. Seeing that when Moshe was prophesying what would happen it was daytime, he used the metaphor of the firstborn rotating the millstone. However, seeing the actual happening took place at night, the Torah switched metaphors and*

referred to the captive in the dungeon, the place where he died. This reason is brought down in the Tur HaAruch.

Kli Yakar learns that this prophecy was said in time with the literal chronology of the Torah, by Rosh Chodesh of the First Month. Moshe tells the Israelites about Rosh Chodesh and counting months just after the proclamation. Accordingly, Kli Yakar learns *this was said by Rosh Chodesh. In the following two weeks these slaves were imprisoned.*

It's still a difficult answer to accept. There were no captured people prior to this?

Ohr Chaim deals with the justice of killing even the slaves. Note, a comprehensive discussion about the justice of infants and children, slaves and captives being slayed is beyond the scope of this piece. He says, though, *"and every firstborn will die."* Notice how HaShem did not say: *"I will kill him."* The reason is that evil does not originate with the Lord. He is the Creator of all that is good. Anything in the nature of evil is initiated by one of the agents He has designated. He Himself indicated who was the firstborn, then His agents carried out the death sentence. This is why the mention of "destroyers" at the time the Israelites put the blood on their door-posts and the fact that He Himself orchestrated the plague are not contradictory. There may also be another meaning, similar to what we are told in Gemara Shabbos 34 where Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai put his eye on a sinner and that sinner died as a result. At first glance, how are we to understand that a pious person of the caliber of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai would summarily "execute" someone by giving him "the eye?" The same Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai had castigated people of the evil eye as possessing a very negative virtue (Zohar 3, page 211). Actually, the exact wording in the Talmud was "he looked at him with his eye" (singular). We would have expected the Talmud to say that "he looked at him with his eyes (pl)." We have to remember that inasmuch as "evil" and "death" are synonymous how is it that evil exists at all? This is because there are no absolutes; just as the attribute of Mercy contains a small part of the attribute of Justice, so every good virtue contains a small element of evil, and vice versa. In the case of evil, death occurs when that small part of "good" or "life" which kept it alive is withdrawn. Keeping this in mind, we can understand the peculiar statement in Gemara Sukkah 52 according to which HaShem will slaughter the evil urge at an appropriate time in the future in the presence of the righteous. How are to understand this? How can one slaughter an angel? Considering what we have just said we can understand the statement in the Talmud very easily.

HaShem will remove the part of the evil urge which makes it a viable i.e. active force. For further discussion please see there.

Ohr Chaim continues: *The meaning of “all firstborn will die” is not simply death. It means there would never again be Egyptians (or even other Gentiles) whose characteristics would include elements of what had been known as the “firstborn” of the people, that special spiritual birthright.*

Rabbeinu Bechaya says, *why were the captives struck down? The fact that they might take credit that the punishment was on their behalf and deny HaShem the glory and they celebrated the oppression of the Israelites was enough reason for their offspring to be struck.*

Bartenua on the Torah says, *Moshe warned only regarding those who oppressed Bnei Yisrael — i.e., the firstborn of Pharaoh until the firstborn of the slave girl. Apparently, even Egyptian slaves oppressed the Hebrew slaves. But Moshe’s warning did not include the captives because the captives did not enslave the Hebrews. Nevertheless, Moshe did not say clearly that the captives are excluded, for the term “firstborn of the Egyptian slave girl” could be referring to “the lowly ones,” including the captives.*

Moshe’s proclamation of our verse occurred on the 14th by day and it took place in Goshen. Rashi, Kli Yakar, and others learn it was told to Pharaoh, but see our *Bonus Shtikel* for a meticulous reading of this portion.

What Moshe told the Bnei Yisrael was for them to hear. What HaShem did was actually what occurred. The Torah tells us that Moshe proclaimed to the Bnei Yisrael that at around midnight HaShem will bring a plague that will cause the Mitzryim to cry out, such a cry as has never before been sounded. Like every other makko except *dever* / pestilence, the entire Land of Egypt is mentioned as having suffered: Pharaoh, his servants, and his people. Firstborns died, parents and siblings mourned. It was already the plan to have the entire Mitzrayim suffer through these signs and wonders regardless of guilt per se.

The Bnei Yisrael were enslaved to the crown and located in Goshen. The remaining Mitzrayim south of the Nile Delta seemingly did not enslave the Hebrews nor had anything to do with them. Further, there were certainly many slaves of other nations and creeds in Mitzrayim that could not *literally* oppress or enslave the Hebrews. Finally, young children did not oppress the Bnei Yisrael and yet they died during this plague. Yes, firstborn included adults, but it also

included children and infants. Animals also did not oppress nor was it their fault they were a supposed deity.

The plagues must be looked at as being signs and wonders, the use of HaShem's mighty Hand. The calculations of justice are beyond our scope but there was purpose to the plagues. It was how HaShem molded his nation and brought them to believe in Him. It made it clear that HaShem is the mighty ruler and Lord of the world. The plagues destroyed the perception Egypt had in its own might, power, and its gods. It humbled Pharaoh and his entire people. Therefore, all people and even animals suffered during the plagues. The imprisoned thirsted during blood and the slave-girl suffered during boils, and the animals suffered death during pestilence.

During the proclamation, Moshe says that in a time like midnight—Egypt's darkest hour—the firstborn will die. This proclamation was for the benefit of the Israelites and the hope that Pharaoh would eventually hear about it. (Unlike the way Kli Yakar learns that it took place on Rosh Chodes, two weeks prior). It was unimportant to the Bnei Yisrael exactly what hour the plague will strike. All they knew was that they would experience that the firstborn of Egypt—from the Pharaoh that sits on the throne—down to his lowliest subject's firstborn—the millstone slave girl—will die. Also, they had to finish their celebratory meal prior to midnight. 'About midnight' was so that they would finish earlier and not tarry, miscalculating the time.

When the plague actually occurred, the Torah tells us that "And HaShem struck down." (Shemos 12:29). HaShem carried out the plague. He struck down the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the imprisoned in the dungeon, the foreigner who is unlucky enough to be Mitzrayim at the time. This plague was not limited to Pharaoh, his servants, and his people. This plague killed every firstborn in the entire borders of Mitzaryim, be they Egyptian or Hittite or Cushite. Only those with blood on the doorposts were spared. The fuller broadness of the facts is recorded but HaShem did not feel it necessary for His purpose to proclaim it earlier that day.

Now, Pharaoh was not literally sitting on his throne. The Torah tells us he had to get up. (Shemos 12:30). Moshe used the term during his proclamation to tell the Bnei Yisrael that no matter who had the firstborn was, be it the great Pharaoh who sits on his throne, the firstborn will die. The flowery language is now for their sake. By the plagues the Torah spoke facts as they occurred. They hit Pharaoh, his servants, and his people. It is for the benefit of those that were slaves for centuries to the Pharaoh that sits on the throne of Egypt to hear that *from Pharaoh who*

sits on the throne to the slave girl behind the millstone, all firstborn will be killed. That adequately displayed the magnitude of the plague.

Then, during the plague, it uses similar language, that from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on the throne to the imprisoned in the dungeon, all firstborn were struck dead. It is also used to compare Pharaoh to the imprisoned. For Pharaoh and the remaining servants and people alive, the plague made its own point. The great Pharaoh who sits on the throne is no better than the foreigner who was conquered in war or the criminal who has been imprisoned. To Bnei Yisrael, they hear that the once mighty Pharaoh is equal to a slave girl; the effect on Egypt by the plague is that the once great Pharaoh is now equal to the imprisoned.

Another reason for this term is that it is possible that this Pharaoh did not serve as Pharaoh very long. Shortly before Moshe came to Mitzrayim from Midian the Torah records how the King of Egypt died. (Shemos 2:23). This Pharaoh that suffered the makkos may have been a relatively new Pharaoh as well. HaShem is making the point: it's not the present Pharaoh. It's the seat of power. It's the throne that is being diminished, humiliated, humbled, and being taught the lesson. It is the throne, the seat of power in Egypt that is being struck against during this plague.

As for the animals, they were not spared by the great flood either. When HaShem brings a punishment on the world or a country, when a sign or wonder must be made, there is no distinction. "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh, for with a mighty hand he will send them out, and with a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land." (Ibid 6:1). "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I stretch forth My hand over Egypt, and I will take the children of Israel out of their midst." (Ibid 7:5).

Bonus Shtikel

Moshe proclaims that at around midnight all the firstborn in Mitzrayim will die. (Shemos 11:4). Who was Moshe talking to?

It cannot be Moshe that was talking to Pharaoh. It has to be that Moshe was talking to the Bnei Yisrael. If we read the entire portion it becomes clear he is not talking to Pharaoh, not on the 14th of the First Month, nor earlier. After the makko of choshech / darkness, Pharaoh summons Moshe. (Shemos 10:24). When they cannot agree on who will go out of Egypt to serve the Lord of the Hebrews, Pharaoh tells Moshe that he will not see his face again upon pain of death. (Ibid 10:28). Moshe agrees with Pharaoh. (Ibid 10:29). Now there is a break in the Torah.

Next, HaShem tells Moshe there is one more plague. (Ibid 11:1). HaShem also tells Moshe that he should tell the Israelites to get gold and silver from their neighbors. (11:2). Another break. Next Moshe tells the Israelites "So said the Lord....." about the last plague. (11:4-7). He said this in the streets.

Now, it gets confusing when the next passuk says "And all these servants of yours will come down to Me and prostrate themselves to Me, saying, 'Go out, you and all the people who are at your feet,' and afterwards I will go out." Then He exited from Pharaoh with burning anger." (11:8). It seems to be saying that Moshe left Pharaoh's presence in burning anger after giving the warning of the final plague. It also seems that the servants will bow down to Moshe.

Upon careful reading the plain understanding is that it is not Moshe's feet or Moshe leaving Pharaoh. It is HaShem's feet and HaShem was leaving Pharaoh. Passuk 8 still follows the introduction of "So said HaShem" in verse 11:4. Moshe was still quoting HaShem. The Torah first says, "in order that you may know that HaShem makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel." (Ibid 11:7). This is not for Pharaoh to know. Pharaoh already had nine other plagues to each him that lesson. Moshe told Pharaoh many times that the point was so Pharaoh would know that HaShem distinguishes between Egypt and the Hebrews. (see ibid 7:5, 8:18, 9:4). This distinction was now for the Bnei Yisrael to see and understand that HaShem separates them from Egypt.

It follows, that the passuk is still Moshe quoting HaShem and referring to the Egyptians, and is read like this: *And all these servants of yours—all servants of Egypt—will come down to Me and prostrate themselves to Me, saying, 'Go out HaShem, leave Egypt, take your powers and your signs and your wonders, and leave Egypt. You and all the people who are at your feet—*

both the Israelites and the Egyptians who want to follow You. And afterwards I, HaShem, will go out. (Ibid 11:8).

Further, there is no reason for Moshe to have anger. “Then He went out from with Pharaoh with burning anger.” (Ibid 11:8). Moshe should understand Pharaoh. HaShem kept saying how HaShem manipulated Pharaoh into hardening his own heart. In that case, Moshe would understand. Why the anger? It was HaShem that was left with burning anger.

However, if HaShem manipulated Pharaoh why did HaShem have burning anger? The anger refers to the final makko, the death of the firstborn. The plague was the manifestation of HaShem’s burning anger. This is a punishment and HaShem finally resolved its anger toward Egypt. It’s akin to reading the passuk *HaShem went out from with Pharaoh with his final plague. Then HaShem finally left and took His people with him.* The next passuk corroborates this. “HaShem said to Moshe, “Pharaoh will not heed you, in order to increase My miracles in the land of Egypt. Moshe and Aaron had performed all these miracles before Pharaoh, but HaShem strengthened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel out of his land.” (11:9-10).

These last two pesukim reiterate what HaShem said to Moshe outside of Egypt, prior to Moshe coming to Egypt to talk to Pharaoh. “I will slay Pharaoh’s firstborn.” (Ibid 4:23). These two pesukim sum it all up. Moshe and Aharaon performed the miracles and wonders, commencing from the staff turning into the serpent-monster, tanin, (Ibid 7:10) all the way through Darkness (Ibid 10:21). As for the tenth plague, it was HaShem who did Makkos Bechoros himself (12:12). Therefore, it can’t be that Moshe and Aharon are who the Torah refers to doing the final mako. It must be all the previous wonders.

The final plague did not occur until the night of the 15th (night preceding day) of the First Month. Yet, between Moshe leaving Pharaoh and that night were many days. Apparently, Moshe was thrown out of Pharaoh’s audience and threatened upon death not to return, prior to Rosh Chodesh. Moshe had to instruct the Bnei Yisrael about Rosh Chodesh. Certainly it preceded the tenth of the month, as the Torah specifically says that Moshe instructed the Bnei Yisrael about the Korban Pesach. (Ibid 12:3). He could not, then, have returned on the 14th to warn Pharaoh.

The warning Moshe gives here is “about midnight.” (11:4). It does not say, in two weeks’ time at midnight. Rashi (and those that quote him) learn that “about midnight” was used so that the Egyptians should not make light of HaShem when their calculation of midnight came and no firstborn died yet. (That in it of itself is hard to understand, as the plague would surely have its

effect even if it came after a few minutes of mockery. I find the meaning is that the Bnei Yisrael should not miss the midnight deadline to eat their Korbon Pesach by miscalculating when midnight is). Therefore, Moshe could not have said “one night in the future, around midnight.” It was a specific prophesy about this particular night. Now, if one would want to read that the Torah left out the words “on the 14th of this month about midnight” or “in two weeks’ time about midnight” the plain reading does not follow as we’ll show below.

The reason the text summarized that Moshe and Aharon performed all the miracles, is because when Moshe left Pharaoh, Hashem told him about the one final plague. HaShem then gave him all the instruction that follows in the next chapter. (Ibid 12:1-28). However, since the Torah was already talking about the final plague it mentions what Moshe proclaimed about it first. The Torah does this, finishes one topic and then gives the details of what happened in between. The Torah hints at it by saying “Please, speak into the ears of the people, and let them borrow, each man from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor, silver vessels and golden vessels.” (Ibid 11:2). HaShem granted the Israelites favor in the eyes of the Egyptians. (Ibid 11:3). This was told to Moshe prior to him proclaiming about the tenth plague. Yet, the Bnei Yisrael did not request these items until after the plague. (12:35-36). They could not even request it the night of the plague because they were instructed not to leave their houses until morning. (12:22). The Torah was giving a summary of beginning to end of this episode and then it went into specifics of what occurred in between.

This also explains “And Pharaoh arose at night, he and all his servants and all the people of Egypt, and there was a great outcry in Egypt, for there was no house in which no one was dead.” (12:30). If Pharaoh was warned about the makko how could he sleep? Further, even if he had such hubris and a hardened heart and could sleep, all his servants and the entire people of Egypt, too? What happened to those Egyptians that feared HaShem? (Ibid 9:20).

No, Pharaoh did not know. His people did not know. Moshe made his proclamation for Beni Yisrael’s benefit, in Goshen, that afternoon. His proclamation followed his instructions earlier in the month to celebrate the First Month, to prepare a lamb, sheep, or goat, and to put the blood on the doorposts.

“Moshe summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, ‘Draw forth or purchase for yourselves sheep for your families and slaughter the Pesach offering. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop and immerse it in the blood that is in the basin, and you shall extend to the lintel and to

the two doorposts the blood that is in the basin. And you shall not go out, any man from the entrance of his house until morning. The Lord will pass to smite the Egyptians, and He will see the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, and the Lord will pass over the entrance, and He will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses to smite you.” (Ibid 12:21-23). Then later, on the 14th Moshe proclaimed his prophesy about the tenth plague. *So the Bnei Yisrael went and did; they prepared the lamb, they watched it from the tenth until the 14th, they slaughtered it, and they put the blood on their doorposts. As the HaShem had commanded Moshe and Aaron, so they did.* (Ibid 12:28). Then, did Moshe go out and proclaim. “So said HaShem, at about midnight tonight all firstborn of Egypt will die, from Pharaoh who sits on the throne...” (Ibid 11:4).

Pharaoh did not know, he was not warned. The word that Moshe spoke must have never reached him. It was proclaimed in Goshen and all those fearing HaShem were preparing the korban pesach and putting blood on their doorposts. Word did not reach the palace. There was no warning this time and the entire people of Mitzarayim were caught unawares. So Pharaoh got up. He and all his servants and all his people got up. As there was a cry in Egypt as was never heard before. So began the day of geula.