

"And Moshe said; so said Hashem, about midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt." (11:4)

Rashi cites *Chazal*, who say that Moshe emphasized the word, about midnight, rather than, precisely at midnight. This was so that if Pharaoh's astrologers had erred in timing, they would not say that Moshe lied in predicting the time for the plague. This seems unnecessary. What if the astrologers did not err and were able to pinpoint the exact time of midnight? They would still say that Moshe lied, since he said about midnight. What benefit was there in attempting to satisfy the perverted Egyptian mindset? We may advance the question further. It seems that had Moshe said, precisely midnight, and the plague had been "off" by one minute, the Egyptians would have accused Moshe of lying and would have denied the entire miracle. Is this behavior rational?

In light of these questions, *Horav M.D. Soloveichik, Shlita*, derives a lesson in human nature. Pharaoh and the Egyptians were not asking logical "questions" in order to understand Hashem's actions. Rather, their goal was to seek "answers" which would justify their decadent behavior. By finding fault in everything, they foolishly thought that their conduct was mitigated. *Resha'im*, wicked people, do not ask questions, they give answers that rationalize their beliefs. For Pharaoh and his astrologers, a profound question was not necessary. A simple "answer" to "question" the credibility of Hashem's miracle sufficed to validate their stubborn defiance in their own minds.

This idea was previously expounded by *Horav Chaim Volozhiner z.t.l.* On one occasion, a student of the famous *Volozhin yeshiva* went "*off the derech*." He became a secular Jew, rejecting the yoke of *Torah* and *mitzvos*. This "ex-student" once met *Reb Chaim* and questioned him regarding issues of *emunah*, faith, and Jewish philosophy. In response, *Reb Chaim* questioned him, "Did you have similar questions about Judaism and its tenets while you were attending the *yeshiva*?" The student responded that, indeed, he did not. *Reb Chaim* then retorted, "This indicates that you have no questions at all. Rather, you are now suggesting answers merely to justify your rejection of *Torah* values and ensuing secular lifestyle. I respond only to questions, not to answers!"