

שמות פרק יא

(ד: ויאמר משה פה אָמַר יְדוּד פְּחַצַּת הַלַּיְלָה אֲנִי יוֹצֵא בְּתוֹךְ מִצְרַיִם

And Moshe said, about midnight HASHEM will go out into Egypt.

רש"י על שמות פרק יא פסוק ד

ור"ד כמו כבחצות הלילה ואמרו שאמר משה כחצות דמשמע סמוך לו או לפניו או לאחריו ולא אמר בחצות שמא יטעו אצטגניני פרעה ויאמרו משה בדאי הוא אבל הקב"ה יודע עתיו ורגעיו אמר בחצות :

Our Rabbis have taught us, about midnight. Moshe said about midnight, maybe a little before or a little after but Moshe didn't say exactly midnight, lest the astrologers make a mistake and say that Moshe is a liar. But HASHEM knows His moments and time, and said exactly midnight

Background:

Rashi is telling us is that Moshe changed the wording of HASHEM. HASHEM said that He will kill the first born of Egypt exactly at midnight, yet Moshe said about midnight – because Pharaoh's astrologers might miscalculate the time, so even though HASHEM would have killed the first born exactly at midnight, they might err and think that Moshe was a liar.

Question:

How can a man be so foolish? In our day and age, where we have the benefit of extremely accurate time pieces it would be the height of folly, to assume that we were right and G-d was wrong. But in ancient Egypt, the time pieces were very primitive and highly inaccurate, why would they assume that they had the right time? Maybe they made an error.

And even more, the system of keeping time in the ancient world was the sundial. It might be possible for an Egyptian to give some validity to the sun dial's accuracy. But the killing of the first born was at midnight, how accurate was the system of telling time at night? So how could it be possible that the Egyptians would assume that HASHEM was wrong and their time was right, when their opinion was based on such flimsy ground?

