

There shall not be a plague of destruction upon you when I strike in the land of Egypt. (12:13)...You shall not leave the entrance of the house until morning. (12:22)

The Jews were warned to stay home during the destruction that Hashem was wreaking in Egypt. What about the Jew who left his house? Did he perish together with the Egyptians? *Rashi* alludes to such a situation when he comments concerning the *pasuk*, “There shall not be a plague of destruction upon you.” If a Jew happened to be in an Egyptian home during the plague, was he smitten together with his Egyptian host? No. This was Hashem's promise: “Jews will not die.” *Mishnas Rashi* wonders why there is a question that a member of the Jewish People would suffer in the destruction. Just because he happened to be in an Egyptian home during the plague is not reason for inclusion in the punishment – or is it?

Mishnas Rashi explains that we must first ask ourselves what a Jew is doing in the house of an Egyptian. Apparently, a Jew who felt comfortable visiting an Egyptian must have been dealing with some severe spiritual deficiencies. If, after all the Egyptians did to us, he had the temerity to visit and maintain a social relationship with one of them, he was profoundly challenged in his spiritual realm. Furthermore, after Egypt endured so much from the plagues that devastated Egypt, one would think that by now the most obtuse person would acknowledge that Hashem was involved in every aspect of the world. Yet, this person defied Hashem and left his house to pay a social call to his Egyptian friend! While outwardly he may have appeared to be a Jew, his self-loathing actions indicated that he would have liked to be perceived as an Egyptian. This is grounds for the assumption that he should have been treated as an Egyptian and suffered their punishment.

Thus, the Torah writes, “There shall not be any plague of destruction upon you.” A Jew remains a Jew, regardless of his nefarious actions. A Jew has no exit strategy. Hashem protects him. He always leaves the “light on” for His children – regardless of their errant behavior. That is what parents do.

When we see a Jew who, for a variety of reasons, has chosen – or was a victim of his parents' choice – to negate Torah and *mitzvah* practice, it is not a reason for us to look at him askance. If Hashem accepts him the way he is – so should we. Impressions go two ways. When a non-practicing Jew looks at us in a disapproving manner, it is no less inappropriate. We are inclined to accept everyone who might be different from us even when he/she: adheres to and lives a life of moral deviance and abandon; chooses to liberalize his/her moral/ethical compass; or rejects the Divine Authorship of the Torah, including all the ramifications that result from this belief. Yet, when an observant Jew walks by with his *Tzitzis* proudly displayed, wears a *Tallis* in the street on *Shabbos*, or displays our distinctive mode of dress (both male and female), they cringe, snub, and, at times, make uncalled for remarks.

Rabbi Abraham Twerski, zl, related (“Generation to Generation”) that he was once on a bus,

dressed in his usual *chassidic* garb. A passenger who was displeased with his mode of dress, accosted him. "Why can't you people catch up with the times? You aren't living in Europe. We are in modern America. Get with the program!" Rabbi Twerski replied that he was Amish. When the passenger heard this, he apologized profusely and even lauded him for adhering to his traditions.