

I'M NEVER WRONG

Background

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

שמות פרק יא

ד וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה כֹּה אָמַר
יְיָ כְּחֻצַּת הַלַּיְלָה אֲנִי
יוֹצֵא בְּתוֹךְ מִצְרַיִם:

And Moshe said, "At 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

At about midnight – "At about midnight" could mean a little before or a little after. Moshe didn't say exactly at midnight, lest the astrologers make a mistake and say that Moshe was a liar. But HASHEM knows His moments and time, and said "exactly at midnight."

Questions

How can a man be so foolish? In our day and age, where we have the benefit of extremely accurate timepieces, it would be the height of folly to assume that we were right and G-d was wrong. How much more so in ancient Egypt? Their timepieces 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 sundial's accuracy. But the killing of the firstborn was at midnight. How accurate was the system of telling time at night? 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?