

## And there was a thick darkness throughout the land of Egypt for a three-day period. (10:22)

*Rashi* cites the *Midrash* that suggests one of the reasons for the three-day darkness. He posits that it occurred so that the Jews who were too assimilated into the Egyptian culture would die. As a result of the darkness the Egyptians did not see their deaths. Therefore, they could not assert that the plagues affected the Jews as well as the Egyptians. We may question the need for a complete change in nature just to purge *Klal Yisrael* of an element so alienated that it had no hope of ever returning to the Covenant. If the purpose was that those Jews would perish in a manner that did not engender any publicity, they could have died from various causes over an extended period of time. Why did they have to die specifically during the three days in which *Klal Yisrael* was preparing for the final act--*Yetzias Mitzrayim*?

**Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl**, infers an important lesson in human nature from this *pasuk*. People frequently talk about the great things they hope to do. In the same breath as they expound their glorious plans, they offer all kinds of excuses to justify their inability to bring their plans to fruition. The moment that the "excuses" are addressed and the obstacles that robbed them of success are removed, the truth becomes apparent. They never had any valid plans; their idealistic projects were nothing more than talk. Why is this? What is it about the moment of truth that suddenly causes the person to abandon his lofty plans? *Horav* Levinstein contends that it is the *yetzer hora*, the evil inclination, that suddenly rises to the occasion to sway the person from realizing his goals. Why not earlier? Why does he wait until the moment of decision before reacting? Obviously, the *yetzer hora* is not concerned with conjecture, with a person's plans. He only responds to reality, when a person is no longer delaying his intention, when he is about to take action. The *yetzer hora* challenges those who are on the verge of action, --not those who are thinking about moving forward.

As long as the Jews were in Egypt and the Exodus was not imminent, the Jews offered no opposition to leaving. The *reshaim*, evil ones who had assimilated and had acclimated into Egyptian culture, found lame excuses for staying, but nobody actually protested. When Pharaoh's resolve weakened, so that he evinced a more positive attitude towards the Jews' release, then these Jews came forward in protest. They did not want to leave. The *yetzer hora* took hold of them when it was evident that the redemption was near. When these recalcitrant Jews demonstrated their true colors, their actions warranted the ultimate punishment.