TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



וארא

לעילוי נשמת



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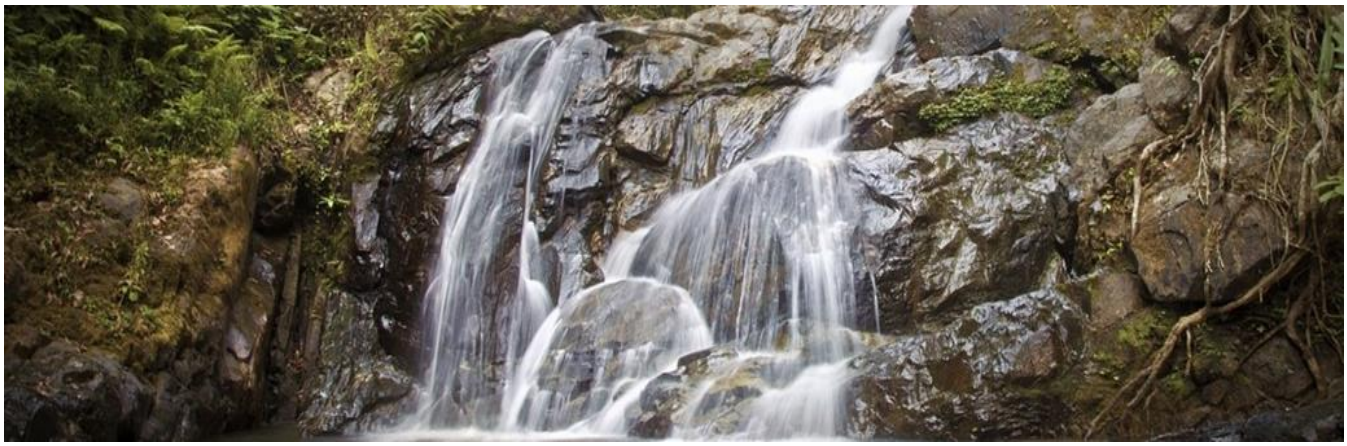
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Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought. The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah")

רַק בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא הָיָה בָּרָד ***"Only in the land of Goshen, where Bnei Yisrael were, there was no hail."*** *(9:26)*

R' Simcha Zissel Broide z"l observes that this distinction between the Egyptians and Bnei Yisrael showed Hashem's love for the Jewish people more so than did the distinctions made in earlier plagues.

For example, the fact that the plague of Blood did not affect Bnei Yisrael did not necessarily show the extent of Hashem's love for them because water is a necessity of life. (Hashem "had" to save the Jews.) In contrast, the plague of Hail struck only at selected crops. -The fact that Hashem did not strike even selected crops of the Jewish people shows His regard for them.

הִנֵּה יַד־ה' הוֹיָה בְּמִקְנְךָ אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה "Behold, the hand of Hashem is on your livestock that are in the field ..." (9:3)

Why is the plague described as coming from the hand of Hashem? Likewise, what is meant by the "hand" in (Shmot 14:31), "Yisrael saw the great hand that Hashem inflicted upon Egypt," and (Devarim 2:15), "Even the hand of Hashem was upon them"?

R' Shlomo Zalman Ehrenreich z"l Hy"d (1863-1944; rabbi of Simleu, Romania) writes: The Gemara (Berachot 4b) asks, "Why is there no verse beginning with the letter 'nun' in Ashrei?"

Because it alludes to the downfall of the "enemies of Yisrael" [a euphemism the Gemara uses to avoid saying "the downfall of Yisrael"], as we read (Amos 5:2), "Naflah / She has fallen and will no longer rise – maiden of Yisrael."

Thus, writes R' Ehrenreich, the letter "nun" alludes to downfall. "Nun" is the 14th letter of the Aleph-Bet. Fourteen is represented by the letters yud-dalet, which also spell the Hebrew word "Yad" / "hand," specifically, the "hand" of Hashem which cause the downfall of Egypt.



וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָשָׂאתִי אֶת־יָדִי לָתֵת אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי אֹתָהּ לָכֶם מוֹרָשָׁה אֲנִי ה' - "I shall bring you to the land about which I raised My hand to give it to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov; and I shall give it to you as a legacy–I am Hashem." (6:8)

R' Shmuel Yehuda Katznellenbogen z"l (1521-1597; rabbi of Venice, Italy) writes: There is a difference between the word "morashah" / legacy and "yerushah" / inheritance, namely that one receives an inheritance, while he leaves a legacy.

It follows that, in this verse, Hashem hinted to Moshe Rabbeinu that the generation of the Exodus would not enter Eretz Yisrael. They would never inherit the Land; they would only leave their rights to it as a legacy for their descendants.

R' Katznellenbogen continues: The word morashah also appears in the verse (Devarim 33:4), תּוֹרָה צִוָּה־לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה מוֹרָשָׁה קְהִלַּת יַעֲקֹב "***Moshe commanded us the Torah, a morashah for the Congregation of Yaakov.***" - This indicates that we are commanded to pass on the Torah to our children as a legacy.

וְהַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר־בַּיְאֹר תָּמוּת וּבָאַשׁ הַיְאֹר וְנִלְאוּ מִצְרַיִם לִשְׁתּוֹת מַיִם מִן־הַיְאֹר... וַיֶּהֶפְכוּ כָּל־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר־בַּיְאֹר לְדָם... וְהַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר־בַּיְאֹר מֵתָה וַיִּבְאַשׁ הַיְאֹר וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ מִצְרַיִם לִשְׁתּוֹת מַיִם מִן־הַיְאֹר וַיְהִי הַדָּם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

"'The fish-life that is in the water shall die and the River shall become foul. Egypt will grow weary of trying to drink water from the River.' . . . All the water that was in the River changed to blood. The fish-life that was in the River died and the River became foul; Egypt could not drink water from the River, and the blood was throughout the land of Egypt." (7:18, 20-21)

R' Yosef Bechor Shor z"l (France; 12th century) writes: It seems to me that the Nile turned to blood for a very short time only. The fish died in the blood, and then the river turned back into water.



The proof of this is that the verse does not say that the Egyptians could not drink because the river was blood; rather, they could not drink because the water was foul [from the dead fish]. Moreover, the Torah says that the Egyptian magicians also turned water to blood. Where did they get water with which to do that? It must be that the river turned back into water almost immediately.

וַיִּשְׁלַח פַּרְעֹה וַיִּקְרָא לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם חָטָאתִי הַפָּעַם - "*Pharaoh sent and summoned Moshe and Aharon and said to them, "This time I have sinned* ..." (9:27)



Why, after the plague of hail, did Pharaoh admit that he had sinned?

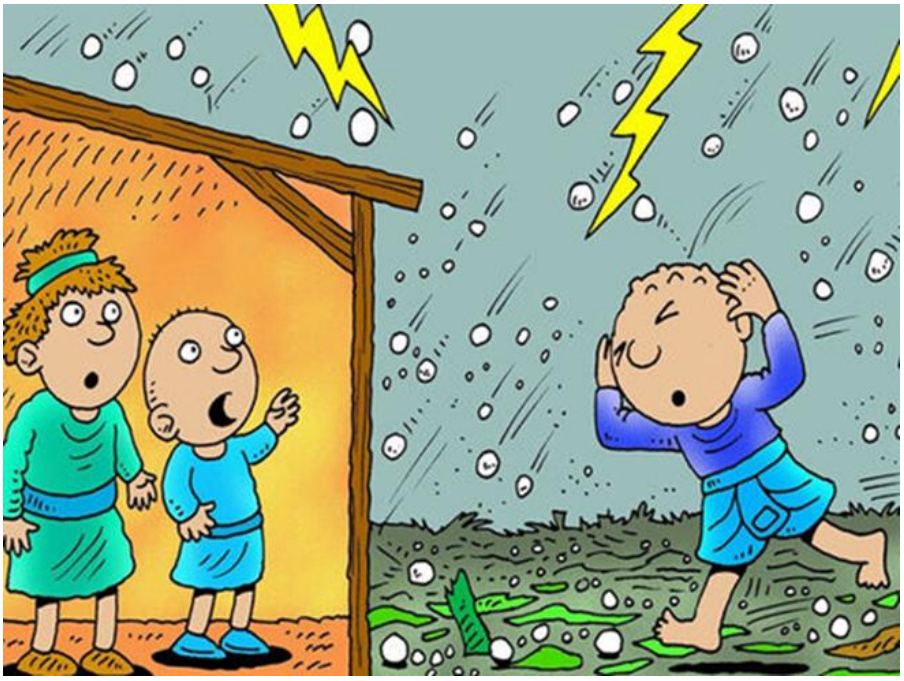
R' Raphael Emanuel Chai Riki z"l (1688-1743; author of Mishnat Chassidim and other works) explains: The hail destroyed the crops, which ultimately would cause famine. - This reminded Pharaoh of the kindness that Yosef had done for the Egyptians, and that caused him to acknowledge that it was wrong to oppress Yosef's family.

הַעְתִּירוּ אֶל־ה' וְרַב מֵהְיֹת קֹלֹת אֱלֹקִים וּבָרָד - '*Entreat Hashem — there has been an overabundance of G-dly *thunder* and *hail* ...'

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מֹשֶׁה כְּצֵאתִי אֶת־הָעִיר אֶפְרֹשׂ אֶת־כַּפַּי אֶל־ה' הַקֹּלוֹת יֶחְדָּלוּן וְהַבָּרָד לֹא יִהְיֶה־עוֹד "*Moshe said to him, "When I leave the city, I shall spread out my hands to Hashem; the *thunder* will cease and the *hail* will no longer be ...'

מֹשֶׁה.. וַיִּפְרֹשׂ כַּפָּיו אֶל־ה' וַיַּחְדְּלוּ הַקֹּלוֹת וְהַבָּרָד וּמָטָר לֹא־נִתַּךְ אָרְצָה -"*Moshe ... stretched out his hands to Hashem; the *thunder* and *hail* ceased and rain did not reach the earth.*

וַיַּרְא פַּרְעֹה כִּי־חָדַל הַמָּטָר וְהַבָּרָד וְהַקֹּלֹת וַיֹּסֶף לַחֲטֹא וַיְכַבֵּד לִבּוֹ הוּא וַעֲבָדָיו "*Pharaoh saw that the rain, the *hail*, and the *thunder* ceased, and he continued to sin; and he made his heart stubborn, he and his servants*." (9:28-29, 33-34)



Why, in fact, did Pharaoh continue to sin?

R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (1784-1869; rabbi of Brody, Galicia) explains:

Pharaoh appears to have been more afraid of the thunder than of the hail; thus, he asked Moshe (verse 28) to pray first that the thunder stop and only then the hail. Moshe agreed to Pharaoh's request (verse 29) and Hashem accepted Moshe's prayer (verse 33).

However, Hashem had His own calculations as well. Midrash Rabbah teaches that the hail that was in the process of falling when Moshe prayed for the plague to end stopped in mid-air and remained there for future use (see Yechezkel ch.13).

Hashem did stop producing thunder when Moshe prayed for the thunder to end, and hail when Moshe prayed for the hail to end. But the last hailstones never reached the earth; rather, they gathered in the atmosphere. Thus, from Pharaoh's vantage point, the hail stopped (i.e., it stopped reaching the ground) while he could still hear the thunder. The hail appeared to end first (verse 34).

Thus, Pharaoh believed that Moshe's prayer was not answered; apparently, the whole incident had been a coincidence, and there was no reason for Pharaoh to change his ways.

Perhaps, concludes R' Kluger, Hashem acted this way so that Pharaoh could continue to rationalize his refusal to let Bnei Yisrael go. (**Imrei Shefer**)

וַיֶּחֱזַק לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שִׁלַּח אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - ***"Pharaoh's heart became strong and he did not send out Bnei Yisrael ..."*** (9:35)

Why is Pharaoh's refusal to listen to Hashem referred to as having a strong heart? Does this imply that one who does listen to Hashem is weak?



R' Baruch Ezrachi Zt'l (Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Ateret Yisrael in Yerushalayim) explains as follows:

Many commentaries asked: Was it fair to bring the plagues on Pharaoh if his heart was hardened and he could do nothing to avoid the plagues?

Ramban answers that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart did not destroy his free will; to the contrary, it restored his ability to choose. Had Pharaoh released Bnei Yisrael as a result of one of the plagues, he would not have been doing so of his own free will. Rather, he would have done so because the plagues coerced him to act.

Based on Ramban's explanation, we can understand why the Torah speaks here and elsewhere of "strengthening Pharaoh's heart." Pharaoh's heart, his will, was weakened by the plagues, and it had to be strengthened so that it would be in equilibrium. Then, and only then, would Pharaoh have free will. (Birkat Mordechai p.257)

"In the war, I lost my entire family – I simply lost everything; but G-d I did not lose." ~ The Klausenberger Rebbe zt"l (1905-1994).

Shabbat, Emunah & Exodus

We read near the beginning of our parashah that Moshe spoke Hashem's words to Bnei Yisrael, "but they did not heed Moshe, because of shortness of breath and hard work."



R' Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l (1823-1900; chassidic rebbe in Lublin, Poland) explains this verse in light of the Midrash Rabbah, which records that, while the young Moshe lived in Pharaoh's palace, he convinced Pharaoh that slaves work more efficiently when they are given one day of rest each week. Pharaoh instructed Moshe to implement this idea, and Moshe arranged for Bnei Yisrael to have Shabbat as a day off. Later, at the end of last week's parashah, we read that Pharaoh decreed (5:9), "Let the work be heavier upon the men and let them engage in it; and let them not pay attention to false words," i.e., he took away their day of rest so they would have no time to think about redemption.

R' Tzaddok writes: Shabbat itself is a source of emunah / faith. Thus, when Shabbat was taken away from Bnei Yisrael, their emunah was lost as well.

This requires explanation, however, for Moshe Rabbeinu himself attributed the initial failure of his mission to his speech impediment. R' Tzaddok explains that here, Moshe is not referring to his speech impediment -"kevad peh", for Hashem had already promised to heal that condition. Rather, Moshe meant that, as Bnei Yisrael's leader, his ability to speak effectively to Pharaoh was proportional to the level of Bnei Yisrael's emumah. which was tied to their Shabbat observance. (**Pri Tzaddik: Va'era 7**)

לֵךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה בַּבֹּקֶר הִנֵּה יֹצֵא הַמָּיְמָה וְנִצַּבְתָּ לִקְרָאתוֹ עַל־שְׂפַת הַיְאֹר - "*Go to Pharaoh in the morning–behold! he goes out to the water- and you shall stand opposite him at the Nile's bank*." (7:15)



Rashi z"l explains: "[Pharaoh] went to relieve himself. Pharaoh claimed to be a deity and asserted that, because of his divine power, he did not need to relieve himself; therefore, he used to rise early and go to the Nile, where he relieved himself in secret."

R' Mordechai Krause shlita (rabbi in Yerucham, Israel) asks: Earlier (6:13) we read, "Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon and commanded them . . . regarding Pharaoh," which Rashi explains as a commandment to show respect to Pharaoh. Why then did Hashem now command Moshe and Aharon to humiliate Pharaoh by intruding on his most private activity?

R' Krause answers: Pharaoh refused to subjugate himself to Hashem's command that he let Bnei Yisrael go because Pharaoh suffered from ga'avah / haughtiness.

Deep down, the essence of haughtiness is the feeling: "I am unique; there is no one above me, and it is unimaginable that I would need to humble myself before anyone."

In this vein, Pharaoh claimed (Yechezkel 29:3), "My Nile is mine, and I made myself."

In order for Hashem to be revealed in the world, Pharaoh had to be humbled, to be shown that Hashem is far more powerful than he. A necessary first step was to humiliate Pharaoh by reminding him that he could not even control his own body.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מֹשֶׁה כְּצֵאתִי אֶת־הָעִיר אֶפְרֹשׂ אֶת־כַּפַּי אֶל־ה׳ ***And Moshe said to him, "When I leave the city, I will spread my hands to Hashem.*** (9:29)



Rashi explains בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר לֹא הִתְפַּלֵּל לְפִי שֶׁהָיְתָה מְלֵאָה גִלּוּלִים - that Moshe did not want to pray inside the city because it was full of Egyptian gods.

R' Heschel of Cracow z"l (died 1663) asks: Why was this a problem for the first time after the seventh plague? Moshe never said before that he would pray only outside of the city!

One of Egypt's gods was the sheep. Just before the seventh plague, the Torah says הַיָּרֵא אֶת־דְּבַר ה׳ מֵעַבְדֵי פַרְעֹה הֵנִיס אֶת־עֲבָדָיו וְאֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ אֶל־הַבָּתִּים (9:20), "***Whoever among the servants of Pharaoh feared the word of Hashem hurried his servants and livestock to the houses.***" - Before this plague, the sheep were in the fields, so Moshe prayed in the city. Now, the sheep were in the city, so Moshe prayed in the fields. (**Chanukat Ha'Torah**)

ה׳ הַצַּדִּיק וַאֲנִי וְעַמִּי הָרְשָׁעִים ***"Hashem is the Righteous One."*** (9:27)

Why did Pharaoh acknowledge this specifically after the plague of hail?

R' Chizkiyah bar Manoach z"l (13th century) explains that it was because Hashem warned the Egyptians to take their sheep indoors. Human warriors do not give such warning to their victims. (**Chizkuni**)

וְהַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר־בַּיְאֹר תָּמוּת "The fish that is in the water shall die." (7:18)



R' Eliezer David Gruenwald z"l (1867-1928; Hungarian rabbi and Rosh Yeshiva) asks: Why was this included in Moshe's warning to Pharaoh? Obviously, if the Nile turns to blood, all the fish will die!

He explains: Pharaoh's magicians ostensibly mimicked the plague and turned water to blood. However, what they actually did was an illusion; the water did not turn to blood but just looked like blood.

Anticipating that, Moshe warned Pharaoh, "When I turn the Nile to blood, it will be the real thing and the fish will die." (**Keren L'David**)

"Egypt could not drink water from the River, and the blood was throughout the land of Egypt." (7:21)



Midrash Rabbah relates that even if an Egyptian and one of Bnei Yisrael drank from the same cup, the Egyptian would find the liquid to be blood, while the Jew would have water.

R' Yaakov Aryeh Guterman z"l (1792-1874; Chassidic Rebbe in Radzymin, Poland) notes that this miracle involving water foreshadowed the splitting of the Yam Suf.

He writes: The Gematria of "**מים**" / "water" equals 91 (40+10+40, plus 1 to represent the whole word). This is equal to the

combined Gematria of the Divine Name "**י-ה-ו-ה**" (a Name that denotes Divine mercy) plus the Divine Name spelled "**א-ד-נ-י**" (a Name that denotes Divine justice).

Both in the case of the Plague of Blood and in the case of the Splitting of the Sea, the water was an instrument of mercy to Bnei Yisrael and an instrument of justice to the Egyptians. (**Bikkurei Aviv**)



וְהַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר־בַּיְאֹר מֵתָה וַיִּבְאַשׁ הַיְאֹר וְלֹא־יָכְלוּ מִצְרַיִם לִשְׁתּוֹת מַיִם מִן הַיְאֹר וַיְהִי הַדָּם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

And the fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile became putrid; the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile, and there was blood throughout the entire land of Egypt. (7:21)

The Torah reports this detail to show that the Egyptians realized that the plague was not an illusion. The blood would kill the people who drank it. The fact that the river stank proved that the plague was real.

When the Torah adds **וַיְהִי הַדָּם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם** – 'the blood persisted throughout the land of Egypt', the reference is to bathhouses, bathtubs, etc. Perhaps the Torah wanted to tell us that the Egyptians took the "blood" from one location to another. If the "blood" had been the result of witchcraft it would have reverted to water as soon as it had been removed from the sphere of the sorcerer who had performed the trick.

The Torah tells us that the Egyptians realized that this phenomenon was something over and above the kind they were used to see their sorcerers perform.





The Rav speaks often about the importance of speaking Yiddish. What about teaching in the yeshiva in Yiddish to a class that understands English better; is that the right way?

That's not a moot question; it's a very important question. It's worth teaching Yiddish to Ashkenazi boys and girls because in a certain sense it maintains the tradition; it maintains a certain aloofness from the nations – it shows we are a separate people.

However, many times the message gets lost in an unfamiliar language. When they teach in a foreign language so the children who barely understand Yiddish are lost – and sometimes the subject matter is so difficult in itself that even in English it's difficult- and now you compound the difficulty by teaching it in Yiddish. And therefore it's a good question.

Some children must have only English instruction. And even then, it's a question if they'll succeed. Because the Torah subjects are not easy. Chumash for some children is a mountain. It's remarkable how difficult it is for some children to climb that mountain. And then they need expensive tutors.

And Gemara?! Gemara is the Alps for some children; many fall down and become discouraged – they become disillusioned because of the

difficulties of the studies. And if their difficulty is increased by using a foreign language like Yiddish, it's a big problem. And therefore, wherever possible English should be used until the child knows the subject. Then Yiddish should be introduced. Exactly how much Yiddish and how much English must be left to the teacher on the spot.



When a father is blessing his children on Friday night, what should he have in mind? And also, what should the child who is receiving the blessing have in mind?

A bracha is said by the parents because they love their children. So you're saying it b'lev shaleim, with a full heart. And therefore Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens. He listens because it's being said with more kavanah. A bracha of a parent is more sincere.

Birchas av, barcheini avi. A father's bracha is more genuine than a stranger's bracha and therefore it's very important. Of course, you could always add even more kavanah. And what's the most important thought you should add?

You have to know that it's not your bracha; it's the bracha of Hashem that you're asking for. You're asking Hashem, "Please Hashem, bless my children they should all be well and live long; they should all be tzadikim; all should have the best shidduchim; all should be talmidei chachamim or the wives of talmidei chachamim; all should be healthy and they should have the most beautiful children; and after a long life, after 120 years, they should all be to go to Olam Habo."

You want to add the last one? You can add it, there's no harm. Now, what should the children think? Your children think, "Ribono Shel

Olam, I don't know what my father is thinking, but I'm thinking all these kavanos." So the child puts all the kavanos, all these thoughts, into his father's words – and Hakodosh Boruch Hu is listening to his thoughts as well.



Should a person eat meat every day?

Now, that's not my line – I'm not in the nutrition business. But I'll merely say this: In addition to having a varied diet of all kinds of food, not only one kind, in addition to that, everyone should learn not to be a slave to the dinner table. We eat for the purpose of being healthy.

The Rambam says that you should eat what's good for your health. He says, lo k'kelev u'kechamor, not like the dog or the donkey who eat only what's sweet for them. Animals eat what's sweet to them, but we have to eat what's good for us. And therefore, that's the only recommendation I'm able to give:

Eat what's healthful for you and it will be included in your service of Hashem if you'll add the thought of why you're doing it. Like it says in the Shulchan Aruch. The Shulchan Aruch says you should eat with the intention, kedai she'uchal la'avod es Hashem, so that I should have the strength, the energy, to be able to serve Hashem.

Always think that. I would recommend that you should say it too when you start eating. It's not a bad idea, only that your wife shouldn't hear it – she'll laugh at you. Or your husband will laugh at you. But you should say it anyhow, even if they'll laugh: "I'm going to eat now kedai she'uchal la'avod es Hashem." That's what the Shulchan Aruch says. You're eating in order to serve Hashem.



How should a person know when to enjoy this world and on the other hand when to be a porush, an abstainer, from this world?

And the answer is whatever is good for your health you should use and enjoy in this world. If you like to eat bread and butter and it's also good for you, or if you like to eat chicken and it's good for you, why not?! Eat!

But eat it b'simcha. Don't say "I don't like to eat." No, don't say that. You must have appetite; eat with appetite and the saliva will flow – it helps you to digest. The stomach juices flow and it helps you digest the food properly. Appetite helps you digest. Enjoy the food and at the same time say thank You to Him.

Any enjoyment you get from food or anything else in this world, thank Hashem, thank Hashem, thank Hashem! That's the purpose of all enjoyment in this world. However, sometimes when people become enslaved to certain things, it's a ruination.

You must be a porush from things that will enslave you. Let's say he's enslaved to cigarettes; in the beginning maybe he just enjoyed cigarettes but he's enslaved to it now. That's a ruination of a life! Don't be a slave to anything except to Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

A slave to cigarettes?! No. Anybody who becomes a slave, so Hashem says, "You're competing with My service." Not only cigarettes. You can become a slave even to things that are superfluous to eat; always wanting to nosh things. Don't be a slave to nosh – it's not healthy.

Anything that is good and healthy however, you have a right to eat and you should enjoy it and thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu for it.



On Shabbos Mevorchim we ask Hashem for a חַיִּים שֶׁל עֹשֶׁר וְכָבוֹד - a life of wealth and glory. But didn't we learn that glory is something that is inappropriate to run after in this world?

Good question. Why do we ask for a life of *osher v'chovod,* a life of wealth and glory?

The answer is this: We are not looking for glory – but we hope Hashem will help us behave in such a way that we *deserve* glory. If people will honor us because of our good character, we don't mind. We want to succeed in behaving in such a way that we deserve *kovod*, yes. I would like people to say, "Miller – he's a nice fellow!" I would like that, yes. Because that means that most likely I did something that would please people.

So you should do things in such a way that people should approve of you — but you're not living for *kovod*. And so, in that *tefillah* we ask Hashem, "Please, give us a life of *kovod*. Please help us this month so that we should behave in a dignified manner; decently and *Torah'dik*, and then we deserve to get *kovod* from people."

Oh, if we succeed in doing that this upcoming month, then we'll be very happy because that means that we've had a successful month.

"It is wise to keep focusing on the virtues of the person to whom you are married. This simple idea can easily save people much heartache and strife in their marriage. When you see the good in someone, it is much easier to tolerate the traits you find negative." ~ R' Zelig Pliskin.



לֵךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה בַּבֹּקֶר הִנֵּה֙ יֹצֵ֣א הַמָּ֔יְמָה *'Go to Pharaoh in the morning – behold! He goes out to the water*.' (7:15)



Rashi explains **לִנְקָבָיו; שֶׁהָיָה עוֹשֶׂה עַצְמוֹ אֱלוֹהַּ וְאוֹמֵר שֶׁאֵינוֹ צָרִיךְ לִנְקָבָיו, וּמַשְׁכִּים וְיוֹצֵא לַנִּילוּס וְעוֹשֶׂה שָׁם צָרְכָיו** *- the purpose of Pharaoh's daily jaunt to the Nile as going to the place in which he regularly relieved himself. Pharaoh pretended to be a god, and he would say that he has no need to relieve himself – as humans do. He would, therefore, arise early in the morning, go out to the Nile River and secretly tend to his body's needs.*

We derive from here, comments **Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita**, the strength of the power of the yetzer hora, evil inclination. Pharaoh lied to his entire country. He sold the lie that he was a god to anyone who would believe it.

So wrapped up was he in his lie that he actually fooled himself. He began to believe his own lie – even though deep down he knew that it was untrue. - He was not a god.

This is the power of insidious prevarication. It begins with a small white lie, a tinge of deceit, which festers and grows until it becomes a full - scale deception.

It, however, does not stop at this point, because none of us is beyond deceiving him/herself. Indeed, everyone has a little bit of "Pharaoh"

in himself. Deceiving others leads to self-deception, which, in its most extreme and pathological form, is deemed as delusional.

It is a condition that is much more pervasive than we think. We begin to twist the truth until we become convinced of its veracity. We dismiss certain facts that are incompatible with our myth of ourselves in favour of those that are less threatening and more corroborative. We become so "good" (or bad) at this distortion of facts that we begin rewriting our self-history for the purpose of preserving our (flawed) self-image.

This was Pharaoh. He was a wise man, but not as smart as the yetzer hora, evil inclination, which helped him along with his self-deception until it (in his cognitive dissonant state) became his (distorted) reality.

וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מִקֹּצֶר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה '***But they did not heed Moshe, because of shortness of breath and hard work***.' (6:9)

Imagine that a person is afflicted, persecuted, the victim of a vicious and cruel despot who has enslaved him for years. One would think that if someone would come along and tell him that it will soon be over-- he will be able to leave -- he would jump for joy and begin counting the minutes until the cuffs would be off and he could finally say good-bye to his life of misery.

Yet, we see here that, when Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen told Klal Yisrael that it was finally all over, they paid no attention to them. They continued their slave labour as if nothing had happened!

Had they lost all sense of feeling? Should they not have given Moshe and Aharon's message at least some consideration? Why did they completely ignore their message?

It is all about self-esteem. When a person gives up hope, he no longer cares about anything. He does not believe that salvation is just around the corner. As much as he has waited to get out, he no longer

believes that it is possible. When one no longer believes in others, the next step is his own lack of self-confidence. He has lost his self-esteem. Without self-esteem, one cannot function.

While many do go through the motions, that is all they are doing – going through the motions.

Horav Nachman Breslover, zl, teaches that the greatest gift we can give a person is the gift of self-esteem. If we can return a person's self-confidence, then we have saved him.

A rabbi was asked to visit an upstate New York prison that was home to a number of Jewish inmates. The holidays are an especially sad time for those incarcerated in restricted environments. It is a time for families to come together and share in each other's joys.

In prison, one is confronted with ultimate loneliness. Prisoners have a feeling that life has moved on and left them behind. Thus, anyone who can make the effort and has the emotional temerity to visit, in order to make a fellow Jew's life a little better is performing a special mitzvah.

The rabbi was well known for his love of all Jews. He considered reaching out to the unaffiliated his special mission. Baruch Hashem, Jews comprise a very small percentage of prison inmates and even those, for the most part, are not serving time for the commission of violent crimes.

When we look at the crime from the victim's standpoint, however, who is to define the meaning of "violent"?

It was Chanukah time, and the rabbi did not hesitate to accept the invitation. It was not a short drive – three hours each way, but, to him, it was well worth the effort. The rabbi spent time with the Jewish inmates, employing his signature storytelling and singing.

He then surprised the prison officials when he asked to be allowed to visit the rest of the prisoners. After receiving permission, he

went to each block, every cell, and embraced each and every inmate and said to them, "I love you, my brother."



Obviously, the reaction was varied. Some wept, others scoffed, but no one ignored his visit. He went on to visit the dining hall where he approached hundreds of inmates, embracing and encouraging each one in the same manner.

No one was going to suggest that he was prejudiced. Regardless of religious belief, colour or race, the rabbi visited each man and gave him the same treatment.

As he was about to leave, suddenly, a large, burly inmate came running over to him. This man was a giant, heavily muscled and covered with tattoos. "Rabbi, rabbi," he called out. "Yes, my holy friend," the rabbi replied with his standard greeting. "How can I help you, my holy friend?"

The giant of a man stood for a moment and awkwardly looked at the ground, then suddenly burst out, "I loved your embrace so much; can I have one more?"

The rabbi gave his characteristic smile, opened his arms and embraced the prisoner. The man wrapped his arms around the rabbi and began to weep profusely. They stood that way together for a few moments: the prisoner weeping; the rabbi euphoric.

Finally, the man told the rabbi, "Never in my life have I been embraced in this way, with such love. Had I been fortunate enough to have been hugged like that ten years ago – I would never have turned to a life of crime!"

Hanging on the wall in the pediatric ward of Hadassah Hospital, is an aphorism from the rabbi: "***When you put your children to bed at night, tell them how pretty they are; and when they wake up in the morning, tell them how beautiful the world is***".

When a person's attitude is positive, he has the ability and fortitude to deal with the difficult challenges of life. In order to have a healthy, positive attitude about life, one must first feel good about himself. Without self-esteem, one simply has no fuel with which to go forward.

הַיָּרֵא אֶת־דְּבַר ה' מֵעַבְדֵי פַּרְעֹה הֵנִיס אֶת־עֲבָדָיו וְאֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ אֶל־הַבָּתִּים '***Who among the servants of Pharaoh feared the word of G-d***.' (9:20)



The Torah tells us that the G-d-fearing Egyptians brought their animals indoors for fear of the hail which would strike the country. Chazal derive from here "**טוב - רצוץ את מוחו שבנחשים**", "***The best of snakes, smash his head***." (In other words, there is no such thing as a good snake.)

Chazal base this statement on the fact that, when Pharaoh required chariots and horses, he had to obtain these horses from someone. Since all of Egypt's animals had been killed, from where could Pharaoh have gotten the animals?

Apparently, the G-d-fearing Egyptians who had saved their animals by listening to Hashem later contributed to Pharaoh's war machine. The G-d-fearing Egyptians were far from G-d-fearing – once the danger had passed. Chazal are teaching us that a snake remains a

snake. Even if the snake earns the appellation of **הַיָּרֵא אֶת דְּבַר ה'**, how is it possible for him to sustain this trait? If he fears G-d, he obviously fears acting like a snake.

This is what Chazal are teaching us: a snake is a snake. The finest, most G-d-fearing snake remains a snake. His frumkeit will not prevail over his basic nature.

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Zt'l, supplements this with an insightful lesson: As long as the basic nature of the snake (or anyone for that matter) is not expunged, it will remain an inherent dormant part of the subject – even if it is supposedly concealed by yiraas Shomayim!

True yiraas Shomayim is not an external quality. It is real; it is intrinsic, being part and parcel of the subject's character, personality and essence. Unless the person/subject is able to transform his essence completely, such that the yiraas Shomayim extirpates any and every vestige of serpentine tendency from within, he remains a nachash, snake. Therefore, the only antidote to his poison is to smash his head.

Yiraas Shomayim should change the person. It is a transformative quality which is not merely superficial, (example: the person merely puts on frum "airs.") If he does not intrinsically change, his frumkeit is to no avail. It is not real. Sadly, we may observe individuals who manifest external signs of being devout and G-d-fearing; yet, when "push comes to shove" under pressure, they suddenly resort to acting in a manner totally unbecoming anyone of such a lofty spiritual connection. - This is an indication that what you see is all that there is. Covert yiraas Shomayim sadly has no internal influence on the person.

Rav Ezrachi supports this from the fact that the G-d-fearing Egyptians, when confronted with the dilemma of listening to Pharaoh or saving their animals, did what was right and brought their animals inside. They demonstrated (what was supposedly) their yiraas

Shomayim, which transcended their fear of Pharaoh and of public opinion, but it was not inherent. It had not transformed their essential natures, for, when Pharaoh needed chariots to chase the fleeing Jews, these G-d-fearing Egyptians were prepared to give him their horses.

I guess they were not that G-d-fearing after all. Later, however, when Pharaoh needed animals, he knew exactly whom to ask. Their yiraas Shomayim was superficial. It had not become part of their psyches.



הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה '***This was the [same] Aharon and Moshe***.' (6:26)

Rashi explains that there are places in the Torah where Moshe Rabbeinu's name precedes that of Aharon HaKohen. Likewise, there are instances where Aharon's name precedes that of Moshe.

The Chasam Sofer wonders why specifically it is in the above pasuk that we find Aharon's name written first. (Obviously, Moshe Rabbeinu, being the Rabban Shel Kol Yisrael, quintessential leader of our People, should have his name written first. When Aharon's name precedes Moshe's there must be a reason, a lesson to be derived therein.)

Indeed, as Hashem's primary agent for leading Klal Yisrael out of Egypt, Moshe's name should be mentioned first. What specifically happened to catapult Aharon to precede Moshe in being written first in the Torah?

The Chasam Sofer explains that toward the end of Parashas Shemos the Torah writes concerning Aharon, וְרָאֲךָ וְשָׂמַח בְּלִבּוֹ, "***And when he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart***" (Shemos 4:14).

The power of middos tovos, positive character traits, of love and care for a fellow Jew, is what turned the tide. When an older brother takes pride in his younger brother's achievements when he manifests true love for his younger sibling; despite the fact that as

a result of these achievements, the older brother will be relegated to second place, his name warrants first mention.

Aharon HaKohen wore the Choshen HaMishpat, Breastplate, over his heart. The Choshen had the names of the Shivtei Kah, Tribes, engraved on its precious stones. The heart that empathized with all of the nation, was the rightful place to be the repository for the Choshen.

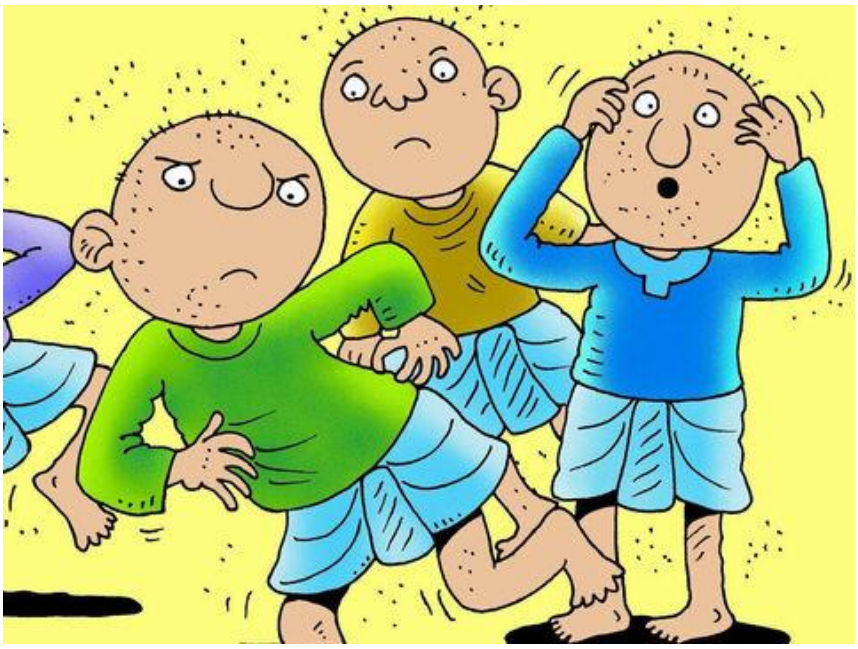


A talmid came to the Rosh Yeshivah of Beth Medrash Govoah, **Horav Aharon Kotler zl**, complaining of severe stomach pains. Shortly thereafter it was confirmed that he was experiencing an acute attack of appendicitis. Rav Aharon walked him to the door of his house (on his way to the car that would take him to the hospital for surgery) and bid him refuah sheleimah, wishing him a successful procedure and speedy recovery.

One week later, Rav Aharon himself suffered from appendicitis. Baruch Hashem, the Rosh Yeshivah was healed. During his recuperation, a close student visited him. Rav Aharon said, "Hashem gave me a shiur, lesson, in **נושא בעול עם חברו**, '*Carrying the yoke together with his friend.*' - Had I demonstrated even greater empathy for that student, I would not have experienced this attack!"

"The more you show compassion for others, the more Hashem will have compassion on you." ~ R' Lazer Brody.

וַיְחֲזֵק לֵב־פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא־שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה׳ **'But Pharaoh's heart was strong and he did not heed them, as Hashem had spoken.'** (8:15)



The Torah informs us that Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart and then continues to relate concerning the next plague, עָרֹב, mixture of animals. - What happened to the כִּנִּים, lice? Did they leave? Nothing is mentioned of their disappearance.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, suggests that quite possibly the lice became permanent residents of Egypt. Why? Because Pharaoh did not beg for them to be removed – as he did earlier with the frogs.

Indeed, as support for this, Rav Sholom cites the pasuk in Tehillim 105:31: אָמַר וַיָּבֹא עָרֹב כִּנִּים בְּכָל־גְּבוּלָם, "***He spoke and hordes of beasts arrived, and lice throughout their borders.***" This alludes that when the arov arrived, the kinnim were included among them.

Without prayer – one receives nothing! Thus, if Pharaoh does not beg, it does not happen on its own. Likewise, we do not find that Pharaoh asked to have the shechin, boils, removed. Possibly, they walked around with boils. Indeed, this might be implied from the pasuk in the Torah (Devarim 28:27) יַכְּךָ ה׳ בִּשְׁחִין מִצְרַיִם וּבַטְחֹרִים וּבַגָּרָב וּבֶחָרֶס אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תוּכַל לְהֵרָפֵא, "***Hashem will smite you with the boils of Egypt… from which you cannot be cured.***" - Egypt was not healed of their boils, because they refused to make the request.

Prayer is the only ticket through which we receive Hashem's beneficence. When we obstinately refuse to entreat the Almighty – we receive as much as we asked for – nothing!

L'hisadein B'ahavasecha quotes a compelling story related by **Horav M.D. Soloveitchik, Shlita**, which underscores the amazing power of prayer.

Years past there was a shiur given by a Kabbalist delving into the esoteric secrets of the Torah. This shiur was attended by a number of Yerushalayim's elite who would come to the Churvah Shul to listen and imbibe the lessons of the **Zohar HaKadosh** and the **Arizal**. A number of the rabbanim who came to imbibe these holy secrets brought with them their young children who would spend the time quietly playing under the tables. Unbeknownst to their fathers, those children would pick up Torah thoughts, but because of their limited ability due to age and knowledge, could hardly digest them properly.

One Friday night, a young boy who had often accompanied his father to the shiur, heard his mother gagging in bed. Something had gotten stuck in her throat, and she was choking. His mother gave a loud scream Oy Tatte! "Oh Father!" which was not an uncommon cry for a person in pain.

The young boy remembered that as a person is about to leave this mortal world, he sees his father and mother who greet him, prepared to accompany him on his journey to the next world.

The child became overwhelmed with fear of his mother's sudden passing. The thought of being left alone was too much for this young child to bear. He ran from his bedroom to the nearest shul, opened up its Aron HaKodesh and cried out, "Ribono Shel Olam. I do not want to end up in the Diskin Orphanage!"

He said this over and over again, accompanying his entreaty with bitter weeping. Hashem listened and his mother was able to expurgate the bone on which she had been choking. His sincere prayer begot a positive response.

הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלוֹת מִצְרַיִם '***Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt***.' (6:7)



The word **סִבְלוֹת**, which is translated as "burdens," is used by the commentators (**Kotzker Rebbe, zl**) to connote a sense of complacency in adapting to slavery. Thus, sivlos is connected to savlanus, patience, reticence. The Jews had become content, accepting their situation in life, obsequiously willing to submit to being Egyptian slaves. Furthermore, they had become part of Egyptian culture to the point that it had become their culture, their mindset. The Egyptian way of life was not foreign to them; it was not an anathema. It was the way they were willing to live.

This bespeaks the galus, exile, mindset to which the Jews in Egypt were subject. In this sense, Hashem not only redeemed us from Egypt; He expunged Egypt from within us.

I have always been bothered by this exegesis. Among the z'chusim, merits, for warranting our redemption were: we did not change our Hebrew names; we retained our Hebrew language; and we dressed in the same distinctive manner which characterized us in our original home. How then did we adopt the Egyptian culture? We did not speak like Egyptians; dress like Egyptians; or take Egyptian names. It seems that we **did** preserve our "Jewishness."

Apparently, being "Jewish" means more than having a Hebrew name, speaking the language and maintaining a distinctive mode of dress. It is how we think that determines our essence. If one dresses like

a Jew but thinks like a goy; speaks like a Jew, but acts like a gentile; has a Jewish name, but limits his Jewishness to these traits, he retains Egypt within himself.

In contemporary society, we dress differently, speak differently, even converse in a different language. Can we assert, however, that our lifestyle, our mindset, is really different from those around us? If our adherence to the Jewish way of life is external, but our consciousness is state of the art American, we maintain galus within us. Acting outwardly yeshivish, but thinking inwardly "worldly" does not render us "yeshivish," "chassidish," or much of anything Jewish for that matter.



אֵלֶּה רָאשֵׁי בֵּית־אֲבֹתָם... וּבְנֵי שִׁמְעוֹן... וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי־לֵוִי '***These are the heads of their fathers houses... and the sons of Shimon... and these are the names of the sons of Levi***.' (6:14,15,16)

Why does the Torah emphasize the word **שְׁמוֹת**- "names", in regard to Shevet Levi, tribe of Levi, in contrast to the other shevatim?

The Shelah Ha'kadosh offers a powerful insight: The tribe of Levi was not included in the Egyptian bondage. They did not suffer the cruelty which was an everyday experience for Bnei Yisrael. What could they do to share in Bnei Yisrael's anguish at this particularly trying time?

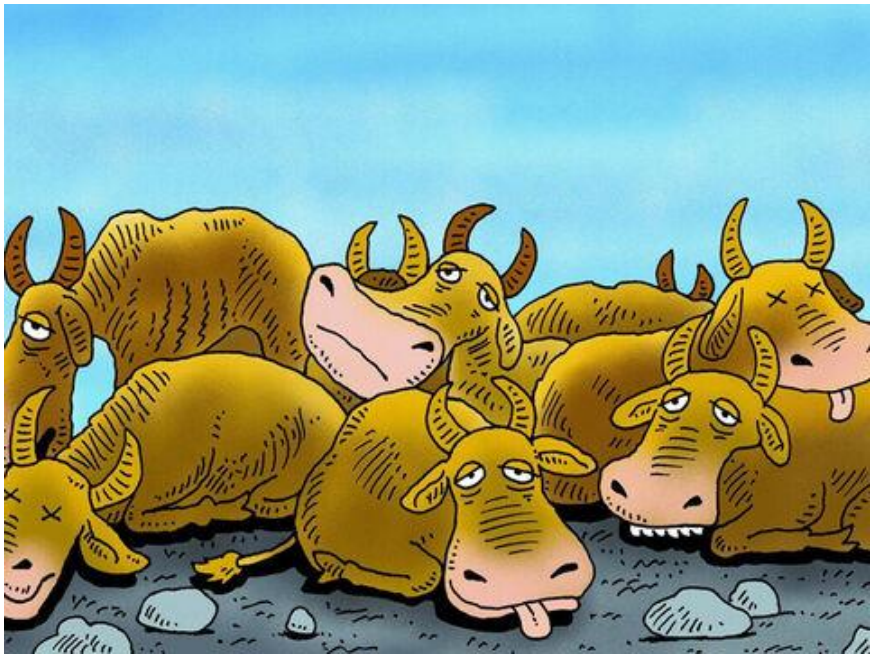
They gave their children names which reflected the suffering and exile of their brethren. - The name Gershon implies being a stranger in a strange land. Kehas alludes to dulling of the senses due to slavery, while Merari alludes to the bitterness.

One should recognize the importance of being an individual who bears the yoke with his fellow man. It is not sufficient to empathize with someone or to take pity on him. When you "bear the yoke" with someone, you feel his pain, because it is your pain. Once his plight is yours, you must help him.

This form of kinship is necessary in the Torah world, indeed, it is one of the forty-nine "steps" required in order to acquire Torah.

Quite possibly this is why the Torah world has endured for so long. The support and devotion we offer our fellow Jew constitute the foundation from which we all develop.

וְהִפְלָה יְהוָה בֵּין מִקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵין מִקְנֵה מִצְרָיִם וְלֹא יָמוּת מִכָּל־לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל דָּבָר. וַיִּשְׁלַח פַּרְעֹה וְהִנֵּה לֹא־מֵת מִמִּקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד־אֶחָד וַיִּכְבַּד לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שִׁלַּח אֶת־הָעָם – *'Hashem shall distinguish between the livestock of Yisrael and the livestock of Egypt and not a thing that belongs to Bnei Yisrael will die… Pharaoh sent and behold, of the livestock of Yisrael, not even one had died – yet Pharaoh's heart became stubborn*.' (9:4,7)



Moshe Rabbeinu warned Pharaoh concerning the upcoming plague of דֶּבֶר, an epidemic that would strike and kill their livestock. He added that no animal belonging to a Jew would die. This would clearly be a miracle, since the animals of both Egyptian and Jewish ownership mingled together in the pasture, drinking the same water and breathing the same air. The Egyptian animals died, but the animals belonging to the Jews did not – exactly as foretold by Moshe.

Despite what was undeniably a miracle, Pharaoh continued his stubborn refusal to allow the Jews to leave Egypt. Why would Pharaoh act this way? Did the plague not take place exactly as Moshe foretold? The mere fact that nary a single animal belonging to a Jew

was lost was the strongest indication that Pharaoh was waging a losing battle. Why was he being so obstinate?

The Malbim notes the phrase, וְהִנֵּה לֹא־מֵת מִמִּקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד־אֶחָד, "***Of the livestock of Yisrael not even one died***." He says that the phrase עַד־אֶחָד, means "***up to one***," which implies that one **did** die. We find this phrase in two other instances in Tanach. When the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea, the Torah writes, לֹא־נִשְׁאַר בָּהֶם עַד־אֶחָד, "***There remained not one of them***" (Shemos 14:28). This implies that one Egyptian did live.

Chazal teach that Pharaoh survived the Red Sea. Also, the phrase is used again in Navi, לֹא נִשְׁאַר עַד־אֶחָד (Shoftim 4:16) concerning Sisra's defeat. Chazal teach that one did survive, Sisra, the general made it.

Therefore, concerning the plague of דֶּבֶר and its effect on Jewish livestock, when the Torah writes לֹא־מֵת מִמִּקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד־אֶחָד, "***that one did die***," it is a reference to the livestock of Shlomis bas Divri, whose husband was an Egyptian. While the livestock may have been assimilated with the Jewish livestock, her husband was not Jewish; thus, her livestock died.

Pharaoh, however, did not see it this way. He considered Shlomis' livestock to be of Jewish ownership. Therefore, in his eyes, Moshe was "wrong." Pharaoh could continue sinning. He had a reason to be stubborn.

This demonstrates the obtuseness of the wicked. They see what they want to see. They embrace any excuse to continue their evil.

"When feeling joy, you will be able to gain more from one hour of Torah study than from many hours of studying when sad." ~ R' Chaim of Volozhin zt"l.

וְגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־נַאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם מַעֲבִדִים אֹתָם ***Moreover, I have heard the groan of Bnei Yisrael whom Egypt enslaves***. (6:5)



A businessman once came to the **Chasam Sofer** to pour out his heart. Apparently, he was doing poorly in business and needed the blessing of a great man of the Chasam Sofer's stature.

The Chasam Sofer looked at the man and said, "**וְגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי**," "*Moreover, (also) I have heard that your brother is destitute with no source of income, and you have refused to help him.*"

The man looked back at the Chasam Sofer and replied, "But Rebbe, I just finished saying that I am not doing well myself. I have enough to worry about myself."

The Chasam Sofer explained, "Hashem said, 'I have also heard the groan of Bnei Yisrael.' The word "**גַּם**," '***moreover/also***', is an inclusive term. It incorporates something or someone else. - Hashem was saying, 'I am also listening to their groan, to their pain.'

What does Hashem mean? Is there anyone else who was listening to them?

This teaches us that, although every Jew was in an "**עֵת צָרָה**," period of misfortune and pain, he still thought of his brother's suffering. He suffered, but he thought of his brother!

As a result of their empathy for one another, they were liberated from the Egyptian exile.

The fact that you are in need does not in any way mitigate your responsibility towards your brother."



וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַחַרְטֻמִּם אֶל־פַּרְעֹה אֶצְבַּע אֱלֹקִים הִוא
'The sorcerers said to Pharaoh, "It is the finger of G-d.' (8:15)

Pharaoh's magicians were finally stymied. They could not replicate the plague – **כִּנִּם** - lice. It must be the "finger of G-d."

Targum Yonasan- "This does not emanate from the powers of Moshe and Aharon." In other words, until this juncture, the magicians were able to duplicate the "miraculous" acts that "seemed" to be the result of Moshe's and Aharon's mystical powers. Consequently, they refused to believe that Hashem had sent them, that He was the source of these miracles. - Now that they saw that this plague was beyond their magical ability, they conceded that there must be a Divine element involved.

In truth, the magicians already were acutely aware that they were not on a level of expertise with Moshe and Aharon. They could not remove the plagues, only attempt to imitate them. What was it that encouraged them to hold out so long, to deny that they were up against a force superior to theirs, to a Supreme Power which rendered them powerless?

Horav Simcha Zissel, z.l. M'Kelm attributes this to human nature. If one were to place something sweet and tasty on his tongue and then be notified that this sweet food is poison, we would be hard-pressed to convince him otherwise. Likewise, if someone is under the impression that what he is doing is acceptable, one will have a difficult time impressing him with the truth.

The Egyptian magicians wanted to believe and thus, they convinced themselves that their magical ability was greater than that of Moshe and Aharon. Nothing could convince them until the truth

glared them in the face. They wanted so badly to undermine Moshe Rabbeinu that they would believe anything that would validate their own line of thinking.

Nachlas Tzvi cites the **Ben Ish Chai**, who relates the following story in one of his drashos, lectures. The famous city of Vilna was not always a city. Before it was founded, the ruling prince over the area called together his religious advisors and inquired of them whether he would be successful in building a city in this area.

The pagan priests responded with a message from their gods: In order for the city to achieve success, it was necessary that a woman come forth of her own free will and offer her only son as a sacrifice to be buried alive. He would be the foundation stone of the city. This sacrifice would ensure a successful tenure for the municipality.

The prince immediately sent messengers throughout his provinces in search of such a woman, whose utter conviction would compel her to do the "right thing," to bring her only son as a sacrifice for the "greater good" of the community.

At first, they could not find anyone so devoted or so foolish. After a few days, however, a simple-minded woman, who lived in a small village far away came forward and offered the "services" of her only son, a young boy, only twelve-years- old.

The prince and his advisors were ecstatic to hear that they would be able to proceed with dedicating the new city, now that their "sacrifice" had been located. They chose a day for the milestone event when the child would be buried alive, and the city founded. - Everything was prepared. It would be a joyous occasion, a holiday for the entire population. Everyone, from the country's nobility to the common citizen, gathered for this auspicious event and to witness a mother sacrificing her only son.

Just before the predetermined moment, the young boy asked to speak to the prince. His request was granted, and the boy came

forward and said, "My prince, I cannot believe that our god is party to such a terrible endeavor. Although your religious advisors claim that they saw this in a vision, I believe that they misunderstood what they saw. I, therefore, ask you to permit me to ask them three questions. If they answer correctly, I will concede to their wisdom and go to my death quietly and peacefully, for I will know that this is our god's will."







The prince agreed. The boy thereupon turned to the advisors and asked, "What is the lightest thing on the earth? What is the sweetest thing in the world? What is the hardest thing of all?"

The priests considered the questions. After a serious discussion, they responded unanimously, "The lightest thing is a feather; the sweetest thing is honey; the hardest thing is a stone." Then they looked at the assemblage, each with a victorious smile across his face. The prince turned to the young boy and asked, "What do you say to their answers?"

The boy responded with the sagacity of a scholar, "Your priests do not understand my questions. If they have no clue how to interpret the questions of a young boy, how can they be expected to even fathom what a god tells them?

My prince, I am no fool. I would not ask a wise man a question which has an obvious answer. I was looking for the obscure, the answer which only an astute man with a penetrating mind can answer. - Even a young child knows that a feather is light, honey is sweet, and a

stone is hard. By their very nature this is their characteristic. I am looking for the anomaly to the naked eye, which appears heavy, but is really light, seems bitter, but is actually sweet, seems soft, but is in reality very hard. - I will now tell you the answers to my questions.

The lightest thing in the world is an only child being carried by his mother. While he may seem heavy, for the mother he is no burden whatsoever. The sweetest thing in the world is a mother's milk to a nursing child. The hardest thing in the world is the heart of a mother who was prepared to sacrifice her only child."

The prince and all those assembled were astonished by the young boy's incisive mind. His penetrating wisdom mesmerized all those who had gathered to see him sacrificed. He clearly proved with his perceptive questions that the advice of the prince's advisors was utter nonsense. He demonstrated that a person, regardless of his ability and acumen, will see only what he wants to see.

Objectivity can come only to those whose personal integrity is regulated and guided by **יראת שמים**, fear of Heaven. Apparently, this was one virtue that Pharaoh's magicians did not possess.

וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלֹת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעֲבֹדָתָם וְגָאַלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בִּזְרוֹעַ נְטוּיָה וּבִשְׁפָטִים גְּדֹלִים '***I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt...and I shall redeem you***.' (6:6)

It was not enough that Hashem was prepared to take the Jews out of Egypt; it was also necessary for them to **want** to leave. Perhaps they had become complacent with their way of life, albeit miserable, but it was the only one they knew. Indeed, they might even have wanted to stay in Egypt. They might not have been able to accept a lifestyle so different from their accustomed one.

The story is told about **Horav Nochum M'Chernobel**, who once spent a night at an inn owned by a Jewish couple. It was chatzos, midnight, when Rav Nachum arose from his bed to recite his Tikkun Chatzos,

a special prayer recited by tzaddikim, mourning the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash and the ensuing exile.

Rav Nachum became so carried away in his expression of grief that his cries awoke the entire household. Immediately, the innkeeper ran over to him and asked, "Why does the Rebbe cry? Perhaps you are not well, or something hurts you?"

"No," answered Rav Nachum, "I am fine. I am crying for the churban Bais Hamikdash, the destruction of the Temple."

"What are you talking about?" asked the innkeeper, "What Bais Hamikdash? What churban?"

"Do you not know," asked Rav Nachum, "that we once had a Bais Hamikdash that was destroyed as a result of our transgressions? Every night I pray to Hashem that He finally send us Moshiach Tzidkeinu who will redeem us from our exile and take us to Eretz Yisrael. - Are you ready to move to Eretz Yisrael?"

"Wait, " said the innkeeper, "I will speak it over with my wife and relay our decision to you."

About an hour passed, and the innkeeper returned with his answer, "We will not go! We cannot leave our cows and sheep, our donkeys and horses, and our chickens. How can we follow 'some' Moshiach and neglect our animals?"

Rav Nachum was not provoked by his response. He said to him, "And what will happen if the robbers and thugs that surround us will one day decide to overrun your field and kill all of your animals?"

The innkeeper, obviously neither astute nor erudite, went back and asked his wife what to do. She responded with a brilliant answer, one that left him in awe of her.

He said, "My wife tells me that you should gather together the thugs and have them sent to Eretz Yisrael, so that we can remain here with our livestock and chickens."

While this story may be anecdotal, it relays an important lesson.- There are people who, as a result of ignorance, complacency, or pure malevolence, are content to remain in exile.

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ גַם־הֵם חַרְטֻמֵּי מִצְרַיִם בְּלַהֲטֵיהֶם כֵּן **"*And they too – the magicians of Egypt – did so with their incantations.*"** (7:11)



Why did Hashem choose miracles and wonders that Pharaoh thought he could replicate?

It started with the staff transforming into a serpent; next the river turned into blood; and then the earth issued forth frogs. In each case, Pharaoh's magicians were able to create a similar ruse – sufficient reason for Pharaoh to think that he had little to fear. Why not give him a sign that he would remember, so that he would have no recourse but to listen to Moshe?

This goes on throughout Hashem's "dialogue" with Pharaoh. Even when Klal Yisrael left Egypt, Hashem left one idol, Baal Tzafon, standing. Why?

Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, z.l., explains that this is all by design in order to retain Pharaoh's bechirah, ability to choose, to continue with his free-willed choice of evil. Had every miracle been shown in "black and white," not in "grey," Pharaoh could not have erred. When there is no free- will, the opportunity for reward diminishes.

Alternatively, Horav Nosson Wachtfogel, z.l., submits that specifically because they thought they could duplicate the miracles, they were able to understand the profound nature of these signs.

The more one knows about a subject, the greater respect he has for he who excels in it.

This can be compared to one who delivers a brilliant Torah exegesis to a child. Certainly, the child, due to his limited knowledge and acumen, will not appreciate the depth and scholarship of the speaker. As the child grows and becomes more astute and knowledgeable himself, he develops a greater appreciation of the dvar Torah and the lecturer, because now he has a "shaichus," relationship, to – and understanding of – the matter.

The plagues had to be of such a nature that the Egyptian sorcerers would appreciate their distinction, as well as their own helplessness to replicate these plagues and prevent them from occurring. It was specifically through this means that the Egyptians would come to believe in Hashem.



וַיַּ֤רְא פַּרְעֹה֙ כִּֽי הָיְתָ֣ה הָרְוָחָ֔ה וְהַכְבֵּ֖ד אֶת־לִבּ֑וֹ וְלֹ֥א שָׁמַ֖ע אֲלֵהֶ֑ם - *'Pharaoh saw that there was a relief, and kept making his heart stubborn. He did not heed them.'* (8:11)

Every time Pharaoh was down and the plagues were getting to him, he ran to Moshe Rabbeinu and implored him to pray to Hashem. The instant he experienced relief, he forgot who Moshe was, he forgot that Hashem could just as well send another devastating plague. He did not care. He experienced relief at that moment.

The Midrash claims that this is the way of the wicked. When it hurts, they cry. When circumstances change and life becomes tolerable, they forget about Hashem and immediately proceed to revert to their old ways.

One of the gedolei ha'mussar after citing this Midrash, once commented, "Are we any different? Do we remember Hashem during a time of joy as we do during a period of grief? When the sun shines upon us, when things are going well, do we exclaim, Baruch Hashem

that I merited what I did, in the same manner in which we cry out to Him when we are dealt one of life's challenges?

Indeed, this Midrash does not apply only to the wicked. Chazal's statement is regrettably a portrayal of our own attitude towards Hashem's gifts. We simply forget to thank Him once life seems to take a turn for the better.

On the Seder night, we are enjoined to say/focus on three things: Pesach, referring to the Korban Pesach, that we slaughtered prior to the liberation; Matzoh, a reference to the speed in which we were redeemed, not allowing our dough to rise; Marror, recounting the suffering and persecution to which we were subjected.

The Baal Hagaddah formats these three concepts in the above sequence, with Marror following Matzoh. This is enigmatic. The bitterness that was so much a part of our lives preceded the Matzoh/speed of redemption. Should it not be: Pesach, Marror, Matzoh?

Hamayon Hanitzchi points out that all too often - we reach the "matzoh," we are liberated from bondage, we are freed from persecution; we finally merit the opportunity to experience peace and harmony. But - we, regrettably, quickly forget the past, the suffering, the "Marror" that preceded the "Matzoh." Some of us simply forget, while others block the past out of their minds. We think that it is over, it can never happen again.

The Baal Hagaddah would like us to know otherwise. It can happen again! Always remember the "Marror", so that through prayer we will merit that it will not occur again. The tribulations to which man is subject are for the purpose of stimulating him to reach out to the Almighty through prayer.

Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl, cites the Midrash that says that when Klal Yisrael were in Egypt suffering from the persecution, they turned to Hashem and cried out. He responded to their pleas and

took them out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. Hashem wanted to hear their voices one more time. But Klal Yisrael no longer responded. They were saved! Hashem, therefore, sent Pharaoh after them - to provoke their prayer. It is that simple.

The purpose of Creation is for man to cling to Hashem. If we do it on our own, we will not need Hashem's "encouragement." We must thank Hashem for the past and implore Him for the future.

The Torah tells us that when Leah gave birth to Yehudah, she said, "This time let me gratefully praise Hashem. Therefore, she called his name Yehudah. Then she stopped giving birth." (Bereishis 29:35) - Yehudah's name is derived from the word "hodah", which means to give thanks.

The Chozeh M'Lublin asks why Leah stopped having children after she thanked Hashem for having Yehudah? Indeed, this is implied by the pasuk; she gave thanks, and she stopped giving birth! Does this make sense?

He answers that Leah only offered gratitude for the past. She thanked Hashem for the gift of a child, but she did not turn to Him for the future. Consequently, Hashem gave her a reason to implore Him for the future.

"We are called Yehudim," says the **Chidushei Ha'Rim**, "because ingrained and imbued in the Jewish neshamah, soul, is the ability and proclivity to be makir tov, show appreciation, to offer gratitude, for every favor and gift that we receive. We are Yehudim because of our ability to give hodaah."

Moreover, just as Leah realized that with Yehudah's birth she had received more than she deserved, so too, do we recognize that whatever beneficence Hashem shines upon us, it is more than we deserve. - How important it is for all of us to live up to the standard of Yahadus.

וַאֲנִי אַקְשֶׁה אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה '***And I shall harden Pharaoh's heart***...' (7:3)

Was it really necessary to harden Pharaoh's heart? Hashem could have simply "convinced" Pharaoh to let us go. That would have been much simpler.

The Baalei Musar explain that even had Pharaoh one day released us from bondage, we would still remain indebted to him. After all, he would have "liberated" us from servitude. Now that Hashem has redeemed us, we have no debt of gratitude to anyone but Hashem.



Horav Chaim Friedlandler, zl supplements this idea. Had Pharaoh acquiesced to Moshe's demand that Bnei Yisrael be released from Egypt, we might be grateful in some manner to Pharaoh. Hashem wanted Bnei Yisrael not to become subservient to anyone but Him. Consequently, He created a situation where it was obvious that only Hashem -- without any "assistance" -- took us out of Egypt.

The problem of misplaced gratitude is real. All too often we thank everyone else and attribute our success to other sources, neglecting the true source of all good--Hashem. Nothing happens unless Hashem wills it. No man can achieve success unless it is Hashem's decree.

All too often we are subjected to events and circumstances that do not seem related. We do not realize that every event that occurs has a distinct connection to the other. One day, however, we will see how it all fits together.

In the Talmud Kiddushin 70a, Chazal say that in Olam Ha'bah there will be a history book which was written by Eliyahu Ha'navi and signed by Hashem. Mankind will be given the opportunity to study and

understand the purpose of all events and circumstances of men's lives. Our life experiences will all be inscribed there. Every ambiguity will be clarified. All the events which we had thought were purposeless--or even tragic--will take on a new meaning as they are interpreted in light of the continuum of history. We will then become acutely aware that it is Hashem Who really deserves our complete and undivided gratitude.

The message is clear: If Bnei Yisrael had departed from Egypt with misdirected gratitude, it would have undermined the entire Exodus and distorted its historical and spiritual lessons.

הַיָּרֵא אֶת־דְּבַר ה' מֵעַבְדֵי פַּרְעֹה הֵנִיס אֶת־עֲבָדָיו וְאֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ אֶל־הַבָּתִּים '***Whoever among the servants of Pharaoh feared Hashem, chased his servants and livestock into the houses***.' (9:20)

The Torah seems to distinguish between different types of Egyptians. While the majority were obviously evil and supportive of Pharaoh's diabolical plans to do with the Jews as he pleased, there were those who were "G-d-fearing"; they were "**הַיָּרֵא אֶת־דְּבַר ה'**," "***feared the word of Hashem***."



Is that really true? Were these Egyptians truly G-d-fearing, or was it a ruse to save themselves and their possessions from ruin? Whatever happened to those animals that were rescued from death because of their owner's "fear of the word of Hashem"?

Chazal tell us that the horses that belonged to those "select" Egyptians were later used to chase the Jews who left Egypt. The Midrash satirizes the G-d-fearing Egyptians. They feared Hashem

when the lives of their horses were at stake, but they openly defied Him when the issue was Jewish survival.

This blatant hypocrisy has challenged our people throughout history. The same people who have professed religion, love, and fear of G-d have acted with utmost hatred towards the Jews. They have treated us cruelly, brutally inflicting the greatest atrocities upon us, all in the name of religion!

The 'G-d fearing' Egyptians were only able to reach the stage of, 'fear of retribution'. Hence, the Torah states that they were "yarei es dvar Hashem." They feared Hashem's word, but they were fearful only of His "word," His actions; they were not actually in fear of "Him."

This "fear" was nothing more than cowardice which was quickly transformed when they felt that they were no longer in danger. - One must possess all the qualities of **fear and love** of Hashem in order to maintain the appropriate moral balance.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֱמֹר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן קַח מַטְּךָ וּנְטֵה־יָדְךָ 'And Hashem said to Moshe, "Say to Aharon, take your staff and stretch out your hand."' (7:19)

Moshe Rabbeinu initiated the last seven makos, plagues, while Hashem told Aharon to strike the river and the earth for the first three plagues.

Chazal attribute Aharon's designation to the fact that the river and the earth protected Moshe. He was placed in the river as an infant to be concealed from the Egyptians, and later the earth covered the Egyptian that he had killed. Moshe benefited from two inanimate objects. Therefore, he must demonstrate his gratitude.

This seems to be excessive. The middah of hakoras tov, appreciation, is one of the mainstays of character development, but is it necessary to show this much gratitude to an inanimate object

that was essentially fulfilling its purpose in the world? After all, the water or earth are not sensitive to a lack of gratitude.



Horav Mordechai Kokis, Zt'l, explains that in the area of hakoras tov, the beneficiary need not make cheshbonos, calculations, to appraise the actual amount of effort his benefactor has exerted in order to estimate how much gratitude he owes. How much was the benefactor put out by his favor? Did he have to do it anyway? Was he going my way? It did not really cost him very much, and so many more excuses that we may use to justify not repaying a favor, not demonstrating gratitude where it is due. - Quite possibly, once we start with the cheshbonos, we might negate the whole concept of hakoras tov!

This is the lesson we learn from Moshe. If Hashem insisted that Moshe demonstrate his sense of gratitude, even to an inanimate object, how much more so must we show our appreciation to human beings, and--ultimately--to Hashem Yisborach, the source of all good.

Our concern should not be from whom we have received a favor, or the size and value of that favor; our first and only consideration should be that we have benefited and should show our gratitude.

Horav E.M. Shach, Zt'l, goes a bit further in expounding the demand for hakoras tov. We must recognize that Hashem is the source of all the good that we receive. The medium through which we receive this benefit is nothing more than a vehicle for channeling Hashem's favor to us.

What difference does it make to us who or what Hashem employs to serve as the agent for carrying out His objective? He demands that

we imbue ourselves with the middah of appreciation, not distinguishing among the benefactors. This is a case in which too much "discrimination" might cause us to lose sight of the actual source of our blessing--Hashem.

חָטָאתִי הַפָּעַם ה' הַצַּדִּיק וַאֲנִי וְעַמִּי הָרְשָׁעִים - '***I have sinned this time, Hashem is the righteous one and I and my people are wicked***.' (9:27)

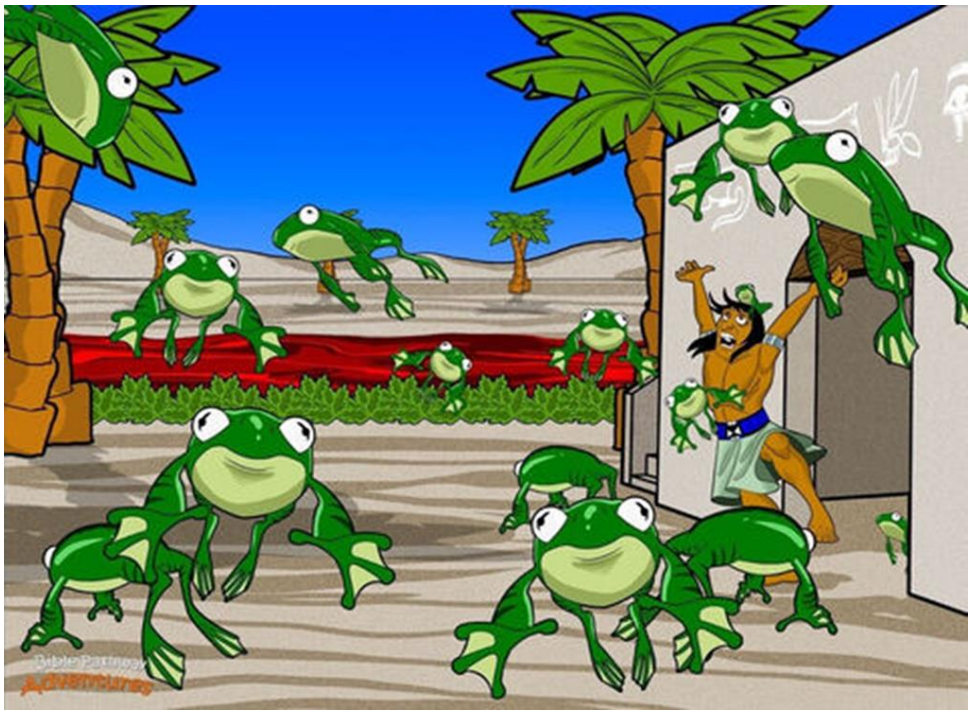


We do not find Pharaoh making any such concession after any of the other plagues. Was makas בָּרָד, the plague of hail, so "enlightening" that Pharaoh was inspired to condemn himself and his nation, while simultaneously offering plaudits to Hashem?

Horav Aharon Rotter, Shlita, offers a very pragmatic response. Rashi explains that the physical composition of the hail was unique in that two chemically opposed substances mixed together. Indeed, the hail was viewed as a **נס בתוך נס**, miracle within a miracle. Fire and hail, which is essentially water, made "peace" with each other to do the will of Hashem.

The symbolism of two opposite extremes cooperating in a harmonious relationship, melding together to perform the will of Hashem, evoked within Pharaoh a feeling of respect and admiration for Hashem. This is the uniqueness of the mitzvah of shalom!

וַתַּ֥עַל הַצְּפַרְדֵּ֖עַ וַתְּכַ֣ס אֶת־אֶ֑רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם "***And the frog(s) came up and covered the land of Egypt***." (8:2)



Rashi explains that originally there was only one frog. The Egyptians attempted to kill this frog by beating it. As they continued beating, it divided into swarms and swarms of frogs.

Horav Itze'le Voloshiner z.t.l. asks what would have occurred if they had not provoked and beat that original frog? Probably nothing! Why, then, did they foolishly continue the beating, only to see their endeavor "backfire" and produce more frogs?

He responds that this lack of self- control is human nature. Every provocation encourages a reciprocal response. Each time the Egyptians saw the frogs' "response" they, in reaction, kept on beating uncontrollably.

Reb Itzele states that one should likewise not respond negatively to those who openly provoke the religious community by demanding change within the orthodox milieu. Responding negatively through public debate and protest will not bring about a successful end to this incursion. A charged reaction will only serve to make matters worse. The most effective response to these eruptions is no response.

The Steipler Rav z.t.l. attributes the Egyptians' futile persistence to the middah, character, of anger. The more the frog multiplied, the greater their anger, and, of course, the more they beat the frog.

This incessant behavior is consistent with the irrational nature of the angry individual. If he would only tolerate ridicule without responding, everything would slowly subside. Instead, each increased effort to respond to the source of his anger, his anger regrettably magnifies his anger.

As the **Orchos Tzaddikim** writes: **הַשְׁתִּיקָה מְבַטֶּלֶת הַכַּעַס, וְגַם קוֹל נָמוּךְ מְבַטֵּל הַכַּעַס. לָכֵן יִרְאֶה הָאָדָם כְּשֶׁכַּעֲסוֹ מִתְגַּבֵּר עָלָיו, שֶׁיִּשְׁתֹּק אוֹ יְדַבֵּר בְּנַחַת, וְלֹא יָרִים קוֹלוֹ בְּכַעֲסוֹ. כִּי הַמַּגְבִּיהַּ קוֹלוֹ בְּשָׁעַת כַּעֲסוֹ – אָז יִתְעוֹרֵר הַכַּעַס**

'***When one becomes angry, he should constrain himself to be silent, never permitting himself to raise his voice. One who responds in anger escalates his anger***.'

וַיָּמֻתוּ הַצְּפַרְדְּעִים מִן־הַבָּתִּים מִן־הַחֲצֵרֹת וּמִן־הַשָּׂדֹת "***And the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courtyards, and out of the fields***." (8:9)





The second plague to strike Egypt was frogs which swarmed all over the land. They found their way into every house, into the bedrooms, even into the ovens and kneading troughs.

The Midrash extolls the virtue of these frogs. Their devotion to serving Hashem at the expense of their own lives has served as a paradigm of exemplary Kiddush Hashem. Their willingness to enter the burning hot ovens was totally alien to their natural instincts for survival. Yet, they overcame their very nature to serve Hashem.

When the day arrived for that plague to subside, the frogs from all over Egypt died and were gathered into heaps. The whole land smelled from the foul stench.

What happened to the frogs that entered the ovens? Did they also die as the others did?

The Yalkut Shimoni states that the frogs who entered the ovens did not die. They disappeared somehow, but not by death. They followed Hashem's command, defying nature, and entered the deadly ovens. For this act of self-sacrifice, they merited to conquer death.

What a lesson in Kiddush Hashem! Faith so absolute that defies nature must triumph over death.

Moreshes Moshe points out that this has been our legacy throughout history. Torah observance defies explanation and rationalization. As we face the constant challenges to our faith, we must stand resolute and courageous, prepared to shoulder the burdens against all odds, even if we do not feel we have the means. - We will continue to defy the elements as we have always done, as we await that moment of glory and peace that the advent of Moshiach will bring.



וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלֹת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעֲבֹדָתָם "***And I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egypt, and I will save you from their bondage***." (6:6)

It would seem that this posuk is repetitive, because if the Jewish people are taken out from under the burdens of Egypt, undoubtedly they are saved from their bondage.

The Kotzker Rebbe says that there are two necessary stages to complete liberation. First, the slave must be physically set free, then his slave mentality must be cast off. One who is freed physically but still is mentally subservient, is, not actually free.

The word "**סִבְלֹת** " - "***burdens***" may be derived from the word **סַבְלָנוּת** which generally means acceptance or tolerance. During their stay in Egypt, the Bnei Yisroel had gradually accepted the Egyptian lifestyle. That which was considered an abomination by Torah standards had now become tolerable. Repulsion progressively gave way to indifference and ultimately to acquiescence and acceptance.

Hashem told Moshe that He would redeem the Bnei Yisroel not only from their physical affliction, but also from their mental and spiritual bondage. Not only would the Jew be taken out of Egypt, but Egypt would be taken out from the Jew.

True freedom does not merely mean liberation from physical servitude to a given master, but the ability to choose and make proper decisions that are not influenced by contemporary values and ways of life which are products of an environment alien to Torah ethics. This dual liberation is the essence of freedom.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Significant Sign



We are well conscious of the fact that we do not don tefillin on Shabbos. In fact, the word **שבת** is an abbreviation for **שבת במקום תפלין**. What is the reason for this?

1) Tosafos tells us from a Midrash that the Egyptians forced us to work with the 39 forms of labor. These were the 39 melachos. For this reason, at Kiddush on Shabbos, we say **זכר ליציאת מצרים**.

Tefillin binds us to Hashem, as it says **וקשרתם**, to bind. Consequently, we don't wear Tefillin on Shabbos since we already have a reminder of Yetzias Mitzrayim, namely Shabbos.

2) **The Avudraham** provides us with a different reason. There are three mitzvos that are described as an **אות**, sign — **שבת, ברית, תפלין**

(whose initials spell out the word **שבת**). These three mitzvos are a sign and testimony to the fact that we are servants to Hashem. Since **על פי שנים עדים...יקום דבר** - according to two witnesses…a matter is confirmed, any Jew is only complete if he has two witnesses that he is a Jew. Therefore, on Shabbos (and Yom Tov) which is called a sign, we don't wear tefillin since we already have two signs — Shabbos and bris.

The question is asked if one is lacking the sign of bris or Shabbos (such as one who is in the army and must desecrate Shabbos or one who was never circumcised because of medical reasons), should he put on tefillin on Shabbos so that he could have two signs? The answer is that he should *not* don tefillin on Shabbos.

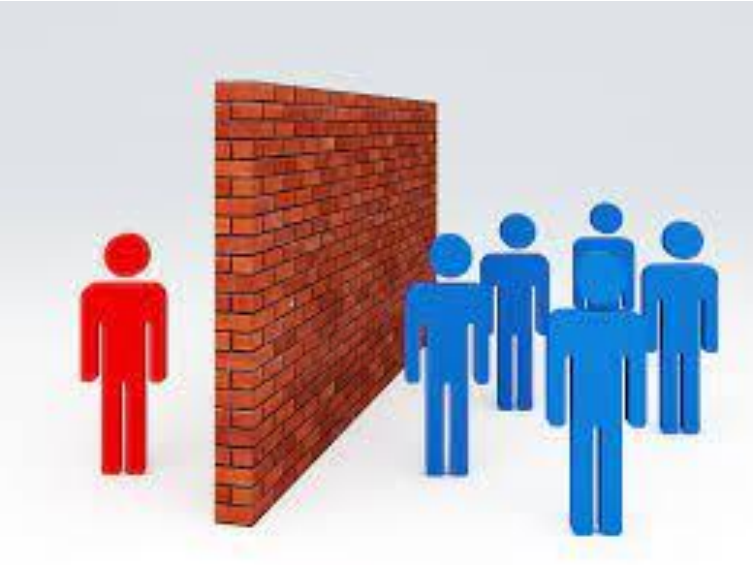


Barriers That Bring Us Together by Michael Winner

When Moshe gave Pharoah his warning about the upcoming hailstorm, Rashi writes that Moshe scratched a mark on the wall, and said, "When the sun hits here, the hail will fall."

Rav Pinkus notes that, if you look carefully, you'll see that this is a tad interesting. Usually, before a hailstorm, or any storm for that matter, there is no "when the sun hits here," because there is no sun at the moment! Before any storm comes, the clouds need to spread

out first, because without clouds, there is no storm. We learn from here, that there were no clouds at the time of the hail!



He explains that many people think that walls are made to separate two people or two things. That's their whole essence: to separate. However, he writes, there are many walls in our world that actually serve to bring people or things together.

In the shul, for example, we have a wall which separates men and women from each other. There are those, who lack Jewish understanding, claim that this wall is to keep women separate, penned up, and second-class citizens. However, the opposite is true. Without this wall, women could not come into shul at the time of davening, because men and women cannot daven in a shul together. However, when a separation is made, it allows women to come in during those times and allows men and women to daven at the same place at the same time. In this example, this wall serves to bring people together.

Another example: the clouds at Sinai. They covered the mountain, "allowing" Hashem to enter our world, if you will, and be in the physical presence of the Jewish nation, albeit behind a wall of clouds. Without this wall, we would never survive such an encounter.

Yet another example, which is directly related to the hail. When Hashem wants to give the bracha of rain, he first sends clouds to cover the sky. This "wall" which "separates" Him and us, if you will, serves as a means to deliver the much-need bracha of rain, which brings us food and water on which we are so dependent. Again, it allows Hashem to enter our world and become close to us.

When the hail hit Egypt, it did so seemingly without any clouds. There was no wall that brings two things together. This was the opposite. This was a punishment being served straight from Hashem, without any "filter" to protect the recipients.

Sometimes in life, we think we see walls being put up. True, sometimes they are walls put up to keep us from going in certain directions and to certain places. And we often get depressed about such things. However, we need to remind ourselves that it's very possible that these walls were not only meant to direct us on the proper path but are also meant for us to become closer to Hashem.



Hashem Knows Best

As a bachur, **Reb Binyamin Zev Deutsch**, the principal of Yeshivas Ponovezh, lived in Hungary. One day, he and another forty-nine bachurim were summoned to sign up for the Hungarian army. Their parents put together a large sum of money to bribe a doctor to "find" illnesses in the fifty bachurim, so that they wouldn't be conscripted. The lion's share of the bribe came from Reb Binyamin Zev's parents and the parents of one other bachur, as they were the wealthy ones and could thus fund it.

The doctor's documents, attesting to each bachur's "illness," arrived on the morning they were ordered to present themselves to the army. However, the doctor only sent forty-eight documents, "accidentally" leaving out the letters for Reb Binyamin Zev and the other wealthy bachur.

As a result, these two boys had to flee Hungary as quickly as possible. Reb Binyamin Zev remembers not even having time to say

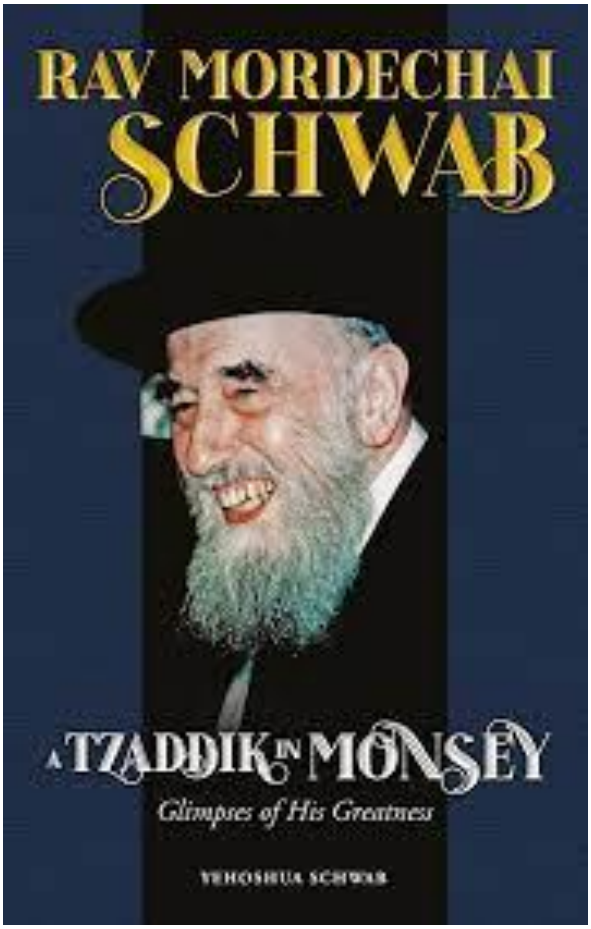
goodbye to his family as he promptly packed up, ran to the port, and escaped to Eretz Yisrael.

Reb Binyamin would later say that he considered that day "a dark day, a bad day." He was jealous of his friends who had been able to remain with their families while he, and his friend, had to escape like thieves. Furthermore, Reb Binyamin was in Eretz Yisrael, alone with no family, which was certainly very difficult for a young bachur.

However, soon after the war broke out, and only he and the other bachur (from the fifty) survived. Reb Binyamin married and had children and grandchildren, some of them famous Roshei Yeshiva.

This reminds us that even when something seems "bad," it is good in disguise. With time, b'ezras Hashem, we will understand how, but for the time being we must know and trust it.

I'm Very Happy



R' Mordechai Schwab, (brother of the great *tzaddik* R' Shimon Schwab), was the *mashgiach* in the Beis Shraga Yeshiva in Monsey. Every year on Chol Hamoed, his close talmid, **R' Zev Smith**, would travel from Brooklyn to Monsey to pay a visit.

The last year before he was *niftar*, R' Zev received a call from the Schwab family, warning him to expect that his Rebbe wouldn't have the same appearance as always. "Recently, he's been very frail and weak, and we don't want you to be in for a shock."

He thanked them profoundly and hung up the phone, but he wasn't too concerned. "I know my rebbi," he

thought, "and I'm not going to be surprised." Upon entering, though, he understood what they were talking about; his vibrant rebbi was frail, weak, and pale.

R' Schwab was very perceptive of his talmid's reaction and knew that he was in shock. He told him the following: "I'm living *b'simchah*, happiness. I couldn't even go to shul on Yom Kippur, and yet I'm living happily. Who made me sick? Hashem. If Hashem made me sick, then that is His will, and I'm therefore overjoyed, content, and perfectly fine with it.

"Dovid Hamelech taught us: '*Chaim b'retzono,*' and the meaning is that I'm living with Hashem's will, whatever Hashem has planned for me. Do you think that the reason I can't learn is because I decided so? No. It's the *ratzon Hashem*, and I, therefore, am not broken but rather happily accept the premeditation of Hashem."

What an incredible understanding of a gadol! This is what comes out after living a life of doing the *ratzon Hashem*—being able to serve Hashem in every situation that faces us. (from **R' Paysach Krohn**)

Reb Yoel R. On The Parsha

וַיִּקַּח אַהֲרֹן אֶת־אֱלִישֶׁבַע בַּת־עַמִּינָדָב אֲחוֹת נַחְשׁוֹן לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה "***And Aharon took Elisheva, the daughter of Aminadav, the sister of Nachshon, for a wife***…" (6:23) – '*When a man takes a wife, he should investigate the qualities of her brothers*' (Rashi).

The Chida says that this Rashi alludes to the famous *pasuk*: **אשת חיל מי ימצא** - ***Who can find a woman of valour?***

The first letters of each word spell **אחים**, "brothers," and (rearranged) **מי אח**, "who is the brother?"

The way to find a woman of valour is to look into the qualities of her brothers.

The Weekly Vort

● **והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ** - ***I shall bring you to the land*** (6:8). Interestingly enough, except for Yehoshua and Kaleiv, the generation that left *Mitzrayim* never entered Eretz Yisroel! Thus, of the 600,000 people who left *Mitzrayim*, only two entered Canaan (Sanhedrin 111a).

The Meshech Chochmah remarks that it was worth performing all the miracles and wonders in *Mitzrayim* and the desert so that two righteous people could reach the promised goal.

From this we learn that believers should not despair when it seems that only a few select people are following the righteous path. For the sake of those few, the light will shine forth, as it did then for the two righteous people who entered Eretz Yisroel. (Kol Ha'Torah - R' Elie Munk)



Chazal tell us that somebody who designates a fixed place in which to daven is termed an "anav" and is counted among the talmidim of Avraham Avinu.

The conventional understanding of this is that if somebody davens and isn't answered, he starts to evaluate what it might be that is blocking his tefilah. He thinks that maybe in a different place, his tefilah might be more effective. By returning to the same place, he demonstrates that the issue lies with him and not his environment or external factors.

However the Rabeinu Yonah is of the opinion that this halacha only applies to someone who davens at home in that even in his own home, he designates a place in which he will daven. Even though he usually goes to shul, there are times when he can't

or perhaps even that he wants to pour out his heart in Tehillim etc., and he designates a specific place for this as well. In doing so, he demonstrates a tremendous love for tefilah, and the fact that he vies to connect with the Ribono shel Olam goes hand in hand with humility, because he is constantly aware of His presence.

It would seem that anything a person does to connect more to tefilah such as using a special siddur, would be in line with the spirit of these words of the Rabeinu Yonah.

The HaKaras HaTov of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach by Rabbi Yissocher Frand



For the first three plagues – Blood, Frogs, and Lice – it was Aharon who hit the water and hit the sand with the Staff of Hashem, thereby bringing on these plagues. Chazal say that Moshe Rabbeinu owed Hakaras HaTov (gratitude) to the water which saved him as an infant, when the basket his mother hid him in floated in the Nile River.

Likewise, it was the sand that saved Moshe when he buried therein the Egyptian whom he killed. Moshe "owed" so to speak to the water and the sand and therefore did not want to be the initiator of a plague which came from these entities.

We are all aware that water and sand are inanimate objects who don't appreciate a 'Thank-you' and don't even know what a 'Thank-you' is. And yet, we see that a person needs to have Hakaras HaTov even to inanimate objects. So clearly, Hakaras HaTov is not for the benefit of the person (or object) receiving the Hakaras HaTov.

It is for the benefit of the person who gives the Hakaras HaTov. If a person learns to show gratitude even to something like a rock or sand or water, then he will certainly show Hakaras HaTov to a human being.

I recently heard the following story: **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** was once in the hospital. He made a point of thanking every doctor and every nurse for the care they provided for him while he was in the hospital. (This is something that someone does not need to be Rav Shlomo Zalman to do.

Many people rightly have this practice under similar circumstances.) But then he asked if he could see the woman who went from room to room to water the plants in the hospital rooms. He said that the plants brightened up the room and therefore the woman who poured the water into the plants to make sure that they would stay fresh also needed to be thanked for her efforts.

Most people may thank a doctor or a nurse who was helpful to them. But thinking about the lowly woman that goes from floor to floor and from room-to-room watering plants? She also should receive Hakaros HaTov, because if even inanimate objects receive Hakaros HaTov, certainly every human being deserves no less.

Yiddish- Polish

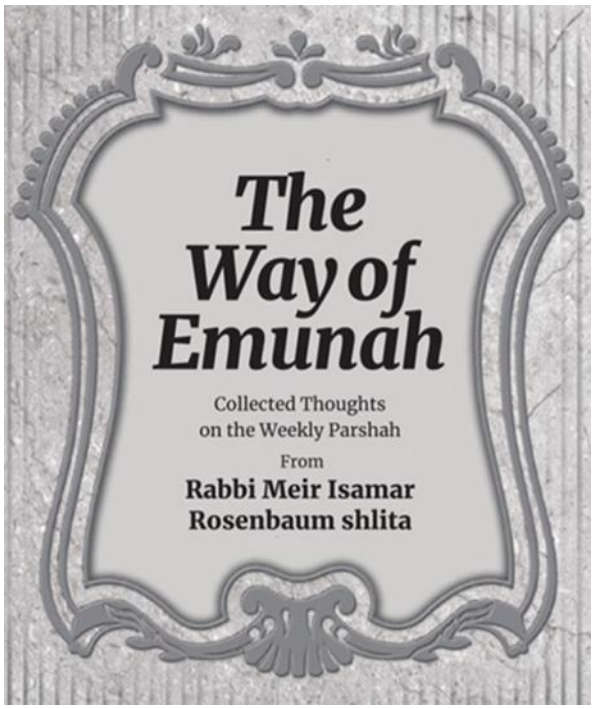
Towards the end of the **Chofetz Chaim's** life, a decree was passed in Poland that all rabbis had to speak Polish. The Chofetz Chaim felt this was terrible and summoned all the Rabbanim to accompany him to Warsaw. There, he had an audience with the Polish President, and an interpreter was set up for him to speak.

The Chofetz Chaim said, in Yiddish, "As directed by our Torah, I pray each day for the welfare of the government. This decree that all Rabbis must know Polish will be devastating to our Yiddishkeit. If you leave us alone, we will be good citizens and pay our taxes. But if

you insist on interfering with our observance, you will experience an abrupt downfall like Pharaoh himself."

The interpreter was stunned. How could he repeat this? The President said, "There are many languages in the world. Some speak Polish, some English, but this rabbi spoke from the heart, and I understood. I don't need a direct translation, just tell me what he's asking for."

The interpreter explained that they were upset about the Polish language requirement, and the President immediately sat down and reversed the decision.



● There is No Darkness

The pasuk states (Tehillim 139:12): גַּם־חֹשֶׁךְ לֹא־יַחְשִׁיךְ מִמֶּךָּ "***Even darkness will not be dark from You.***"

The Kotzker Rebbe zy"a explains this to mean that if one recognizes that the perceived darkness is from Hashem, then there will be no darkness at all.

● The Only Worry

Rav Tzvi Hirsch of Ziditchoiv zy"a would often say, "It is forbidden to be worried or depressed. The only thing one may be worried about is why he is worried."

"No matter how gloomy things seem, everything can turn around. Talking to Hashem can turn things around." ~ R' Elchonon Tauber.

● The Frogs Spoke to The Stones

שְׁרַ֣ץ הַיְאֹ֣ר צְפַרְדְּעִ֗ים וְעָל֤וּ וּבָאוּ֙ בְּבֵיתֶ֔ךָ וּבַחֲדַ֖ר מִשְׁכָּבְךָ֑ וְעַל־מִטָּתֶ֗ךָ וּבְבֵית֙ עֲבָדֶ֔יךָ וּבְעַמֶּ֖ךָ וּבְתַנּוּרֶ֥יךָ וּבְמִשְׁאֲרֹתֶֽיךָ׃ *'And the river will swarm with frogs, and they will go up and come into your house… and into your ovens and into your kneading bowls.'* (7:28)

The Medrash (Shemos Rabbah 10:3) states that during the plague of tzefardea, if a wall was made of marble stones and the frogs could not get through, the frogs would tell the marble to split so that it could go and do Hashem's will.

The Bais Avrohom of Slonim zy"a (Yalkut Sichos Kodesh) quotes his father, the **Divrei Shmuel zy"a**, as saying: "a Yid must tell his heart to split open in order to allow him to do the will of Hashem. If one doesn't do this, he is worse than the frogs who told this to the marble so that they could fulfill Hashem's will."

וַיִּצְעַ֣ק מֹשֶׁ֔ה אֶל־יְהוָ֖ה עַל־דְּבַ֣ר הַצְפַרְדְּעִ֑ים אֲשֶׁר־שָׂ֥ם לְפַרְעֹֽה׃ *'And Moshe cried out to Hashem about the matter of the frogs that were placed on Pharaoh.'* (8:8)

● The Tefillah Must be Explained

The concept of tefillah is mentioned several times in the story of the exodus from Egypt in regard to the prayers of Moshe Rabenu and Klal Yisroel during the bondage, and for the redemption. Furthermore, we can learn an important lesson in regard to tefillah.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh states that we learn from the frogs that one must say his tefillos out loud, in a clear way, with his requests fully explained.

"There are three crucial ingredients to a successful Jewish home: Torah, Kedusha, and Simcha." ~ R Pam





Rav Dovid Biderman zt"l - Lelover Rebbe, Divrei Dovid 7 Shevat 5574 הרב דוד בן שלמה צבי בידערמאן זצ״ל

● Rabbi Dovid Biderman of Lelov (1746 - 7 Shvat 1814) was a close follower of the "Seer" of Lublin. He was known for his extraordinary compassion for, and inability to see faults in, his fellow Jews. His main disciple was Rabbi Yitzchak of Vorki, whose son, Yaakov David, was the first Amshinov Rebbe. Two printed collections of stories about him are *Migdal David* and *Kodesh Halulim*.

● **Hiding His Greatness Even from the Chozeh of Lublin**:

After Rav Dovid's petirah, his Rebitzen a"h gave his Kiddush cup to the Chozeh of Lublin zy"a. The Chozeh used it to make Kiddush and then said, "He was very, very, very great. And he hid his greatness even from me."

● **Learning Yiras Shomayim from a Butcher**:

Rav Dovid would often travel to towns and villages to inspire the residents of far-flung areas to do teshuva. He once was traveling with his friend, the Yid Hakadosh zy"a. In the middle of their journey, he told the Yid Hakadosh to stop and wait for him for a short while because he wanted to enter a certain village on the side of the road.

He returned after a short time and the Yid Hakadosh asked him where he had been. Rav Dovid answered, "I just learned yiras shomayim from a butcher."

He explained that he had seen a butcher holding in his hand the axe he used to chop meat. Suddenly, he got angry at his father, who was

standing next to him, and said, "If I didn't fear Hashem, I would cut off your head with this axe right now!"

Rav Dovid was amazed by the butcher's yiras shomayim and he couldn't stop saying, "Such yiras shomayim!" (Otzar Yisroel)

● **Who is The Worst Person**:

The Rachmastrivke Rebbe of America zy"a (Sefer Milin Kadishin) related the following story: The first time that Rav Dovid of Lelov went to visit Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk zy"a, Rav Elimelech asked him, "Who is the worst person in the world?"

At that time, there was a well-known lowly person in town, and Rav Dovid suggested that he was the worst person. Rav Elimelech then commanded him to leave his presence. After he left, Rav Dovid was upset with himself for saying such a bad thing about this man.

He said to Rav Elimelech, "The truth is that I am the worst person, but if I would leave the city, that man would be the worst."

● **He Closed his Store so as Not to Hurt Others**:

Rav Dovid made his living from selling salt. One day, he closed his shop for good. His friends asked him why he did this, and he said, "In my neighborhood, there is another salt merchant. Some people buy from him, and some people buy from me.

When I see someone purchasing salt from my competitor, it doesn't make me feel bad. I have no complaints against the customer for not buying salt from me. On the contrary, I am happy that the other store has business. "However, when a customer comes to my store, I see that it makes my competitor feel bad. He is upset that the customer isn't going to him. I don't want to cause another Jew pain, so I have to shut down my business."

● **Better to Eat Worms Than People**:

His incredible middos are evident from his explanation of the verse (Tehillim 22:7): "I am a worm and not a man." He explains this to

mean: It is easier for me to eat a worm – and to transgress five prohibitions, than to eat a man, so to speak, by causing him pain.

● **The Power of His Brachos**:

Sefer M'Zekeinim Esbonen writes that Rav Mordechai Chaim of Slonim zy"a related that Rav Dovid once was traveling and stayed overnight in a certain man's home.

Early in the morning, he was ready to get back on the road, but his host was still asleep. He wanted to bid him farewell, so he tapped on the window of his bedroom and said, "Zeit gezunt!"

Sleeping in the same room was the man's daughter, who had been very sick and unresponsive for 12 years. That very morning, she got up, completely healthy, as if she had never been sick. - That was the result of the power of Rav Dovid's bracha for good health.

● **The Story of Rav Chaim Dovid Doctor**:

Sefer Sipurei Maran HaRamach (of Slonim) relates the story of the connection between Rav Dovid and Rav Chaim Dovid Doctor of Pietrokov zy"a, who was also known as Dr. Bernard:

A man who was suffering from a kidney problem came to Rav Dovid to ask for a bracha. The Rebbe gave him some cheese and whiskey to eat and drink. He then had him lie down on his bed for a while.

When the man got up, he was hale and healthy. This man was a patient of Dr. Bernard's. When he came for his next appointment, the doctor couldn't believe what he saw. He said, "I have the ability to heal lungs, but you didn't even have any lungs left. How did you get new lungs?"

The patient told him about the holy man in Lelov who had brought about his yeshua, and the doctor decided to go see him. When the doctor went into the Rebbe's room, he asked him all of his philosophical questions, and the Rebbe responded by sending him to the Chozeh of Lublin zy"a.

As soon as he arrived, the Chozeh listed all of his questions and answered them all. The doctor became a baal teshuva and was known as Rav Chaim Dovid Bernard zy"a. In his later life, he still practiced medicine and was a po'el yeshuos. - May his memory be blessing for all of Klal Yisroel.

Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira zt"l - Baba Sali Shevat 4 5744

הרב ישראל בן מסעוד אבוחצירא זצ״ל



For years, Rav Shlomo Bussu, grandson of the Baba Sali, was an anonymous kollel avreich… until pressured to forge the next link in his chain of tradition and meet a thirsting public. You have to climb the stairs at the side of the Hamelech Hachassid print shop in order to get to Beit Medrash Tiferet L'Yisrael, but for those who know Rav Shlomo Bussu, the location is really no surprise — his shul is tucked away, just as he's been all these years.

Situated at 25 Rechov Givat Shaul, in the middle of yet another aging Jerusalem industrial area giving way to gleaming residential towers on either side, the two-year-old shul occupies a humble address that is sure to become prime real estate.

On this sunny spring day, Rav Shlomo Bussu is giving chizuk to a group of bochurim from a Sephardi yeshivah. He is wearing multiple pairs of tzitzis and tefillin — he keeps his tefillin on all day long, every weekday. He speaks to them in their language — fluent English softened by a light French accent — about how victories over the yetzer hara, even the ones that seem so small down here, take on majestic proportions Above.

After his shmuess, the bochurim form a line to receive individual brachos from Rav Bussu. He gives them each a warm smile, a firm handshake, and a clap on the shoulder, along with personalized counsel. His good cheer and easy camaraderie with these young men call to mind a winning coach exhorting his team. But the bochurim's awed demeanor shows that their rosh yeshivah prepared them well for this visit: for Rav Bussu is a mekubal, towering talmid chacham, a posek, sofer, shochet, and mohel. He is also a grandson of the Baba Sali, Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira zy"a, the beloved mekubal and leader of Moroccan Jewry who was niftar in 1984 — himself the grandson of the revered Abir Yaakov, Rav Yaakov Abuchatzeira, scion of a distinguished line of Torah scholars and kabbalists stretching back to the time of Rav Chaim Vital and the Arizal.

● **Into the Open**

This public role is relatively new for Rav Bussu, one he stepped into only several years ago. For the quarter century before that, he stationed himself in the Ohalei Avraham shul on Eretz Chefetz Street in Jerusalem's Shmuel Hanavi neighborhood, learning as an anonymous kollel avreich. He adopted the rigorous schedule practiced in the Abuchatzeira family, engrossing himself in Torah for 18 hours every day, sleeping just two hours a night, and fasting from morning to evening — all out of the public eye.

"Those were my best years," he says with a hint of a wistful smile of the years in his "hideout," where avreichim in the neighborhood knew a brilliant tzaddik was in their midst, but not many others had an

inkling. "It's best to be under cover, to be nistar. Something that is hidden cannot be compared to that which is known by people."

He resisted taking on a public role, but his relatives pressured him to forge the next link in the chain of tradition, binding together the generations of the Abuchatzeira family. "They told me, 'If people don't come to you, they will go to all kinds of charlatans.' "

In the end, he consented, because he was persuaded that his yichus could be a powerful asset. "If a person comes to me with an open heart, and he's excited about meeting me because I'm a grandson of the Baba Sali… without [the yichus] it would be much, much harder to influence that person. You can't pass up the opportunity to be mekarev him and be mechazek him."

The decision really came down to how best to make a kiddush Hashem. And for that, there couldn't have been a better role model than his saintly grandfather, the Baba Sali.

"Simple derech eretz can make a kiddush Hashem," he says. "Sometimes even just by being there you can make a difference — we have such an achrayus not to make a chillul Hashem.

"Even in our appearance," he emphasizes. "We see how the secular and the modern people are fastidious in their appearance. I don't know what kind of heter some yungeleit have not to be makpid this way. You should be clean and proper. It's a Chazal mefurash that when a talmid chacham is not makpid on cleanliness, others will say, 'Oy, this is the way lomdei Torah are?'

"I remember how the Babi Sali used to be very clean…. Even in Morocco, which is very hot, he was makpid to be clean and to keep his clothes clean. He said, 'A person who is naki b'gufo is naki b'nishmaso.' This is a very important inyan."

● Parting the Clouds

The Baba Sali was a constant presence in Rav Bussu's house when he was growing up — even when he was not physically there. Rav Shlomo

Bussu's father, Rav David Bussu, was from a Buenos Aires family, orphaned at a very young age. He made the hard decision to leave his family in Argentina to learn Torah in Eretz Yisrael, eventually landing in Yeshivas Mir and then Porat Yosef.

His mesirus nefesh attracted the attention of the Baba Sali, who announced to young David that he had been selected to marry the Baba Sali's bat bechorah, Avigayil.

"I think it was this mesirus nefesh that gave him the zechus to marry the daughter of the Baba Sali," Rav Bussu says of his father. "Behind everything special there is always mesirus nefesh."



There is a story Rav Bussu often shares about the lesson he learned from the Baba Sali regarding mesirus nefesh. Rav Bussu was once at a seudas bris with his older brother, Rav Shimon, who is also a highly esteemed talmid chacham and mekubal. There was also a very well-known rosh yeshivah in attendance.

Rav Shimon rose to speak first, and in the course of his devar Torah he mentioned that someone once saw his grandfather, the Baba Sali, learning Gemara. His eyes flew down the page as if he were speed-reading. The onlooker asked the Baba Sali how he could learn Gemara so fast; doesn't learning Torah require ameilus, great effort and concentration? Shouldn't he review more slowly?

The Baba Sali answered, "My grandfather, the Abir Yaakov, was zocheh to be given the Zohar as a gift. I was zocheh to be given Shas as a gift." - While Rav Shimon recounted this, Rav Shlomo

noticed that the rosh yeshivah, who had been smiling throughout the bris, suddenly went straight-faced.

When Rav Shlomo's turn came to speak, he made note of this. "I noticed that the Rosh Yeshivah stopped smiling when my brother mentioned this, and I would like to strengthen the Rosh Yeshivah's question — how can Gemara be a gift if a Jew is supposed to work hard to acquire it? — with two more stories.

"One night, when we were living in France and the Baba Sali was staying with us, he asked my older brother Rav Moshe to run downstairs and check to see if the sky was clear enough for him to say Kiddush Levanah. Young Moshe dutifully ran down several flights, only to see that the moon was completely obscured by clouds. He carried this news back to our grandfather.

"This happened three nights in a row, until the last night came when one could say Kiddush Levanah. The Baba Sali again sent Moshe out to check — but it was again too cloudy. When Moshe reported this, the Baba Sali rose from his place, took his cane in hand, and made his way down all the stairs with Moshe's help. When they got outside, the Baba Sali raised his cane toward the sky. The clouds parted in front of the moon, and he recited Kiddush Levanah.

"But I have a question on this," Rav Bussu said. "There was another instance when, in order to say Kiddush Levanah in time, the Baba Sali rode by train for 600 kilometers to reach a place where there were no clouds. But why didn't he just wave his cane?"

Rav Bussu proceeded to the second story. "I heard this from Rav Amram Abergil, my grandfather's gabbai in Morocco. Once the Baba Sali told Rav Amram he wanted to go toivel in the mikveh, which was a natural spring inside a cave. Rav Amram accompanied the Baba Sali to the cave, but when they reached the pool, Rav Amram saw that the water was swarming with biting, stinging creatures. The Baba Sali nevertheless prepared to immerse, and when he put his foot in

the water, all the creatures parted. When he emerged, the creatures swarmed back again to fill the water.

"The Baba Sali told Rav Amram to toivel also, but Rav Amram was afraid: Sure, the creatures made way for the Baba Sali, but they would eat Rav Amram alive! The Baba Sali advised him not to worry. He would put his own foot in the water, and the creatures would all keep away — and that's what happened.

"But there was another incident. I heard from my cousin, Baba Elazar, that he also once accompanied our grandfather, the Baba Sali, to toivel in a mikveh in Morocco. Baba Elazar heard him descend into the water, but then heard gasps of agony. Baba Elazar hurried to see what had happened, and saw the Baba Sali covered in blood, having been stung and bitten by the same types of creatures. So here's the same question: Why didn't the Baba Sali simply clear the creatures out, as he did on the other occasion?

"It all comes down to mesirus nefesh. Because the Baba Sali was willing to travel 600 kilometers to say Kiddush Levanah, he was zocheh to part the clouds with his cane. Because the Baba Sali was willing to be ravaged by stinging, biting creatures in order to toivel, he was zocheh to be able to clear them away and immerse undisturbed.

It was the same thing with the Gemara. Because my grandfather was moser nefesh with a great many years of intense ameilus in learning Gemara, he was zocheh to be given it as a gift."

● Always Feel Their Pain

Rav Bussu says that in addition to his father's mesirus nefesh, there was another trait that met with the Baba Sali's approval. "My father's anivus is unbelievable — only one who knows him understands," he says. "If you want to see, just come to my parents' house in Har Nof in the middle of the night. You will see him there in the window, absorbed in a sefer."

After Rav David Bussu and Rabbanit Avigayil were married, the couple moved back to Buenos Aires. Rav Shlomo Bussu was born there on Hoshana Rabbah 5722 (1961). In the meantime, the Baba Sali was in Paris, and his son-in-law and daughter soon felt called to join him there. Rav Shlomo grew up mainly in Paris, and French became his mother tongue. Although the Baba Sali moved on to Eretz Yisrael in 1964, he returned to Paris three times during Rav Shlomo's youth, staying for three months on each visit.

"My whole life would be completely different if I hadn't known the Baba Sali at this formative stage of my life," Rav Bussu muses. "A malach, mamash. I would come back home from school, knowing that the Baba Sali was at home. Light was coming from the house, the whole house was light. It wasn't normal. He wasn't a man, he was a malach. When he passed away, that's when we really realized. It was a sunny day, but everything was dark.

"Just to be in his presence was like being recharged," Rav Bussu says. "People used to come to the house just to see him. 'We want to look at him.' Even litvishe people would come over, just to look at him."

There is a story about his grandfather that Rav Bussu tells frequently, one he witnessed as a child with his own eyes. He cites it to stress the importance of never becoming desensitized to other people's pain.

My Grandfather, the Babi Sali, had incredible Ahavas Yisrael. It was the source of his Ruach Hakodesh.

When I was a child, I broke my leg. I was in a cast for six months. I don't know why Hashem granted me the merit, but the Babi Sali came to visit me several times over a period of a few months.

On one of those occasions, I took advantage of my situation, and stayed with my grandfather – The Babi Sali. I entered his room, and I pretended that I couldn't move. - I heard extremely difficult conversations. As a child, I was unaccustomed to hearing such types

of challenges that people were going through. – I had a very hard time listening to them and trying to understand all the complexities. – I was really traumatized, however, after two weeks, I sort of got accustomed to it. Even I as a child, I got used to it very quickly.

Yet, I recall three weeks later, when a distraught Jew from Belgium came and told the Babi Sali that his son was battling a severe illness. The father was consumed by his son's pain. He implored the Babi Sali to daven for him. - Babi Sali blessed him wholeheartedly.

After the man left, seemingly unaware of my presence, Babi Sali cried out to Hashem, pleading with the utmost emotion,

A desperate father had come before the Moroccan sage, pleading that he pray for the man's dangerously ill son. After the man left, as young Shlomo looked on, the Baba Sali broke out in tears and called out to the heavens, "Ribbono shel Olam, take my hand away. Take my hand so this child should have a refuah sheleimah."

I was taken aback. Here was a man who had encountered thousands of people together with all their problems and troubles, yet still possessed an immensely compassionate and loving heart, requesting rachamim and mercy for every petition.

"Doctors, you know, can lose all their sensitivity," Rav Bussu points out. "When they're in the middle of an operation, they can't think about what they are doing to this patient. But the Baba Sali, who heard thousands and thousands of stories of people's pain and suffering… he had the same regesh, the same sensitivity, with each and every one of them."

This episode left an indelible impression on me to this day.

Rav Shlomo grew up in Paris, attending yeshivah ketanah at Mercaz HaTorah, headed by Rav Yaakov Toledano (son of Rav Rafael Baruch Toledano, leader of the Jews of Meknes, Morocco, for most of the 20th century). He went on to learn at Yeshivas Chochmei Tzarfat, headed by Rav Chaim Chaikin, a talmid of the Chofetz Chaim.

In 1978 he followed his brother, Rav Shimon, to Gateshead, where he learned under Rav Leib Gurwicz, Rav Leib Lopian, and Rav Moshe Schwab. That is where he picked up English and Yiddish — as well as the Ashkenazic pronunciations he sprinkles throughout his speech. (He also learned Arabic from his illustrious grandfather during the extended periods the Baba Sali stayed with his family in France.)

After learning in Gateshead, Rav Bussu became engaged to the daughter of his uncle, Rav Baruch Abuchatzeira (Baba Baruch) of Netivot, son of the Baba Sali. It was clearly an auspicious match; the shadchan was the couple's grandfather, the Baba Sali himself. In 1982 Rav Bussu and his wife, Rabbanit Rut, settled in Eretz Yisrael, and he went to learn in Yeshivas Mir; his chavrusa was Rav Dovid Moore, today a noted dayan and posek in Brisk.

Then Rav Bussu began his nearly 25-year sojourn in the Shmuel Hanavi neighborhood of Jerusalem, essentially leaving his family for the week across town in Har Nof and living in a machsan so he could focus all his energies and waking moments on Torah.

He blended into the crowd in Shmuel Hanavi, a complex of long tenement buildings built along the 1949 armistice line to accommodate the large influx of Jewish refugees from North Africa. Even today, many homes in the area feature portraits of the Baba Sali, mounted on concrete walls built three feet thick, to withstand the pre-1967 Jordanian artillery shells.

But the days of blending in are over now for Rav Bussu: He has been pressed into service to head several kollelim, and his itinerary has taken him around the world, where he is in demand for audiences with the public, all while still keeping to his rigorous daily schedule of learning and fasting.

He has been back to his native Argentina, as well as Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, Morocco, and the UK. His stops in the US have included New York, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

"I didn't leave Israel for almost 25 years," he reflects. "I thought I'd be staying until Mashiach comes. I understood that if a person is really shteiging and trying to get closer to Hashem, he can't disconnect himself. I thought if I went to chutz l'Aretz, it would be like trying to cook something, but taking the pot off the fire, putting it back on, then taking it off again…"

Rabbi Moshe Shapoff, a Stolin-Karlin chassid who has known Rav Bussu for a decade and has served as his gabbai for the last six years, identifies a thread running through the Abuchatzeira family history that has perhaps found expression in this current generation as well.

"The Baba Sali was always running away from kavod, a model of anivus, and now the whole world knows who the Baba Sali was," he says. "It's a whole avodah to run from kavod that you don't find in many other places today." And now, it seems, honor has taken off in pursuit of the Baba Sali's grandson.

"It was a real earthquake for me, the difference between all the years of being alone and now having to be awake and alert and careful to do exactly what Hashem wants in every situation," Rav Bussu says. "So, baruch Hashem, after staying in one place for so long, He is bringing me to other places. Everywhere we go, every step, we feel the Hashgachah. We feel Him leading where we must go."

● Don't Choose

Rav Bussu has a well-developed strategy culled from the depths of Torah that can help a person determine which direction to take when Hashem puts him at a crossroads. Mainly it involves being judicious about when to apply one's freedom of choice.

"A person needs not to have his own ratzon in these things," Rav Bussu explains. "We have, on one side, the Chazal that a person is guided in the direction he wants to go, for both the negative and the positive.

But here, Rav Bussu cautions, a person can fall into another trap. When a person is given a choice not between a good thing and a bad thing, but rather between two good things — say, a choice between two yeshivos — he may start to form his own plans and desires around the question.

"We have to focus our bechirah only on the things that are in the realm of free choice, which is the choice between tov and ra," Rav Bussu says. "But when you come to a choice between two ways to good — don't choose. Leave it to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. The more you leave in His Hands, the more He does. Because the best thing is to say, 'I don't want anything — He knows the best.' In my own experience, nothing went better when I went the way I wanted. Hashem always knows better."

But what is a person to do when Hashem does not make His preference in the matter abundantly clear? What if it seems the decision is left to the individual alone?

"That's also a challenge," Rav Bussu acknowledges, "but there's a trick you can use, and it's something that will never fail if you go with it."

Rav Bussu refers to Chazal's teaching that during Avraham Avinu's ten trials, he asked no questions of Hashem, until the malach instructed him to stay his hand and not slay his son Yitzchak: "Yesterday, You told me 'Yitzchak will be accounted for you as offspring.' Then You came back and told me, 'Take, please, your son, as an offering to Me.' Now You're telling me, 'Withhold your hand from the youth.' "

"So what happened?" asks Rav Bussu. "Did Avraham Avinu lose control, when we said previously that he asked no questions?"

Rav Bussu resolves the apparent contradiction: Avraham Avinu reasoned that Hashem had presented him with two options: Under the first scenario, Yitzchak would survive to be his heir and carry

on his mission to bring Hashem's message to the world. In the second scenario, Yitzchak would be brought as a sacrifice.

Avraham was able to recognize how Hashem's will was expressed in the first option, but when he analyzed it objectively, he had to concede he favored that option himself; if he followed that first option, he could not discount the possibility that he was acting to benefit his own interests, and he could not claim to be exclusively following the will of Hashem.

The second option also reflected the will of Hashem, but Avraham had to admit that he himself did not prefer this scenario. Avraham ultimately decided that, to ensure he was fulfilling Hashem's will only, and not taking his own interests to heart in the slightest, he should obey the command kach na es bincha. He was resolute in this decision, and was in the midst of carrying it out when the malach stopped him.

"As long as he was determined to slaughter Yitzchak, he had no questions," Rav Bussu says. "But when the malach told him, 'Al tishlach yadcha el hanaar,' he thought maybe it was a trick. Then he had questions! "

Just as Avraham Avinu went against his own ratzon at the Akeidah, so should a person avoid taking the easier way out. "When you are in safeik as to what's best for you, don't choose the option that you are prejudiced to take. Choose the one that is less comfortable for you. That way, you will certainly not be making a mistake."

● Stories to Live By

The extended Abuchatzeira family remained tight-knit, guarding the derech of the Baba Sali and their other holy ancestors. Rav Bussu guards the mesorah he absorbed directly from his grandfather, and there is no place he taps into it more than during his reception hours for people in crisis, many of whom are suffering because of chinuch issues with their own children.

A traditional couple was once referred to him because they were having issues with their children and their own shalom bayis. He asked them, "And what's with Shabbos?" They responded that they keep Shabbos. "And what does your Shabbos table look like?" They answered that they didn't really have a Shabbos table. Everyone in the family just ate on their own.

The Shabbos table, says Rav Bussu, is an antidote to many ills. "I almost never start Kiddush until I see every child is at the table," Rav Bussu says. "Everyone should be there, from big to small. But I don't force them. I try to make it geshmak to be at the table. We keep going for three or four hours — I have to fight to start the bentshing. You don't have to prepare a lomdishe devar Torah — just keep it geshmak, a light devar Torah, and make it interesting, with lots of singing, and speak with each of your children in front of the others. It is the only protection. It makes you their best friend."

The number one priority in confronting the particular challenges of this generation, he says, is to stress the positives with your children. Negativity should be employed only in extreme situations, to set borders on behavior.

"Be as positive as you can be — the negatives, dwell on them as little as possible," Rav Bussu says. "I almost never said to my children, 'Sit and learn,' almost never. But if I happen to catch one of them learning from a sefer, I say, 'Wow! What are you learning? Tell me about it!' They feel excited and encouraged."

Rav Bussu carries this principle even into the realm of dealing with a child whose actions aren't measuring up. He remembers how one of his sons fell asleep in shul on Shabbos morning. "Anyone else would have woken him up, but I let him sleep. Only at Mussaf did he open his eyes, yawn, and stretch. And then he davened Mussaf. Afterward I said to him, 'Wow! How did you do that? You were so tired! I can't believe it!' I came home and told my wife, 'You won't believe what our son did, how he davened Mussaf when he was so tired.' Most people

would scold and say, 'You slept through shul and hardly davened Mussaf!' But what does the child get from that? Nothing.

"You have to give encouragement. Tell him he's a gibor when he wakes up in the morning even though he's tired. When he gets this kind of encouragement, he wants to show he can do it."

Rav Bussu lists another priority that he says might seem very small but may well the most important inyan of all: to tell a story about tzaddikim at the Shabbos table. "Do you know why? Because the main inyan of tefillah is ambition," Rav Bussu asserts. "If you think about it, everyone has an ambition. In life, too many things arise that spoil a child's pursuit of his ambitions. But with a story, he has no negiyus. He always identifies with the tzaddik, and internally he develops ambitions to be like him."

Sippurei tzaddikim were a regular fixture at the Bussu family table when he was growing up. His father's stories captivated the entire family. Rav Bussu emphasizes that there is a correct shiur for stories of tzaddikim: exactly one per week, at the Shabbos table.

He said he heard in the name of the Chazon Ish that one story is worth more than a thousand mussar shmuessen. But the one-per-week ratio is not only a minimum; it is also a maximum.

"I was once at a chinuch conference with the Tolna Rebbe — he spoke about it explicitly, the need to tell sippurei tzaddikim," Rav Bussu says. "One rav who was present said he wanted to tell his kids a story every night. The Tolna Rebbe said no — they'll just fall asleep. Once a week is enough. Once a week and they'll pay attention."

Rav Bussu emphasizes that this is not a simple story time for children; very great care must be invested in this task: "There was a time it was harder for me to find the right story than it was to prepare a shiur. It's pikuach nefesh."

Reconnecting Rav Bussu reflects on his new public role — of being an address for people all over the world who seek his counsel and

blessings — and the preparation Hashem provided him for it, seeing the Hashgachah pratis every step of the way. Besides his illustrious lineage, Rav Bussu's own life experience has equipped him with powerful tools and a unique insight for dealing with the hopes and concerns of Jews all over the world.

"I was born in Argentina, I moved to France, I learned in England," - "I've met in my life all kinds of mentalities — chassidish, Sephardi, Ashkenazi. And also, HaKadosh Baruch Hu gave me the languages."

Above all, the message he hopes to get across is that however formidable the challenges facing our generation appear to be, they are dwarfed before the power of Torah and connection to Hashem.

"Being connected to the Torah is being connected to Ein Sof," Rav Bussu says.. All brachah comes from the Torah — parnassah, health, shalom — it all depends on the Torah Hakedoshah.

"The more people are connected to the Torah, the more success they will have in everything. When a person is learning, he's influencing the whole world. It makes learning completely different. It's not only about filling your neshamah, to enable you to overcome the nisyonos in your own life — you're connecting to the essence of the brachah for everything."

And as our own conversation winds to its close, Rav Bussu turns back to the sefer on the desk before him and reconnects. —

● The First Second Opinion

Rav Bussu shares a story about his grandfather the Baba Sali giving an eitzah that proved prophetic, regarding Rav Yisrael Dovid Novener and his rebbetzin. Rav Novener was a rosh yeshivah in Mattersdorf, as well as a noted composer of niggunim. After the war, the Noveners moved to France, where after a time Rav Novener took ill. A diagnosis revealed he had a condition in his spine that required immediate intervention. They managed to consult with the world's number one specialist — a French Jewish doctor.

This specialist advised Rav Novener that he must undergo an operation that was extremely risky but offered the only ray of hope for recovery. Without it, he said, Rav Novener could not expect to live long. Rebbetzin Novener flew right away to Eretz Yisrael, straight to the Baba Sali who had already moved there from Morocco and with whom the family was connected since his sojourn in France, to get a brachah for a successful operation.

Upon hearing the details, the Baba Sali's response was adamant: "The operation isn't necessary," even as the operation had already been scheduled. - Rav Novener also had a connection to the Satmar Rebbe, who advised, "Get a second opinion."

The Noveners were a bit thrown by this — who could give them a second opinion, after they had already consulted the number-one specialist in the world? In the end, they went to this specialist's professor from medical school. This professor reviewed all the tests and diagnostics and said the operation was necessary.

So they went back to the specialist, but when he heard they had sought a second opinion — from his professor, yet — he was offended and refused to perform the operation.

The Noveners were distraught — who would now perform such a dangerous operation? In the end, they were recommended a non-Jewish surgeon, who reviewed all the files and determined that surgery was necessary. He told them he'd take them on a Sunday, but they requested instead that it be pushed off to Tuesday. Since the operation was being delayed two days, this doctor wanted to do all the tests again. The results came back, and he said emphatically, "Yes, you need the surgery."

But as he reviewed the results again, this time a bit more closely, he exclaimed suddenly, "No! It's an infection! The infection looks like this other condition, but it can be cured with antibiotics!"

Straightaway they put Rav Novener on antibiotics, and he was cured.

● Don't Throw Them Out

"I was once talking with a yungerman about technology," Rav Bussu says. "This yungerman told me, 'Kids today, you know, they know what they want.' But why? Who said so? Who decided? A family has to sit together and find some kind of solution. It has to be done with understanding — the parents can't just say, 'Give me your phone!' but rather, 'These are the issues, this is the danger.' Don't look at it as taking away your child's pleasure — you're protecting him for his whole life! Everyone has kedushah, and compromising that affects his whole life. Your kids can understand this."

But from the side of the mosdos chinuch, on the other hand, Rav Bussu charts a very fine line to which mechanchim must hew; because although the challenge from technology is formidable, a bochur must not be cast out.

"Roshei yeshivah today, when they throw out bochurim because they hold it's pikuach nefesh, they have to try to understand that we have no idea what kind of nisyonos these bochurim have to confront. There is a big disconnect between many mechanchim and their talmidim. It's a disaster.

"My son Moshe Yaakov — the mashgiach in his yeshivah threw out a bochur. Moshe Yaakov asked to speak to the rosh yeshivah. He said to the rosh yeshivah, 'The Gemara says when we pasken whether a beheimah has a mum or not, we must consult many different experts to be sure we pasken right. But with this bochur, you decided by yourself that it was pikuach nefesh?' And the rosh yeshivah brought the bochur back!" Rav Bussu relates this story with evident relish.

Rav Bussu points to another challenge confronting today's yeshivah bochurim that contributes to their challenges: Their yeshivos won't let them get married early.

"That makes things much, much harder," he says, shaking his head. "That has caused a lot — a lot — of korbanos. When a person knows

he's about to get married, he has a safe harbor. If you're not letting him start shidduchim till 23, he's already struggling. A rosh yeshivah tells me not to worry about such a bochur, saying, 'What's the problem? He's a tzaddik! Look, he's learning!' Your tzaddik comes to me to tell me all his struggles. We cannot fathom the nisyonos they are struggling with. Sometimes they get addicted to very bad things. I don't know what heter a rosh yeshivah has not to let someone get married when he wants to."

He interposes the well-known story about Rav Steinman ztz"l and a mashgiach who sought the Rosh Yeshivah's advice on how to deal with a certain bochur. All the positive measures had been exhausted, and now the yeshivah's only option was expulsion.

"We warned him," the mashgiach said, "but it continued, he's finished now, and he cannot stay in yeshivah."

Rav Steinman was pained to hear this. "Are you sure you tried everything?" - "We tried everything, and I'm telling the Rosh Yeshivah, it was mamash erech apayim," the mashgiach insisted.

Rav Steinman gave a deep krechtz. "What's his name?" he asked. "And what's his mother's name?"

"I don't know," the mashgiach said with a shrug.

"What?!" Rav Steinman demanded, now clearly agitated. "You didn't daven for him?! What are you, a policeman?!"

"Rav Steinman threw the mashgiach out," Rav Bussu says, "and he told that rosh yeshivah he had to find another mashgiach." *(Originally featured in Mishpacha,)*

"People are created to be loved, and things are created to be used. - The reason why the world is in chaos is because things are being loved, and people are being used!"

Rabbi Paysach Krohn - Free from Fire

The year was 1906. Rabbi Hillel Borkowsky lived in a town outside of Vilna, Lithuania called Voranava. As much as he wanted to remain ensconced within the vibrant European Jewish community, he knew he needed to move to America and earn the financial means of resettling his family on new soil in the United States. And so he did.

His trip overseas brought him to the Landfield Avenue shul in Monticello, New York. He went on to serve as a chazzan, shochet, mohel and shamash in the community. His hours were long, and his work ethic went above and beyond, lasting from early morning to late at night. Two years later, in 1908, Rabbi Borkowsky contacted his wife, Hinda, and their six children and relayed the long-awaited news: he'd be able to bring them all to America.

Of his six children, Rabbi Borkowsky knew that his youngest five would need to take up permanent residence somewhere else. Even though Yiddishkeit flourished in Manhattan, it was a city that would bring its own set of new and difficult challenges to maintaining strong ties to a Torah life. Likewise, Monticello had its handfuls of residents who expressed disregard and apathy toward Judaism. On the other hand, Rabbi Borkowsky and his wife knew that their eldest daughter, Chaya Elka (Ida), would need to live in Manhattan in order to forge a future for herself.

Ida moved in with her uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Schultz, and obtained a job during the day while attending school at night. In addition, the hope was that when she'd reach marriageable age, she'd meet a nice boy in Manhattan and begin a family of her own.

Upon completion of her school, she sought to obtain a decent job. And to her fortune, there was a job available in one of the most reputable companies—the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. There had been a recent strike, and they were now looking to hire several employees and make up for loss of time and orders they had to fulfill.


154 KILLED IN SKYSCRAPER FACTORY FIRE;
SCORES BURN, OTHERS LEAP TO DEATH.

But there was one catch. It was a known fact that if you worked for the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, you had to work on Shabbos. Unfortunately, many Jewish girls facing this dilemma buckled under pressure and signed on anyway. Ida too was in this quandary. She knew that she wanted to earn a good income, but she equally remembered the standards of her parents, R' Hillel and Hinda. Her father had always said, "Countries change and cultures change, but the Torah never changes."

As much as he could, R' Hillel sought to impress upon his children the values, warmth and dedication inherent to Torah and Jewish life. Chaya Elka had indeed woven such ideals into the fabric of her life. Even though she now went by Ida and lived in Manhattan and went to night school, not much had changed inside her. Taking a job, however lucrative it might be, couldn't and wouldn't translate into discarding her Jewish past and heritage.

And so, her answer to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory was such — "No." She turned down the job.

The first week after she declined the job offer and would have been expected to work seven days, including Shabbos, shares a place in history. March 25, 1911, marks the tragic outbreak of a raging fire that destroyed the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory.

The ten-story building rose engulfed in flames, and with large tables and machines blocking the safety exits and other fire safety measures not yet in place by law, 154 workers tragically perished, many of them young, Jewish women.

Ida had not been there.

It is not coincidental that March 25, 2011, was not a Monday, Tuesday or Friday. It was Shabbos. And that very day, the Parsha read in every single shul in every single Jewish community around the world was Parshas Vayakhel. There, the following words were read: "*Do not burn a fire in your dwelling places on the day of Shabbos*" (*Shemos* 30:3).



To this day, this tragic incident has become a turning point and historic moment for legal safety and fire measures. After extensive investigation and rigorous discussion, a series of standardized fire regulations were established across many factories and industries in the United States.

I have spoken Ida's daughter, Mrs. Hanna Markowitz, who lived in West Haven, Connecticut, along with Ida's granddaughters and great-granddaughters who live in Baltimore, and they all said the same thing: if Ida had been at the factory that Shabbos, they wouldn't be alive today. Because of her observance of Shabbos, Ida has children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren who continue to observe Shabbos and live a rich Jewish life.

But I want to tell you something else. The Gerrer Rebbe, as well as many other Rebbes, homiletically interpret the above Pasuk—'Do not burn a fire in your dwelling places on the day of Shabbos'—to mean that Shabbos should not be a day of 'fire,' or anger. Make Shabbos a day of tranquility and peace in your home. But this interpretation is not simply homiletical.



Those who daven Nusach Ashkenaz on Friday night and recite the passages of 'Bameh Madlikin,' a compilation of the Mishnayos from the second chapter of Mesechta Shabbos, state (Shabbos 2:7): "A person should say three things to his family in his home on Friday afternoon, entering into Shabbos—'Did you give maaser (tithes)?' 'Did you prepare the eruv?' 'Have you lit the candles?'

The Tiferes Yisroel, commenting on this Mishnah, asks why the Mishnah emphasizes that a person asks of his family these question b'soch beiso, literally "inside his house"? Why couldn't the Mishna simply have stated that a person should ask these questions b'beiso, "in his house"?

The Tiferes Yisroel remarkably explains: This wording comes to teach us that these questions should not be said in a "loud, angry voice, so that others will hear it outside." Talk nicely and softly and keep your words to a pitch and tone that leaves your words resonating only inside your home. This is the additional layer and idea embedded behind the Pasuk of not lighting a fire within our homes on Shabbos.

The commitment to the observance of Shabbos serves as a foundation of blessing to our world and lives. It was true for the Borkowsky family and it is true for us all as well.



Rabbi Yoel Gold - What Does Mrs. Weinberg See?

Some time ago, I had the opportunity to be in Atlanta and spend Shabbos with Rabbi Ilan and Rebbetzin Feldman. Rebbetzin Feldman is the daughter of Rav Yaakov Weinberg zt"l, the late Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Yisroel, Baltimore. She shared with me the following.

Her mother, Rebbetzin Chana Weinberg a"h, used to teach in Baltimore in the 1950s in the Liberty Jewish Center every Sunday afternoon. It was a modern Jewish school, and each week she would have her lesson prepared and teach it to the students. One day she entered the building and saw the maintenance worker walking around with his six-year-old son. The worker looked quite agitated and in a bad mood. He was talking to his son sternly, berating him and calling him names. Seeing this unfold right before her eyes made Rebbetzin Weinberg feel terrible. And so, she decided to approach the father.

"Excuse me, but I could borrow your son for just a few minutes?" The maintenance worker looked back at Rebbetzin Weinberg confused. "Why do you need my son?" "I want him to help me set up the classroom upstairs," she responded plainly. The worker, almost reflexively, started hurling his familiar insults, wondering aloud why anyone would want his son who was lazy and "no good" to help. "He can help me," Rebbetzin Weinberg assured.

Leading the boy upstairs, Rebbetzin Weinberg began looking around for a mirror. Finally, she headed into the woman's restroom and lifted the boy up so he was face to face with the mirror. "When you look into the mirror, what do you see?" she asked. "I see you when I'm looking into the mirror," the boy responded playfully. "No, I want you to look at yourself and tell me—when you look at yourself, who

do you see?" The boy began echoing his father's insults—"I see a lazy, good-for-nothing kid."

Rebbetzin Weinberg then turned to the boy. "Now I want to tell you when I look at you what I see." She proceeded to tell him that she sees a good-natured kid, a sensitive boy, a boy who tries hard.

And then she went on to take out a small makeup mirror from her pocketbook. Along with this, she wrote on a piece of paper, "What does Mrs. Weinberg see?" She folded the paper, placed it into the mirror, folded the mirror and gave it to the boy. She then said to him, "The next time you feel bad about yourself, I want you to open the mirror, take out this note and ask yourself, 'When I look into the mirror, what does Mrs. Weinberg see?"

The way Rebbetzin Feldman knows this story is because years ago at the shiva of her mother, a man in his mid-sixties walked into the shiva home and told this story. He then he took out a mirror, unfolded an old note, and said, "Your mother empowered me to go through life and play music, because she reminded me of who I am."

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Parsha Perspective – Opposites Attract

"The opposite of pain is not pleasure, it's 'no pain.' "– R' Noach Weinberg z"l.

When dealing with opposites, we often confuse pairs that go together with actual opposites, like in the above example.

At the plague of Barad, the hail which combined two opposite forces – fire and ice, the Torah tells us that "those who feared the word of Hashem brought their servants and animals indoors."

The opposite should be those "who did not fear the word of G-d." But that's not what the Torah says. The opposite given is, "whoever did not take the word of G-d to heart," left his animals and servants in the field. Thus, the opposite of fearing the word of G-d is not 'not fearing,' G-d's word, but ignoring it!

The word for fear, yirah, also means to see. When one thinks objectively and truthfully about the world, he is bound to see G-d and thus know that His word is reality. The opposite of this is one who refuses to see the Godliness in front of his nose. Such a person condemns all he possesses to be wasted and lost, not because he doesn't fear G-d, but on the contrary, because he fears G-d's word, yet refuses to acknowledge the reverence he should have for Him.



Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

The Bais Aharon writes in a letter to his son, "A person must work on Simchah, on being happy, more than all other good Middos."

Once, the Bais Aharon rebuked his son for not being happy. His son asked, "I have other faults, and you don't speak to me about them. Why do you rebuke me specifically about happiness?"

The Bais Aharon replied, "You have Yiras Shamayim. When you do something wrong, I know you will regret it, so I have no reason to rebuke you in other areas. But people think that being sad isn't so severe. Therefore, I have to teach you to always be happy!"

Working on our Middos



A young man in Eretz Yisroel was once making the rounds in a secular Moshav, knocking on every door, to ask the residents if they were interested in learning Torah. At one house, the man who answered the door was angry about a recent incident where several Chareidim had burned an Israeli flag, which caused an uproar among the people. He yelled at this young visitor, "I don't want to have anything to do with people who burn our flag!"

The young man responded gently and said, "Before we speak about that, let's sit down and learn a little. I will discuss it with you after."

The man agreed. After they had finished learning, he had only one question: "Will you come back and learn with me again?" He was no longer interested in the issue of the flag burning.

When **Rav Elya Svei, zt"l**, was told about this incident, he remarked, "The man's change of heart certainly had to do with experiencing the beauty of the Torah, but I am sure that was not the only reason. - The encounter with that young man, and to his pleasant and sweet personality, must have had a good deal to do with that man's change of heart!"

"We do not need to fight fire with fire. We should not try to meet the outside world on its own terms and try to compete with it by offering fun and excitement of our own. Rather, we should expose our children to an entirely different experience: the contentment and satisfaction that Torah offers.

If they perceive how sweet and pleasant a life of Torah can be, they will never wish to exchange it for anything else in the world!"

Parsha Points to Ponder

Which grandfather and grandson, both mentioned in Parshas Vaeira, lived for the same number of years?

Amram was the son of Kehas, who was the son of Levi. Both Amram and his grandfather Levi died when they were 137.

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

A PROJECT OF THE Mesorah Heritage Foundation

WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

The Gift of Speech by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman



The annual dinner of Agudath Israel in the spring of 1999 was dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Moshe Sherer, who had passed away one year earlier on the day of that year's annual dinner.

In preparation for the dinner, Rabbi Sherer's son, Rav Shimshon, visited Agudah headquarters in lower Manhattan. He entered the huge office building and walked across the lobby to the receptionist, a gentile woman. Rav Shimshon wished her a "Good morning" and asked if he had to sign in. "If you're here to visit Agudath Israel, it's not necessary," she replied. Rav Shimshon said that, indeed, he had come to visit Agudath Israel.

He added, "Rabbi Sherer, the late president of Agudath Israel, was my father. Did you know him?"

"Did I know him?" the woman responded. "I smile every day because of him!"

She explained: "Among all those who occupied offices in this building, Rabbi Sherer was always the first to arrive for work each morning. He would enter the building briskly, as if he was in a hurry to do something important. He would press the button for the elevator and then, as he waited for the elevator to descend, he would hurry across the lobby to my desk. 'Good morning — and keep on smiling,' he would tell me. And I knew that he meant it.

"Tears are welling up in my eyes as I say this. At times, my life is rough, but then I remember your father's words and I smile."

Hearing this, Rav Shimshon was reminded of an incident that happened in his youth. As a young boy, he would walk through the streets of Boro Park on *Shabbos* morning together with his father as they made their way to *shul*. Rabbi Sherer wished a "*Gut Shabbos*" to every Jew he passed and a "Good morning" to every gentile.

One *Shabbos* morning, young Shimshon asked his father, "Daddy, are you running for president? Why must you say, 'Good morning' to every single person whom we pass?"

Rabbi Sherer replied, "As you know, when I was a student at Mesivta Torah Vodaath, I had the great privilege of serving as an assistant of sorts to the *gaon* and *tzaddik* **Rav Elchonon Wasserman** when he visited America in 1938. I first met Rav Elchonon when I reported to his room one morning. I greeted the *tzaddik* with a "*Shalom Aleichem*" and then we headed for the elevator to go downstairs.

"As we waited for the elevator, Rav Elchonon turned to me and asked, '*Vi azoi zogt men 'Gut morgen' oif Einglish?*' (How does one say '*Gut morgen*' in English?) I replied, 'Very much like we say it in Yiddish — 'Good morning.'

"R' Elchonon then paced back and forth and practiced saying 'Good morning.' The elevator arrived, and as we entered it, Rav Elchonon

wished the gentile elevator attendant, 'Good morning.' He then turned to me and asked, *'Hob ich gut gezokt?'* ('Did I say it well?')

"And so," concluded Rabbi Sherer, "I learned from Rav Elchonon that saying 'Good morning' to everyone is something that a Jew should do."

שמחנו בישועתך על התורה

A Tribute to Mori V'Rabi Moron HaMashgiach HaGaon HaTzadik Rav Mattisyohu Chaim Salomon Zt"l - Written by R' YZ Grossberger



Our beloved Rebbe, HaGaon Hatzadik Reb Mattisyohu Salomon zt"l had so many qualities from which we can learn. It's extremely difficult to know where to start. He was a multi-faceted personality, and this was evident in the way that he could successfully engage with young and old, across the entire spectrum of Klal Yisroel, and to each at their own level.

To list but a few of his qualities: should one stress his Ahavas Hashem or his Ahavas Yisroel? His broad knowledge in Torah or his phenomenal greatness in Mussar. His Chesed to the individual or to the Klal. His powerful Tefilos or his Derech in Chinuch. His outstanding Middos or his care for every Yeshiva bochur and Kolel Yungerman. His Kedusha or the way he was

Moiser Nefesh to protect Klal Yisroel from harmful technology. His Ayin Tova or his care for the Yidden in Russia. His warmth and empathy to special needs children. The time he spent with those struggling with mental health issues. His encouragement to Tzedoka organisations. His Avoda on Shabbos and Yom Tov or the tremendous efforts he put into Elul and the Yomim Noro'im. The inspiration that he gave divorcees, almonos and yesomim, or those struggling with Shidduchim. His Dikduk in Mitzvos or knowledge of Halocho. His closeness to Gedolim of yesteryear. His clear Da'as Torah with a proper knowledge of Mesora and Hashkofa that he passed on. His Seforim and Shmuessen that covered every topic imaginable that so inspired Klal Yisroel. His Emuna or his Bitochon. His Zerizus or his Perishus. His open home - the address for every broken person who needed some advice and encouragement at all hours of the day or night, or a place to sleep. His visits to seriously ill people. His telephone line that rang constantly. His Tefilos for the childless or his support to struggling teens. The way he built people and the efforts he put into Sholom Bayis. The Shuls and the schools that he set up. The Yeshivos and Seminaries he cared so much about. The incredible Siyatto Dishmayo he had in advising people. His worry for the Hatzlocho of every Reb Yisroel and sense of responsibility for Klal Yisroel and the list goes on and on.

Just like a precious diamond sparkles in all its facets, so too, Reb Mattisyohu's influence impacted across the entire globe, inspiring everyone by his very presence in our generation.

Reb Mattisyohu – Eved Hashem

Therefore, I would like to suggest something unique about him that was most apparent to his Talmidim. Perhaps this is the very core that encapsulates his greatness - he was an Eved Hashem!

I remember years ago how he once told me, "I have given myself over completely to Hashem. He can do with me whatever he wants!" There was no self in his Avoda; his only desire was to do the Rotzon

Hashem in every situation just as we learnt above regarding the greatness of Moshe Rabeinu.

His son-in-law Reb Binyomin Jacobs Shlita said over at the Levaya that they once asked his Rebbetzen o"h, what is the secret behind Reb Mattisyohu's success? She answered, because before he does anything he asks himself what is the Rotzon Hashem and does just that - that is why he is so successful!

Here too lies the secret as to why people were so drawn to him and so receptive to what he had to say. The Mishna tells us in **פרקי אבות פרק ב'** - **עֲשֵׂה רְצוֹנוֹ כִּרְצוֹנֶךָ, כְּדֵי שֶׁיַּעֲשֶׂה רְצוֹנְךָ כִּרְצוֹנוֹ** - '***Subjugate your will to His will, so that He will subjugate the will of others to yours***.' Because Reb Mattisyohu subjugated his entire self to doing only Hashem's Rotzon - he had no other interest in life, therefore people were happy to submit their own selves to him by taking his words seriously and elevating themselves.

Avdus – Brings Opportunities

His passing is a tremendous loss for our generation. We must however acknowledge that if Hashem graced our generation with an image of an incredible Eved Hashem, then the Limud to us is to take that inspiration from him to also become great Avdei Hashem.

Once we focus on this, then Hashem will surely reciprocate by giving us opportunities to be successful in every area of Torah and Mitzvos, and have the Zechus to become the conduit to bring down Brocho into this world, just as Reb Mattisyohu did in so many areas.

This is the legacy that he has left us – Reb Mattisyohu zt"l – Eved Hashem!

'A man should believe in G-d through faith, not because of miracles.' ~ R' Nachman of Breslov zt"l.

Appreciating Tzadikim

The Torah writes about the Yichus of Moshe and Ahron prior to the start of the Makos. After that the Posuk tells us how Moshe and Ahron were tasked with the Shlichus to take Klal Yisroel out of Mitzrayim. The next Posuk (**ו׳:כ״ז**), reiterates "**הוא משה ואהרן** ", and the question is we have already mentioned in the Posuk before that we are referring to Moshe and Ahron so why is it necessary to tell us this again? Rashi based on the Gemora in **מגילה יא** answers that it's to teach us something special about Moshe and Ahron – that they fulfilled their Shlichus from Hashem and were Tzadikim from the beginning to the end of their lives, therefore the Torah tells us to stop and appreciate how special Moshe and Ahron really were!

Rashi is teaching us that there were two aspects to the greatness of Moshe and Ahron. The first that they fulfilled their mission to take Klal Yisroel out of Mitzrayim - that in itself with everything it entailed was a tremendous accomplishment. However, we know that the Tachlis of Yetzias Mitzrayim as Hashem told Moshe at the S'neh was that Klal Yisroel should receive the Torah at Har Sinai.

For this second part of their mission, it wouldn't be enough just to have leaders who are good at diplomacy, etc. For this you need Tzadikim on the greatest level who have been Tzadikim their entire lives to be able to bring Torah down to Klal Yisroel. - This is why Rashi makes these two observations that in their mission and their Tzidkus they were great from beginning to end. Chazal in Yoma 38: tell us that Hashem saw that Tzadikim were few therefore He spread them throughout the generations.

Just like in Mitzrayim Hashem gave us Moshe and Ahron to look after the physical and spiritual needs of Klal Yisroel, so too, in every generation we have Tzadikim who care deeply about Klal Yisroel and do their best to elevate Klal Yisroel in their lifetime.

Ha'Gaon HaTzadik Reb Mattisyohu Salomon zt"l was one of those Tzadikim! He elevated us and did so much for Klal Yisroel in so many

areas during his life. We need to appreciate and be thankful to Hashem for giving our generation this Tzadik who inspired us and understood Klal Yisroel's needs so well.

We also must stop contemplate and be grateful to the Tzadik for the tremendous efforts that he put into his life's mission for the sake of Klal Yisroel, just as Moshe and Ahron did in their lifetime which the Posuk is teaching us to take note of.

Let's learn from his exalted deeds and become truly inspired to go in the ways of Tzadikim! **יהי זכרו ברוך** !

A Lesson Can Be Learned From…….

Some of those who worked in the kitchen of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak once complained to **Rav Shach ZTL** that a group of bochurim who had been up learning very late on Friday night, had decided to "break in" to the kitchen and help themselves to some of the Cholent prepared for later that day.

The Rosh HaYeshiva was shocked and immediately declared that those bochurim were Posul to give testimony, as thieves. "If they are hungry, let them come to my house and I will feed them. I am still up at that time".

Rav Shach later spoke about Moshe Rabbeinu who had refused to nurse from one of Batya's maidservants, resulting in Miriam's procurement of their mother Yocheved to nurse him. - Chazal explain that this was because the mouth that was destined to speak with the Shechinah should not drink milk from women who ate non-kosher food. The Rashba uses this as a basis for ruling that one may not give one's child to be nursed by a non- Jewish nursemaid, and this is codified by the Rema in Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 81:7). - Rav Shach asked how the Rashba could apply such a rule to all Jewish infants, from what was apparently specific to Moshe, whose destiny demanded it. Rav Shach explained that indeed, the rule was

applicable to all Jewish infants, all of whom are destined one day to recite berachos, where the words 'Baruch Atah Hashem" are spoken directly to Hashem. - "How will a mouth that has taken stolen food into it be able to speak directly to the Shechinah !"

[ed: **The Chofetz Chaim** says to those who question why their heartfelt Tefilos are not answered, that they must first 'clean' their mouths for an effective Tefilah] (**Pleasant Ridge Newsletter**)

ר' יִשְׂרָאֵל אַבּוּחַצֵירָא זַצַ"ל - Baba Sali, which means '*our praying Father'*, was the title bestowed upon **ר' יִשְׂרָאֵל אַבּוּחַצֵירָא זַצַ"ל** who prayed constantly. When he heard about suffering people, he would beg **ד'** to transfer their pain to him.

Once he was overheard whispering, "**ד'** Creator of the world, I am ready to enter a furnace of fire and give my life as an atonement for …" using the person's name and the name of the person's mother! - Is it any wonder that he touched the lives of thousands?

Focus on Middos - Baba Sali (Judaica Press)

Among those who sat in Baba Sali's **זַצַ"ל** waiting room one morning was a woman and her teenage son. The mother told the **גַּבַּאי** - R' Eliyahu, about their strained and tense relationship.

Finally, it was their turn to see Baba Sali, and the **גַּבַּאי** ushered them into his chambers. Hesitantly, the boy entered the room. At Baba Sali's request, the boy's mother went outside to wait. Baba Sali looked at the teenager and asked him to sit down. Both the boy and his mother, who was standing just outside the room, heard what R' Eliyahu said to Baba Sali in Arabic.

"The mother of this boy asks the **רַב** to bless her son with **מִדּוֹת** , *attributes*, that he lacks, through words of **חִזּוּק** , *encouragement*, and strength, especially emphasizing the **מִצְוָה** of **כִּבּוּד אָב וָאֵם**.

Tears filled Baba Sali's eyes while he listened. As they streamed down his cheeks, he whispered to himself, "If my mother were alive, I would carry her on my shoulders and dance with שִׂמְחָה."

Seeing the צַדִּיק 's pain and hearing his longing for his mother reached deep into the boy's sensitive heart. The youth lowered his head between his hands and began to cry. With a tear-stained face, he went outside the room to his mother and begged that she forgive him for the grief he had caused her recently.

Baba Sali motioned for him to return to the room. He told him a beautiful and personal story about his brother's כִּבּוּד אָב וָאֵם . He then blessed the boy. "If you promise to change your ways, I will bless you with כָּל טוֹב, *everything good*," said the רַב. "You will be happy with everything if you obey and observe the מִצְוָה of כִּבּוּד אָב וָאֵם." The רַב 's words affected the boy deeply. He was a changed person.

Baba Sali never needed to mention a person's wrongdoing. His message was from a heart overflowing with love for his fellow Jew. Such a message will always be heard! יְהִי זִכְרוֹ בָּרוּךְ

Sage Sayings

With his limitless love and compassion for his fellow Jew, Baba Sali זַצַ"ל lightened the load of those who came to unburden themselves. He often said [in his native tongue], " I don't do this for others, I do it for myself! " – "There is nothing I enjoy more than making another Jew happy!"

"The world may be a dark place, but it is such a bright place for those who live with Emunah. It is a different life – A different existence." ~ Nesivos Sholom.

MEOROS HATZADDIKIM
Lights Of Our Righteous

Gedolim Be'Masayhem
Stories & Anecdotes



Rav Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter Sfas Emes (Shevat 5)

● A Tzaddik Is Born

Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter of Warsaw was the Chiddushei HaRim's eldest child, and, like all the other children of Rav Yitzchok Meir of Ger, he was unwell. The Chiddushei HaRim had lost all his other children and now Rav Avrohom Mordechai, just thirty years old, was sick again; death was calling at his door and it looked like he would succumb and leave the world with no son as his heir.

The doctors had given up hope, and it seemed like Rav Avrohom Mordechai was already in the final throes of death, when his childhood friend, Rav Yaakov Arye of Radzimin, leaned over and whispered in his ear, "I have one piece of advice left for you, my dear friend: ask Hashem to grant you life, long enough to merit having a son you don't yet have!"

The Chiddushei HaRim also approached the sickbed and told his dying son, "You must know that it is a mitzva to desire to live, as it says, 'Choose life – uvocharta vachaim!' Please, my son, strengthen yourself – choose life and get well!"

Rav Avrohom Mordechai strengthened himself and with Herculean effort and his last strength, he sat up and cried out, "Ribbono Shel

Olam, please grant me the gift of life so that I can have a son – I shall name him Yehuda, as it says, 'This time – odeh es Hashem – I shall thank G-d!"

A miracle occurred and Rav Avrohom Mordechai recovered! The next year, he did indeed have a son, and with Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel, the Seraph of Mogolintza, as his sandak, the baby was brought into the bris of Avrohom Avinu and named "Yehudah Leib" as promised!

Rav Avrohom Mordechai told his wife, Esther, "I named him Yehuda and he will cause all the hearts of Klal Yisrael to praise and give thanks – lehodos LaShem!"

The Sefas Emes used to say about himself, "My father named me Yehuda, which means "thanksgiving", because he was healed from his sickness in my merit, and I feel this within me as well; each day and night I never tire of ceaselessly giving thanks – lehodos LaShem!"

In honor of his Yahrzeit, here are some of his sayings and anecdotes:

● Force Them Open and Learn

When one of the Chassidim, Reb Mendek Ostover, once complained that he simply could not stay awake and kept falling asleep when he tried to learn Torah, the Sefas Emes did not accept this excuse and told him, "Rip upon your eyelids! Force your eyes open and learn!"

This powerful statement made such an impression on the Chassid that through its influence, that year Reb Mendel completed all four parts of the entire Shulchon Aruch!"

● You Can Still Be a Jew

On another occasion the Sefas Emes told the same Chassid, Reb Mendel, "You can still be a Jew…" meaning, "You still have the opportunity to make something of yourself one day!"

His sharp words of rebuke entered the Chassid like an elixir and in that year, he completely left all worldly pursuits and desires behind, immersing himself in Torah and tefilla!

● The Key to a Jewish Heart

On one Shavuos night at the tisch he conducted, the Sefas Emes told the Chassidim, "It says in davening (Shacharis in Uva LeTzion Goel) 'Hu yiftach libenu besoroso – He, Hashem shall open our hearts through His Torah.'

You hear?! It says the key to open our hearts is the Torah itself! Only through Torah can a Jew open his heart up for Torah. In the Torah itself is hidden the key to opening up a Jewish heart!!"

These words caused such a storm that that night, every sefer was grabbed off the shelf, every bench and shtender was occupied, all the Gemoras, volumes of Shulchon Aruch and sifrei Chassidus were snatched off the shelves till they were bare, and the Chassidim studied all night, trembling and in awe like at Har Sinai!

● Never Alone

Once, Rav Arye Leib Kotshitzky, the chief Rav of Vlachlovik, came before the Sefas Emes, complaining how he suffered in that he presided over a kehilla with no Chassidim.- "I feel lonely!" was his complaint.

The Sefas Emes answered him, "Avrohom Avinu was also alone in his time! And besides, whoever holds himself up and steadies himself with a blatt Gemora is never alone!"

It happened one Friday that the gaon Rabbi Moshe Aryeh Freund stepped into the kitchen where the Shabbos meal was being cooked. The vapour of the dishes filled the kitchen.

Said Rabbi Moshe Aryeh: "If women knew the powerful remedies contained in the vapor of Shabbos dishes, they would not leave the kitchen all week, staying there from Sunday until Friday. ~ Zemiros Aters Yehoshua as quoted by R' Dovid Meisels.

Torah Wellsprings – Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

It is known that Nachum Ish Gam Zu was called so because he would always say **גם זו לטובה** - "This, too, is for the good."

But there seems to be a word missing in his name! His name should have been **נחום איש גם זו לטובה**.

Reb Hershele Liska answers that **גם זו** implies that "This is also from Hashem." His awareness was **גם זו**, that the hardships he was enduring were from Hashem. – With this awareness, automatically, everything becomes good.





● Judgments with Justice

When we study the story of the ten *makkos*, it's important to make clear beforehand what their function was. And therefore, one thing must be established at the beginning – *the purpose of the makkos was not to set free the Am Yisroel.* The fact is that Hakodosh Boruch Hu had said beforehand that the *makkos* wouldn't help.

More than once Hashem said openly that He was going to harden the heart of Pharaoh anyhow and that it would only be at that exact time when Hashem wants, that's when the *Am Yisroel* would go free. And

that's precisely what happened – finally when Hakodosh Boruch Hu decided that the time was right, He made Pharaoh get up in the middle of the night and chase the *Am Yisroel* from his land.

Now, if the *Makkos* weren't needed to set us free so Hakodosh Boruch Hu could have saved us in a much less complicated way. He could have sent a dream to Pharoah. And Pharaoh would have gotten up in the morning and called together his ministers and he would have told them, "Look people, after much solemn and prayerful deliberation I've come to the decision to let the *Bnei Yisroel* go."

And that would have been the end of things – it would have been a royal decree! In the Cairo Tribune, it would have been front page headlines: '**Source In The Royal Palace Reveals: Pharaoh To Set Hebrews Free**!' And we would have walked out of *Mitzrayim* to freedom just the same, without all the hullabaloo of the *makkos*.

Hashem could have made it happen that way, why not?!

● **Explaining the Erev Rav**

And so, if the *makkos* weren't needed to achieve the freedom of the *Am Yisroel*, what was their true purpose? Now, we don't have to look far to find the answer because Hakodosh Boruch Hu stated it as clearly as could be – He told Moshe Rabbeinu what the *makkos* were for: **וְיָדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי אֲנִי הַשֵּׁם** – *"And Egypt shall know that I am Hashem"* (ibid. 7:5). That's the purpose of the *makkos*.

And the truth is that very many Egyptians learned the lesson. Some benefited a little and some benefited more – and some even gained such great benefit that they decided to throw in their lot with the *Bnei Yisroel*. **וְגַם עֵרֶב רַב עָלָה אִתָּם** – *A big number of Egyptians left Mitzrayim with the Bnei Yisroel.* Why do you think they left? Because **וְיָדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם** – They had learned the lesson!

But we understand right away that it wasn't for the benefit of Mitzrayim that these *makkos* were given – it wasn't the Mitzrim that concerned Hakodosh Boruch Hu most. Of all the *talmidim* for whom

the lessons were intended, it was the Am Yisroel who were most important. The lessons are for us! Who still reads the story in *shul* every year? The Mitzrim?! Do the Mitzrim make a Pesach Seder to remember the lessons?! So when it states, **וְיָדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי אֲנִי הַשֵּׁם** , it means **וְיָדְעוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי אֲנִי הַשֵּׁם** . It means, "*Even* the people of Mitzrayim!" The *Mitzrim* will *also* learn, but the real purpose is that the *Bnei Yisroel* should learn that I am Hashem.

That's the great lesson that there are no accidents in the world. If you're going to leave Mitzrayim now to become My people, then the very first lesson you have to learn is that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is in charge of all the affairs of the universe and whatever happens comes directly from Him.

The *makkos* were intended as a lesson that the world has an Owner and that this Owner reacts to what people do.

● Purposeful Plagues

When we come to *Parshas Va'eira* we should make an attempt at understanding the general purpose of all the plagues that came upon Mitzrayim.

As we read about the remarkable events that transpired at that time, we shouldn't merely relegate it to being a Torah narrative; instead, we should think about the following question: What was the intention that Hakodosh Boruch Hu had by staging such remarkable spectacles?

It's actually very important for us to understand this clearly because it occupies a great part in our history and it's a big part of our Torah. And for us it's important not only in connection with our *sedrah* this week; we'll soon see that its lessons are vital for our world outlook and our private everyday lives.

It's said once, and again and again it's repeated: **בַּעֲבוּר תֵּדַע כִּי אֵין כָּמֹנִי בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ**– *So that you should know, that there is none like Me* (*ibid.* 9:14).

So once and for all let's get this clear – the purpose of the ten plagues, the motivation of the *makkos,* was to teach the lesson of the Creator to the world.

● Pharaoh and Me

Now, we should pay good attention to this story because we'll see that it applies to us as much as it did to Pharaoh. And it's very important for us to understand this clearly because it's not merely a matter of learning *chumash* – learning *chumash* is very important, it's our life breath – but more than that, whatever is in the Torah is not merely an episode in the Torah; it's a *torah,* a teaching for the future. And we're expected to live with the teachings of the *chumash*.

And one of the teachings here is that you can witness incredible miracles, marvelous happenings, and remain obtuse and unimpressed. You have to know that we are lucky we weren't in Mitzrayim. Don't be deceived; if our generation had been there we wouldn't have been too impressed. For *dam,* we would have given the same explanation as Pharaoh. For *tzefarde'a* and *kinim* too we would have given scientific or pseudoscientific explanations; we would not have seen Hashem as clearly as we imagine.

Miracles in Medical School

Don't we do that always? Here's a medical student in the laboratory and he's being told by his professor that a piece of tissue has certain functions and it's able to do this and this. Now, if he would be willing to open his eyes and see, he would ponder this, he would think about it – how could it happen that this piece of tissue can produce secretions, enzymes, that are essential to the body?! We know of at least one thousand enzymes that are essential for our wellbeing – some of them actually keep us alive!

And they're formulated in precisely complicated formulas. If you would take all the elements in the world, all the combinations, and

put them in a billion test tubes, and shake them up and down for a billion years under every conceivable condition of temperatures and pressures, it will not happen that even one enzyme would be created. And yet this medical student remains blind to it all, no less than Pharaoh was blind.

He hardens his heart. It's not a matter of him believing in evolution – I'm talking now about a *frum* boy; he laughs at evolution. But no matter, he doesn't let the *etzba Elokim* that's right in front of his face affect him. He doesn't see Hakodosh Boruch Hu in that enzyme or in that cell or in the microbe.

The truth is that a medical student today has before him in the school *osos u'mofsim* that are actually *bigger* than miracles of Mitzrayim!

Not only a medical student. Every one of us, just by walking on the street one can see miracles that are no less than the *makkos*. The trees and the leaves and the snow and the rain and are no less the *etzba Elokim* than the *makkos*. Only that we don't bother looking; we don't bother thinking.

Natural Miracles

And that's what we say to all those who need proof of Hashem; they ask, "Why doesn't He perform the same demonstrations today just like back then? Then we would believe! Why doesn't He turn rivers into blood every day? Why don't frogs come pouring out of the Hudson River in Manhattan and make their way into the movie theatres and all the places of ill-repute in Times Square? That would be a sight! That way, every man in every generation will have a testimony to Hashem and His power.

But Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "Look, I gave you the lesson already. I revealed Myself to you. It can't happen twice or three times, because it loses its edge, it becomes meaningless. How many times do you want Me to break My word that upholds nature?"

"Why don't you go out and study the world the way I made it?" says Hashem. "The laws of nature, that's what I want to follow! Everything has to go according to the laws of the nature that I invented.

Rivers are supposed to be water, not a messy substance that befouls the fields and frogs are only supposed to be in a certain proportion. Frogs are very useful; frogs catch mosquitos, they're part of an ecosystem. But once you have too many frogs what are you going to do with them? How are you going to get rid of them?

So what do you want? To bring more miracles? You'll spoil My whole business here. I know how to run My world! Nature! That's My word! Not like people think, that the miracle is His word. No; nature is His word!

Actually there's no such thing as nature. It's all *briah;* it's all creation. And if it's created, it means there's a Creator. 'Nature' is just Greek word which the Greeks conjured in order to conceal the *Borei.* In order not to talk about Hashem they said 'nature' (Kuzari 1:77).

● Walking with Rabbi Miller

Now, if you can't do it yourself, meet me someday and I'll take a walk with you; I'll show you something that could open your eyes just the same as *dam, tzefarde'a* and *kinim.* I'll show you a rose bush.

Now, don't be disappointed when you hear that – I was walking with some boys last week and we stopped by some rose bushes and I said, "Look at the thorns on these roses. The rose is a beautiful flower and as we pass by we might have the urge – perhaps not us, but some other person might have a *yetzer hora* to pull out the bush and take it with him to plant in his garden.

"But as he would try to take it, he would find that the rose is armed. All the thorns on the rosebush point downwards so when he tries to pull upwards, he finds the *kabalas panim* committee ready to greet

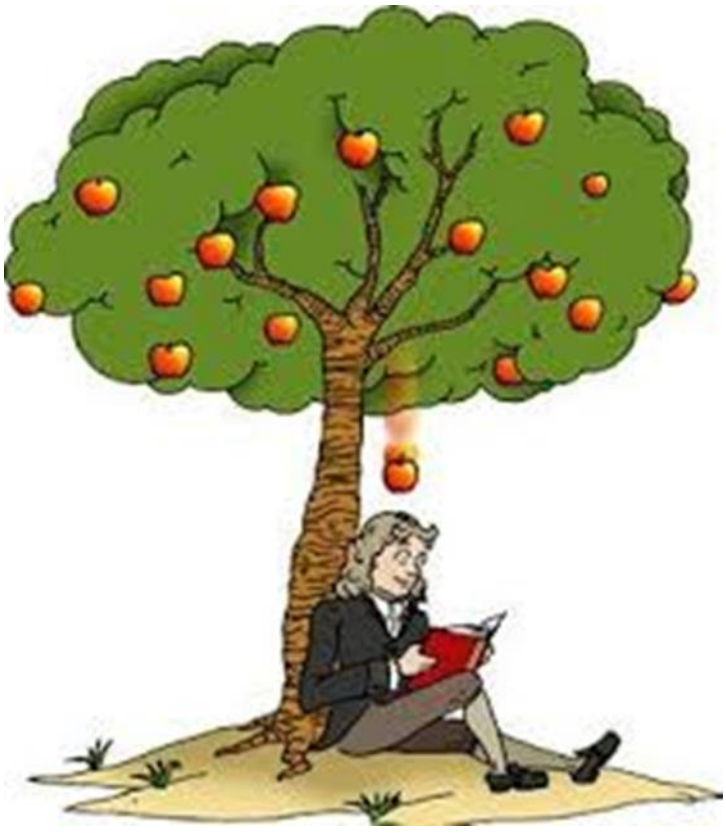
him, just in the right position. He pulls up and the daggers push down into his hand and he changes his mind; he leaves the rose bush alone."



Now, it could be that many of us pass by rose bushes again and again and not once do we think about the *etzba Elokim*. We won't stop to notice that the daggers are pointed. It's an interesting thing because in nature nothing happens like that; pointed things don't happen by accident. If it's pointed, there's a purpose there.

Even the *reshaim* understand that. They'll tell you the purpose is to defend the plant. But like Pharaoh they miss the point altogether.

We're expected to think about *Who* is defending the plant. The plant has no *seichel*. It's Hakodosh Boruch Hu's design! It's the handiwork of the Designer.



Newton's Apple Tree

Just to notice the daggers and to marvel at the science without recognizing the *etzba Elokim?* You're missing out on everything. It's like what they tell about Newton.

When Newton was sitting under the apple tree, an apple fell down on his head. So Newton started saying, "Oh! Why did it fall down – why didn't it fall up?" That's a *chochma* of a wise *goy*. He was

interested in physics: Why didn't it fall up? So he discovered the law of gravity. The earth is bigger than the apple, so the earth attracts the apple to itself.

Oh! A very great *chochma*! Only that Newton made an error. He didn't go far enough! He should have asked, "Why did it fall at all?! It should have remained on the tree!" The branches don't fall off so why should the apple fall off? And why does it wait until it gets ripe? Why didn't it fall off when it was still green? It waited until it was ripe and sweet and soft and then it fell off by itself.

Newton should have thought about this miracle. How is it that for months and months, as long as the apple was unripe it held on tightly to the tree and then, as soon as it became ready to eat, it began to fall. - It means the apple tree knows you have no wings, that you can't fly up to it. It means that you see Hashem in the apple tree!

Oh! That discovery would have made Newton a great man. But he wasn't big enough to do that. To discover the law of gravity, he was capable of but the law of *etzba Elokim* he didn't discover.

Where The Apples Grow

So the boys and I made sure we weren't going to make that mistake. We stood by the rose bush and we marveled at the creation of Hashem. - That's what you're supposed to do. Don't pass by! Every rose bush you pass by is a glorious opportunity.

Not only roses! Everything! Did you ever see an apple hanging from a branch? When an apple appears on a tree, you should gasp: An apple on the tree?! How did that happen?

I was forty years old the first time I saw apples growing on a tree. I was a city boy; I never saw apples hanging on a tree. For a city boy, apples "grow" in the big bins in front of the store, that's all.

I was once in a shul, I used to daven in the morning there, and I was the only *kohen*. I didn't want to monopolize all the *aliyos*, so before *krias hatorah* I would walk out into the yard, so that I shouldn't be

called up to the Torah. So I walked out on that first day and I saw a sight! - A tree, and red apples were hanging on the tree! I was amazed! I never saw such a thing before! It was the *etzba Elokim* no less than the *makkos*.

We have to get into our heads that Hashem is speaking to us too from the rose bush and the apple tree as much as *dam* and *tzefardei'a* were speaking in Mitzrayim.

Dandelion Miracles



Now, as we were standing there by the rose bush, I picked a dandelion for the boys with whom I was walking last week.

You know a dandelion has two stages. There's a yellow flower stage and there's a stage when it's in the seed ball; a colorless gray seed ball stage.

I showed them that the seed ball always grows higher than the yellow flower. The yellow flower, after it's pollinated it loses its yellow flower and it becomes a gray seed ball, and then it jumps up much higher than it was when it was a yellow flower. - Why is that?

Because when it's a seed ball, the little parachutes in the seed ball have to be blown out to go elsewhere and plant more seeds, more flowers. But if it would grow on the same level as a yellow dandelion, it's too low in the grass so the parachutes would get caught among the surrounding grass. So when it reaches the seed ball stage, it jumps high above the grass and now it has no grass surrounding it. It has a free field on all sides for its parachutes to float.

I picked up a seed ball and puffed on it and 100 parachutes were floating in the air all around us. They were marveling. The *yeshiva* men were marveling when they saw it. One puff and a hundred parachutes with little seed packages on the bottom were floating in the air, each one perfectly balanced in the wind.

Each one of them was ready for its mission to go off even miles away. They can even float across the ocean; the seeds are protected in a tough jacket that can withstand the salt brine of the sea, and if the ocean would wash them up on the shores of France or England then as soon as it smells the earth, the jacket opens up and it begins to grow. It puts a little root in the ground and a little stem up towards the sun and it begins a new career.

A Different Perspective

Now, once you open your eyes and start looking at these things, your mind opens up too, and you begin to see Hakodosh Boruch Hu in the whole *briah.* You *see ma'aseh yadav shel Hakadosh Baruch Hu* wherever you look.

Now, of course most people when you say all these facts to them, it makes not the slightest impression because they're so deadened by *apikorsus*. *Frum* men in black hats and *payos* can be *apikorsim* inside. They know, they know; they think they know everything. But it's almost nothing because they don't think about seeing Hashem around them at all and – it's the same as how Pharaoh saw everything, in one ear and out the other.

It's very hard to drive home to them that everything which we call nature is planned as a *nisayon;* it's a test, an opportunity for a career of greatness. And it's a career that is never finished. Because to be convinced once is not enough. It's a job that must go on all our lives.

Always and Everywhere

And therefore, if some observant Jew will say to you, "Why spend time studying all these things? If you're convinced, be like all of us

and practice everything now and forget about looking for some more convincing." The answer is that's not the *shitah* of the *Rishonim*. The *Rishonim* say there's never too much proof! Because it's a *mitzvah* to see things more and more clearly till your last day.



And just like you will be an old man and you'll still be talking about the *makkos* of Mitzrayim – *afilu kulanu zekeinim;* even old men must sit all night and talk about the *makkos* – seeing Hakodosh Boruch Hu in the world around us is no different because each time it gets into your bones more and more.

So if you're an old man and tomorrow morning you'll look and you'll see there's a daisy growing out of a crack in the ground, you won't harden your heart. A daisy doesn't just appear. Where do daisies come from?

You know how a daisy comes? It's miracles upon miracles. It's too late to start talking about this subject of daisies – maybe a different time. Or maybe you should think about it yourself the next time you see a daisy.

Miracles Forever

Now by listening to this, you're not prepared yet. You have to practice this *avodas Hashem* every day and you'll become adept in

this art of recognizing Hakodosh Boruch Hu in the world. You don't need any books; you don't need libraries. All you need to do is open your eyes and stop making your heart hard and you'll be able to discover Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

And for people who have eyes the world is full of such miracles. You don't need to see rivers turning to blood to be a *ma'amin*. The *makkos* in Mitzrayim serve only as a model to open up our eyes and let us know *nothing* will help for the person who doesn't want to see. But for the person who is eager for the truth, the world holds for him miracles without number!

It's not an exaggeration to say that the miracles that Hakodosh Boruch Hu shows us in the world around us are no less than the miracles of Egypt!

● The Peeping Radiner

There was once somebody in Radin who peeked through the keyhole into the room of the **Chofetz Chaim**. I don't know if it was right to do but that's the story – he wanted to see what an ish kadosh was doing in private and so he looked through the keyhole into the garret, into the attic room where the Chofetz Chaim was.

What did he see? The Chofetz Chaim zichrono livrocho was sitting on the edge of a bed and he was studying the makkos that Hashem brought on Mitzrayim. Now, the report we have from this yeshiva man in Radin is that the Chofetz Chaim wasn't studying the makkos with the peirush of the Zohar Hakadosh. And neither was he learning the Sifra Ditzniusa in that locked room. No; he was holding a simple Chumash, reading the pesukim from this week's sedra. He was saying plain Chumash – and he was sitting and laughing!

"וְהַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר בַּיְאֹר מֵתָה וַיִּבְאַשׁ הַיְאֹר" – The fish-life that was in the River died and the River stank because of all the rotting things" (Va'eira 7:21). The Chofetz Chaim was reading those words like a little boy

in cheder learning Chumash for the first time. He was learning the Chumash mamesh like a pre-kindergarten child, the first time he's hearing about the makkos. He's thrilled. He's imagining how the Egyptians are leaning over their wells trying to quaff a mouthful of fresh water. And they're spitting it out and retching. "Fech! Uch! This is disgusting, this stuff." And the Bnei Yisroel are watching their tormentors and laughing; they're busting their sides with laughter.

A Tzadik's Fun

And the one who was looking through the keyhole tells us that the Chofetz Chaim was enjoying it too; he was sitting on his bed and saying: "Ah! Gut oif zei! – Good for them! They're getting exactly what they deserve!" He was banging with his foot on the floor like a boy, like a little boy in Mitzrayim watching the Mitzri'im get it in the neck.

Now, that's the briefest kind of report, because that boy didn't have the nerve to look for too long. He felt he was eavesdropping on the Shechina when he looked at the Chofetz Chaim through the peephole and so he turned away; he slinked away down the steps.

Now we have to understand that the Chofetz Chaim was already an old man. He was in his eighties, close to ninety.So we think: alright, he'll learn the Chumash shnayim mikra v'echad targum; but such a zakein, such a chochom, wouldn't bother to learn pshuto shel mikra.

Oh no! He bothered with it! Certainly! And he did it all the time! Because the Chofetz Chaim understood the purpose of the makkos; he understood that Hashem brought the makkos for him. I'll explain that.

Plagues of Knowledge

We might have said that the reason Hakodosh Boruch Hu brought makkos was because the Am Yisroel had to be saved, but

the truth is that the makkos weren't needed for that. They could have been saved from slavery in ways that weren't spectacular at all. It wasn't necessary to make plagues on Mitzrayim. It wasn't necessary to split the Yam Suf so that Mitzrayim should drown. They could have gone out; Pharaoh could have got his people together and said, "Look these people were once friends of ours, they asked for asylum years ago and Yosef was a benefactor of Egypt. Let's let them out."

Although Pharaoh himself wouldn't do it, but Hakodosh Boruch Hu could have moved his heart. **לֵב מְלָכִים בְּיַד הַשֵּׁם**. He could have caused Pharaoh to change his mind, and he would have sent them out.

So why did Hakodosh Boruch Hu make such a display of His power? Ten makkos, drawn out over an entire year. What was it for?

So let's listen to what Hakodosh Boruch Hu says. After all, He knows best why He did what He did. "Why am I bringing makkos on Pharaoh? Not only to save My people. And not only because Pharaoh deserves to be punished.

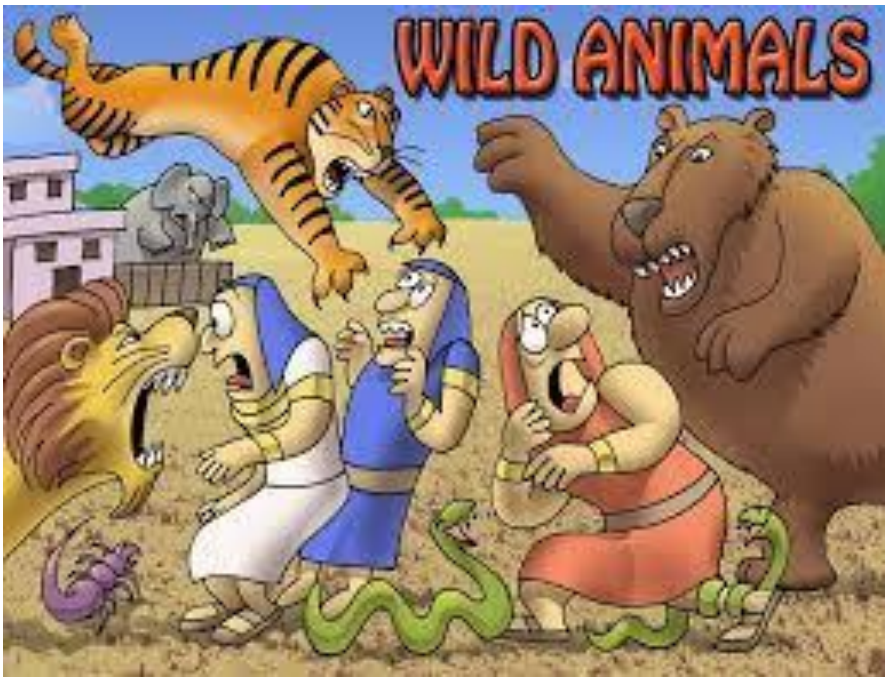
There's a much more important reason. The reason **is לְמַעַן תֵּדַע כִּי אֲנִי הַשֵּׁם בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ** – so that you should know that I am Hashem in the midst of the land (Vaeira 8:18). **בַּעֲבוּר תֵּדַע כִּי אֵין כָּמֹנִי בְּכָל הָאָרֶץ** – in order you should know there is none like Me in the whole universe (ibid. 9:14). So that you should know; in order that you should know.

Again and again we're told that this is the motivation of the makkos – so that they will know. Not only the Egyptians should be educated; Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not going to do that only for the Mitzri'im. We are the ones still reading the Torah today – it's for us. And the keyword is **תֵּדַע**; **you** should acquire deiah, knowledge.

Unnatural Mixtures - A Strange Name

One of the most extraordinary of all *makkos* was the plague of *Arov,* when a mixture of wild animals marauded through the

Egyptian villages. Now, all of the *makkos* were unusual of course, each in its own way; but when it comes to *Arov* we note that even its name is unusual. Because all the *makkos,* the name tells you what it was. *Dam* was blood, *Tzefardeia* was frogs, *Kinnim* was lice, and so on. But *Arov* just means 'Mixture' – nothing is mentioned in the name about what the *makkah* was.



Again, I want you to understand the question: Blood *is* the plague. Frogs *is* the plague. But the plague of 'Mixture'? Mixture of what? It could be a mixture of sugar and cocoa and flour. **הָעִקָּר חָסֵר מִן הַסֵּפֶר** – *the most important piece of information is missing.* And that's something that has to be studied.

Pedagogic Plagues

Now, don't think it's a waste of time to study these things. After all, that's what the *makkos* were intended for – to be studied. We should never forget that Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu that the purpose of the *makkos* was **וְיָדְעוּ**– *so that they should know* (Shemos 7:5, 14:4, 14:18).

It wasn't only to punish the enemy and to set us free. They were intended as lessons in understanding the world; that the world has an Owner and that He reacts to what men do. **וְיָדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי אֲנִי ה'** – that's the purpose!

And we understand of course that it wasn't only for the benefit of Mitzrayim that these *makkos* were teaching *emunah*. Even more than them, it was given for the Bnei Yisroel to learn. Everybody is

expected to benefit from what Hashem does in this world but of all the *talmidim* for whom the lessons are intended, the Am Yisroel is the most important. The lessons are for us. **וְיָדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי אֲנִי ה'** means '**even**' Mitzrayim – ***even*** Mitzrayim should learn.

Activated Animals

And therefore, when they saw troops of wild animals descending upon the towns and villages it was something remarkable to them. After all, ordinarily an animal is shy; it's afraid of humans. If he's hungry sometimes he'll come close to where humans live but otherwise he keeps away. But now, from the forests, the desert, all the animals came out; they were activated. They lost their shyness and they made their way into the villages and cities and attacked humans. It was something never seen before.

But besides that, there was something even more bizarre; it was a mixture, an *arov*. A very queer thing, that the animals that usually avoid each other – they travel either alone, or they travel in packs of their own kind – now they came together in troops. A motley troop of animals, mingling with each other in ways that was the opposite of their natures.

You know, among the notable phenomena is the fact of the segregation of the species. It's the *yad Hashem* that has put an instinct into every *min*, every kind; whether it's insects or birds or mammals, reptiles or fish, that they remain separate from each other. I'm not even talking now about propagation. That, of course; but even to mix, to join forces, is unusual.

Now, it's true that you'll find some exceptions to this but it's only in situations where there is some mutual benefit. In some ant colonies there are beetles that live together with the ants in harmony because these beetles are being used by the ants. The ants stroke them to produce honey from the beetles; they milk them. Or sometimes it's the other way around – the beetles are using the ants.

Egyptian Exceptions



Even in Mitzrayim, before *Makkas Arov*, there were such things. If you go to the Nile you'll find there the Egyptian crocodile. It's a fierce animal; it can snap a person's head off with ease. Now there's another animal, a bird, that also makes it home near the Nile. It's a certain wading bird; the plover I think. So this plover makes its way over to the crocodile, the crocodile opens its mouth and the plover picks food from the teeth of the crocodile. It gets some of its nutrition from the scraps in the teeth of the crocodile; and the crocodile allows it. Instead of eating the plover for a snack it lets the plover do its thing because it keeps the crocodile's teeth clean and healthy. A crocodile needs good teeth after all.

But those are exceptions; those are cases where Hashem from the beginning established that symbiotic relationship. Otherwise, there's no such thing. Our backyards are full of cats. The alleys are full of dogs. They never attempt anything except to fight, to destroy each other. Very rarely will they cooperate even to attack a human.

But now, something different happened. Now there was a mixture. In huge numbers! And the Bnei Yisroel were amazed. But not amazed like we are when we see something out of the ordinary – you'll go to a circus and you'll see a monkey balancing a ball on his nose. And he's riding a bicycle too; so you're amazed. It means your nerves are

tickled. But the Bnei Yisroel didn't have ticklish minds like we do. They had very big minds.

And so when the Yisroel looked through his windows and saw these animals trooping by in mingled packs, packs that had never traveled together before, he was thinking, "What kind of business is this?" He never saw such a thing before – a wolf and a bear mingling together? What's that about?

It's For You!

Now, he knew of course that it was intended as a punishment for Mitzrim – sometimes the Egyptian masters would set an animal on a Jew and now they were getting it back – but he knew it was more than that. If that was all, let the Egyptian be attacked by a wolf and finished. But here my Egyptian neighbor is being attacked by a wolf and a bear together. A queer thing that never happened before! Where a wolf is, a bear isn't, and where a bear is, a wolf isn't. And here both together were attacking one Egyptian! Hakadosh Baruch Hu is causing the animals to come in a confusion, an unnatural way. It needs an explanation.

Now in those good days we had leaders. Not like today when the rabbis are afraid of their congregants – they might lose them to the rabbi down the block. In those days they had leaders who told them the way it is. Moshe Rabbeinu spoke to them; the *ziknei hador* spoke too. You know what they said? "It's a message for *you! You're* the ones being criticized here. The *arov* is an unnatural mixture because here also, among us, an unnatural mixture took place."

Taking the Hint

What was it? It says that the Bnei Yisroel so multiplied that, **וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם** – *the land became full of them* (Shemos 1:7). 'The land' means that the land where they weren't supposed to be, outside of Goshen; Jews moved in right next to the Mitzrim. And what happens when you live among them? You begin to act like them. **The Yalkut**

Shimoni (162:11) says that **וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם** means **שֶׁנִּתְמַלְּאוּ בָּתֵּי טָרְטִיאוֹת וּבָתֵּי קִרְקְסִיאוֹת מֵהֶם** – that eventually some of the Bnei Yisroel even began to join the Egyptians in their public amusements.

What happened? The worst thing that could happen to a Jew: **וַיִּתְעָרְבוּ בַגּוֹיִם וַיִּלְמְדוּ מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם** – *When the Bnei Yisroel, some of them, began to mingle with the gentiles they learned their ways* (Tehillim 106:35). That's the meaning of the *possuk*: **וַיִּתְעָרְבוּ בַגּוֹיִם** – *they began to mingle with the nations* and the next thing is, it's automatic, **וַיִּלְמְדוּ מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם** – *they learned from them.*

And now, Hakadosh Baruch Hu was showing them by this sign from heaven – they looked outside the window and they saw a very unnatural thing – and they were being reminded that they too were acting in an unnatural way. That's even more unnatural than what the animals are doing – it's more unnatural for Bnei Yisroel to mingle with non-Jews than if wolves and bears would mingle.

And now it hit them like a ton of bricks: *Arov!* Such a curious name Hashem gave to this *makkah.* Mixture?! But now they understood. Because that was the most important purpose here, that lesson of the danger of mixture.

Am Yisroel is **הֶן עַם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֹּן**; it's a separate kind of people. They don't have anything to do with other nations, the styles of other nations, the modes of living, the way of thinking of other nations – it's not for the Am Yisroel. And we needed to learn that lesson.

The Misplaced Makkah

So you'll ask, why should the Mitzrim suffer from the *makkah?* It's a good question *lichorah.* After all, it was the Bnei Yisroel who were mixing in where they didn't belong so why didn't the *makkah* of mixed animals come upon the Bnei Yisroel?

So you'll tell me that the Mitzrim deserved it too? OK, that's true – so it should have come on both of them. The Mitzrim would get what they deserve and the Bnei Yisroel too would be taught a lesson.

But actually, even before the *makkah* came Hakadosh Baruch Hu already told the Bnei Yisroel the answer to this question: **וְשַׂמְתִּי פְדֻת** – *I'm going to make a redemption,* **בֵּין עַמִּי וּבֵין עַמֶּךָ** – *between my people and the Egyptians* (Shemos 8:19).

The Sages (Shemos Rabbah 11:2) tell us that the word *pedus,* redemption, indicates that the Bnei Yisroel were actually in real danger – only that they were redeemed. **מְלַמֵּד שֶׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל רְאוּיִין לִלְקוֹת בְּזוֹ הַמַּכָּה** – *The plague of arov was actually destined to come upon the Bnei Yisroel,* **וְנָתַן הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא פִּדְיוֹנָם הַמִּצְרִים** – *only that Hashem redeemed them by punishing the Mitzrim instead.* It means that this *makkah,* more than all the others, was intended originally for the Bnei Yisroel; only that an exchange was made, and the Egyptians became victims instead.

Shikkur Shkutzim

I'll describe a scene I saw with my own eyes. I used to walk in East Flatbush Shabbos morning. It was a gentile neighborhood, a white gentile neighborhood in those days. On Saturday mornings I used to see a nice gentleman, well-dressed, seven o'clock in the morning lying fast asleep on the sidewalk. Fast asleep! He was dead drunk. I'm sure he got up later and boasted, "Ooh last night I really had a night!" He was so proud of himself; he was *really* drunk last night.

I saw that again and again. Gentiles wobbling out of bars. Gentiles passed out on the sidewalk. Drunk gentiles fighting. But I never saw a single Jew. Even the *mechallel Shabbos* Jews; they wouldn't stoop so low. Because even the worst ones among us understood, at least to some extent, that **הֶן עָם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֹּן** – we are a nation that dwells alone, **וּבַגּוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשָּׁב** – we aren't counted among the *umos ha'olam.* We are different, entirely different.

Shikkur Jews

So how is it that you find such things today? Today, you could find Jews who are also dead drunk on the sidewalk. You'll find worse.

After generations of living among gentiles, of cozying up to gentile attitudes, finally they succeeded in becoming like *goyim;* and today we've reached that great moment in our history when all of their problems have become ours. Today the Jew is beset with gentile problems because he mingled with the gentile world.

You Get What You Ask For

When you bring the gentile into your home, so he comes along with all of his baggage. You think that you're just turning on the television; it's an innocent thing. Absolutely not! When you turn on the television and you let a gentile climb in through that window right into your dining room, so he brings with him all of his problems too, all of his corruption. It means you're murdering your family.

Suppose a gentile climbed in through your window; he stuck his mug in your window and started talking. You'd put your foot into his face and shove him out. At least you'd call the police. But now, because he's coming in through a wire, so it's ok. You'll even accept what he's telling you and showing you. And it's not one *goy* – if you turn the knob so another *goy* sticks his face in through your window; you turn again so it's a different *goy*. And you sit there with your wife and your children and you're listening to him; with *respect* you listen!

So how can you expect anything different? If you live together with the gentile world so their faults become yours, their problems become yours. Divorce becomes a Jewish problem. The desire for luxuries becomes a Jewish problem. Immorality becomes a Jewish problem. Youth in rebellion becomes a Jewish problem. All the gentile problems become ours.

Stop Mixing

And therefore the biggest problem facing the Jews today – Brooklyn Jews, Yerushalayim Jews, Williamsburg Jews, Lakewood Jews, Manhattan Jews surely, Jews everywhere – our biggest problem is how to be *patur,* how to free ourselves, from the influence of the

environment. Even the best ones; even if we don't watch their television and we don't read their newspapers and we don't go to their schools, but the atmosphere is saturated with their *shtus* and their lies. And you can't help yourself because, naturally, the majority surrounding you will have an unfavorable influence on your mind.

And so if we can divest ourselves, if we can rid ourselves of the influence of the nations of the world, that's the number one solution to all of our problems. To de-gentilize ourselves; to get rid of the influence of the outside world. As much as possible we have to cut loose from the gentile influence.

Now I can't enumerate all the ways of cutting loose because that will take an extra lecture, but it's enough to know that it's the mixing that is the big problem in our private lives and in our history as a Jewish community; because it means we are absorbing gentile attitudes. The outside world is what causes all kinds of losses, and the biggest loss of all is the loss of the true Torah *hashkafa* – proper Torah attitudes.

Of course the Jew has *bechirah;* he has the choice of resisting bad influence. And the one who chooses to follow the bad examples of the gentiles is not exonerated – if he doesn't stake the warning of *Arov* then he too will go lost; many of the Bnei Yisroel went lost in *Makkas Choshech*. But because the source of trouble is them, so Hakadosh Baruch Hu teaches us the lesson on their shoulders.

And that's why Arov came for the Mitzrim, because they were the biggest source of the trouble. But the biggest beneficiaries of the lesson were the Bnei Yisroel who were watching. - "What's that about?! Animals coming in a confusion, in such an unnatural mixture?" - It was *very* unnatural! But it was a reminder that it's even *more* unnatural for Bnei Yisroel to mingle with non-Jews than if wolves and bears would mingle. And when the Bnei Yisroel looked through their windows and they saw these animals trooping by in

queer packs that never traveled together before, so they were thinking – they consulted their leaders and it was explained to them: "It really was intended for us because we mixed unnaturally. And therefore we are the ones who were supposed to learn the lesson most."

Separating the Mixture - Korban Pesach Secrets

And now we come to the subject of the *korban pesach*. Because after learning this lesson of *Makkas Arov,* the nation had to take action. You can't just sit back in your chair and relax when you learn a lesson like that – something has to change! You have to put your foot down: "I'm done with being a half gentile, or quarter gentile. It's time to expel these gentile attitudes from my mind."

And that's one of the secrets of the mitzvah of *korban pesach.* (Shemos 12). Because what was the outstanding feature of the *korban pesach?*

We understand from the words of Moshe Rabbeinu himself what it was. When Moshe heard the mitzvah of *korban pesach* from Hashem, he was astounded. "You mean to say that we should publicly take a sheep and slaughter it?!"

You know, the sheep was considered *kadosh* to the Egyptians. It was a god to them. Now, why it was *kadosh* to them is not my business now to tell you but it's a well known fact. Moshe Rabeinu said, **הֵן נִזְבַּח אֶת תּוֹעֲבַת מִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִסְקְלֵנוּ** – "*How can we even think of such a thing? If we slaughter their avodah zarah, they'll massacre us*!" (Shemos 8:22).

So you'll say, "Well, we'll do it on the sly. We'll just take the lamb right before the time comes to *shecht* it, just a minute before the *shechitah,* that way the *goy* won't have a chance to see what we're doing."

No, you can't do that. Hashem says, **מִקָּחוּ מִבְּעָשׂוֹר** – On the tenth day of Nissan, long before Pesach, you have to take it. It means it had

to be a public demonstration. It wasn't hidden; everyone could see the Jew pulling the lamb through the street.

So the Mitzri would ask, "Hey, where are you taking that?"

And the Yisroel had to answer, "I'm bringing a *zevach*, a sacrifice."

"A what?! You're going to slaughter a lamb?!"

To the Egyptians, that's a terrible thing. It's like the cow in India. The cow is holy; it's worshiped. I don't know how it is now, but not so long ago if you kicked a cow in India, that was the last thing you did in your life. And Egypt was no different; only it was the sheep, not the cow.

You can be sure that Moshe Rabbeinu was worried about that. **וְלֹא יִסְקְלֵנוּ**, he said. They're going to stone us all. It would cause a pogrom. All of Egypt would get up in a rage and massacre the Bnei Yisroel. "Why do we have to make such a demonstration?" Moshe asked.

So Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him, "That's exactly it!" That's the mitzvah of *korban pesach!* To slaughter what is considered by the *umos ha'olam* to be so precious! To make an open demonstration that what's important to them, what's untouchable to them, what's impossible for them to think of slaughtering – we go ahead and we disregard it completely.

The only way to remain separate, to not absorb their influences, is by reminding ourselves again and again that we disregard completely what is important to the *goyim;* it's nothing to us.

Makkas Arov taught the Bnei Yisroel that mixing is unnatural for us – we are different and must remain different – and the *korban pesach* was a proclamation that we are committed to that way of life. That's what it means to *shecht* the *avodah zarah* of the *goyim.*

Not only the lamb; that's just a symbol. In general, it's a *klal gadol* that the Am Yisroel disregards the ideals of the *umos ha'olam.* It doesn't mean you tell a *goy* to his face; you don't have to

insult him. But we can't hide the truth that we are fundamentally different from the *umos ha'olam.*

Of course, we're polite and kindly; we treat everyone with decency and respect. And we're loyal citizens who follow the laws of the country – we should follow the laws even more than the gentiles do.

But we are different; we are fundamentally different from the *umos ha'olam.* And the *korban pesach* means that we remain different only because we oppose with a complete disregard all the ways of the *umos ha'olam.* We disregard their holy feelings. We disregard their worship. We disregard the honor they give to their religion. To us, it's nothing at all. It's *hevel vorik.* **שֶׁהֵם מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְהֶבֶל וְרִיק** – *they bow down to nothing.* **כִּי כָּל אֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים אֱלִילִים** – *All of their gods are nothing-gods.* We say that all the time.

But not only their religion. All of their ideas and attitudes, their *middos* and *hashkafos* and interests and practices, we're not interested! We have to slaughter the ideals of literature, of drama. It never happened, it's all false. Now, I understand that people are already accustomed to fiction, to imaginary stories that never happened, but it's time now to get unaccustomed.

Mock the Movies

You have to slaughter their movies. How could it be that a *frum* Jew watches gentile movies? What are movies for? To tell you things that never happened. A fool sits down, a wicked man, and writes a book and then they put it into movies and his stupid ideas are being transmitted now to millions of people.

All movies have to do with women, immorality, all stupid things. It's good for horses in the stables. They're interested in such things; they're interested in female horses. But human beings should understand the difference between a man and a woman is made by heaven; it's a wonderful *briah* but it's for a purpose. There's a *kedushah* in married life. But to take that wonderful invention of

Hashem, זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בְּרָאָם, and to contaminate the world with it? And along comes a Jew and he joins in? Just the opposite! We don't mix – we show contempt, complete disregard for such things.

Mock the Libraries

Another thing – no libraries. Don't go into libraries anymore! And *chas v'shalom* to bring your children into the libraries. Once upon a time a library was a nice place – there were *parveh* books there – but today it's no good. No good at all! Libraries are dirt today. They're all garbage. The world is crazy today. The literature is filthy. Filthy, disgusting ideas.

So you'll tell me that there are some good books there for your children. Well, suppose an apple fell into a toilet bowl, would you let your child take it out and eat it? It's a kosher apple, why not? Well, it might be the most beautiful apple, but he's taking it from a dirty toilet. It's going to depend on what else is in the toilet. Nobody should let their child play with excrement.

So there might still be certain books in the library that are still readable – I don't know if that's true – but you have to know that once you walk in there you immediately smell the odor of *tzoah,* of excrement. The library today is a foul place more than ever before. And therefore, no matter what, you stay out in order that your garments should not be redolent with the fragrance of the public library.

Fat Americans

Some people are so Americanized that they identify with the American sports scene. A Jew doesn't have any interest in sports, unless it's for exercise for himself, for health. Isn't it stupid to be enthusiastic as people are skating or playing lacrosse or basketball or soccer, whatever it is, and you're watching it? If you could get on the field yourself and kick the ball around, so at least you get exercise. But being an American means you're sitting on a chair and

all you're doing is getting hemorrhoids from sitting on a hard chair. And if not hemorrhoids, if you're sitting on your couch, so you're getting fat. What a stupidity to come and watch other people getting exercise! You're being victimized.

Even if there's nothing wrong in a game – that's what the boys tell me; "But there's nothing wrong" – but it's stupid, it's meaningless. Who cares who wins? And the mere fact that you identify with the herd, that fact that you're being stampeded by the herd is a tragedy. You're losing your identity – you're the *Am Hanivchar,* the chosen nation; you have different things. You're not interested in that garbage.

You say it's not a sin? Certainly it's a sin to be gentilized! Certainly it's a sin to mix our ideals. It's unnatural!

That's what Makkas Arov comes to tell us. It's an unnatural mixture because the Am Yisroel was chosen to be the **הֶן עָם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֹּן**. We are alone – separate from all the nations of the world. A *frum* Jew dissociates himself from public amusements. - We have to beware of identifying with the nations that we live among!

It's a tremendous error that we are making today. We think we can be *frum* Jews and still be mixed with the gentile ideas. The Modern Orthodox surely; they think they can assimilate and still be *frum*. But actually, it's impossible. And therefore, very many of them are going lost, *nebach*. Very many. Especially their children.

There's only one solution: You have to de-Americanize! That's the call of the day! De-Americanize! Of course, you have to be loyal; you have to be a patriot for the country. You have to do what's right. You have to vote. Be a decent person to everyone. But don't become one of them.

And that's one of the most important lessons of *Makkas Arov;* it came to tell us that a *frum* Jew doesn't mix because mixing is the biggest problem for us. And that's why the name of

the *makkah* was *Arov;* because that was the most important lesson. The 'Mixture', *that's* the plague!

That's what the Bnei Yisroel were thinking when they watched the wolf and the lion and the crocodile and the bear marching into the villages. That unnatural mixtures are a tremendous danger! Hakadosh Baruch Hu was teaching them that **הִבְדִּילָנוּ מִן הַגּוֹיִם**, because He wants to **הִבְדִּילָנוּ מִן הַטּוֹעִים**. To keep as separate as we can from the *umos ha'olam* so that we should be separated from all of their mistakes. He made us different, and He wants that we should dedicate our lives towards trying to answer this question: What is the true Torah way? What is the true Torah attitude? An attitude free of any adulteration, free from any admixture of ideas of the outside world. ~ **Have A Wonderful Shabbos**



Rabbi Dovid Biederman of Lelov (1746-1814)

In Lelov, there lived an old gentile who was 118 years old. He was very sick, and it seemed that he was about to die. The family were ready to summon the undertakers. However, the man told them not to make the call, as he still had two more years to live. He indeed recovered, and he lived for an additional two years! (Biz 120)

They asked him, "How did you know that you would live for another two years? - He replied, "When I was a young boy, I witnessed Rabbi Dovid Lelover every morning at 3am rolling down a steep hillside. The hill was so steep, it was impossible to walk down, so he rolled down it. At the bottom was a stream of water where he immersed himself.

I decided to spread out broken shards of glass all over the part of the hill that the rabbi rolled down, so that he would cut himself badly and bleed. This happened every morning, so every night, I would put more broken glass down, so every morning the rabbi would cut himself and bleed some more.



One day, my parents became aware of my nightly disappearances, and they asked me what I was doing. I admitted my actions. My parents got very scared, because Reb Dovid Lelover was known to be a saintly man, even amongst the gentiles. They were very afraid that the family would be severely punished by the sage.

They took me to Reb Dovid to apologize and ask for forgiveness.

Reb Dovid said to me, 'Oh, you were the one that did it. You were the one who attempted to stop me going to immerse in the mikvah (stream). – This is a challenge (nisayon) that I was Boruch Hashem able to overcome – may you live till 120!'"

Reb Dovid Lelover was known for his love of every Jew. But despite his great Ahavas Yisrael, we do not know of any Yid that received such an amazing promise from him.

This non-Jew received it for giving Reb Dovid the opportunity to rise above a nisayon!

You must understand the incredible reward for a Yid's triumph in overcoming a nisayon. No-one is expected to roll over broken glass – we do not have such issues today Baruch Hashem, but supress your yeitzer horah a little. Do something more now, it's Shovavim Tat. Stretch yourself that little bit extra – precisely when it's hard.

An Outrageous Marriage Made in Tsfas by Rabbi Baruch Abuhatzera

During his stay in Tsfat (Safed) in 5683 (1923), my father ['**Baba Sali**'] made discreet inquiries about which talmidei chachamim were in need of receiving tzedakah.

The Rabbis of Tsfat informed him that R. Tzion Cohen, a distinguished and elderly talmid chacham, was physically disabled and in desperate need of charity. His wife and all his children perished in the terrible famines of the First World War, leaving him to suffer his pain in utter solitude. Being that he was partially paralyzed, even the most minor chore was an excruciating task for the sick and elderly man.

My father visited Rabbi Tzion in his tiny, stale, unlit room. It measured no more than four amot by four amot [2 meters x 2 meters]. He found the elderly man lying helplessly in his bed, unable to move. Were it not for the generosity of the men and women who came regularly to feed him, his situation would have been much worse.

My father gave him a substantial sum of money from his charity fund and then he prepared to bless him with a speedy recovery, intending to take his leave immediately afterwards. But the sick man suddenly turned to my father and pleaded with him: "Rebbe! Give me a perfect blessing!"

My father, surprised by such a request, asked him, "What blessing do you want me to give you, Grandfather?"

He answered, "Give me a blessing that I should merit to heal from my illness that I should marry and bear children, in order that I may leave offspring in my memory."

My father was astounded by the sick man's request. How could he pray to G-d that an invalid man in his seventies should marry and bear children? This request was beyond the ways of nature.

R. Tzion discerned my father's astonishment, and with confidence he encouraged him. "Rebbe, I have absolute faith that if you will bless me as I have requested of you, my wishes will be fulfilled."

Still, my father was uncertain. "Do you really have total faith?"

"Yes!" the sick man answered. "Otherwise I would not ask this of you." At last, his perfect faith succeeded in inducing my father to give him the blessing he so strongly requested.

* * *

Ten years later, in the year 5693 (1932), my father once again visited Eretz Yisrael. When he arrived in Tsfat, he suddenly remembered the sickly Rabbi Tzion Cohen and the blessing he had given him.

When he made inquiries about R. Tzion's state, one of the prominent rabbis of Tsfat led him to a fine house. There, to my father's amazement, was none other than R. Tzion, sitting on the porch on an elegant couch, dressed in the finest clothes. At his feet played two youngsters.

After having refreshments brought in, R. Tzion invited my mystified father to listen to his miraculous tale: "You see, Your Holiness, a wealthy widow from South America arrived in Tsfat with her seventeen-year-old daughter. Upon asking the rabbis of Tsfat to whom she should give charity, she was directed to my poor home.

"When she saw my awful state, this saintly woman became extremely distressed, and she took pity on me. She ordered her servants to remove all the furniture from my tiny room at once, to paint the walls, and to purchase a new bed and linen. As well as covering all the costs, she personally supervised that her orders were executed precisely according to instructions.

'But this was not the end of the miracle. 'The holy woman decided not to return to South America, but instead, to remain at my side and to take care of me. An interpreter informed me of her decision,

and I protested strongly. "G-d forbid! I will not remain in seclusion with a woman and thereby violate the prohibition of yichud ('aloneness': remaining in seclusion with any woman other than one's wife [or mother or grandmother or sister]).

"The interpreter relayed my refusal to her, but the determined woman asked, 'What can I do so that I will be permitted to stay by your side?'

"The bewildered interpreter answered, 'The only way is for Madam to marry R. Tzion according to Jewish law.'

"And can Your Holiness believe G-d's ways in the world - she consented to marry me immediately!

"I again protested vehemently, however, much to the surprise of the local rabbis. "They threatened me, stating, 'If you refuse to marry this woman, we will announce a prohibition against helping you any further.'

"So, when I saw that there was absolutely no other choice, I went even further and made what must have seemed to be quite an outrageous request: 'If you really want to help me, then ask her to allow me to marry her daughter!'

"Well, when the widow was told of my latest request, she again startled us all and answered, 'The decision is not mine to make. My daughter must decide for herself.'

"At that point, the daughter was told the entire conversation as well as about Rabbi Tzion Cohen's firm belief that he would father children, and asked whether she would agree to marry an old, sick man.

Of course, we all assumed the bizarre tale had reached its conclusion, but her answer also astonished everyone. - "'I will do whatever my mother says. If my mother agrees, then I am 100% willing to marry him. It will be a great privilege and a merit to be

married to such an important Torah sage and to bear the children that he so absolutely has faith will be born.'

"And so, my dear Savior, this apartment was rented immediately, the best medical care was made available to me, and thank G-d, I have recovered from my illness.

But again, that is not the end of the miracles - your blessing came to be; I have borne two sons!' "And you know, Your Holiness, all of these blessings came to me as a consequence of my devotion to the study of Torah and my fear of Heaven, as it says, 'G-d desires the prayer of the righteous, He hears their supplications, and fulfills their words.'"

[Reprinted from an email of "Our Master, Our Teacher. The holy Baba Sali"] - Editor's Note: Rabbi Yisrael Abuhatzeira, the Baba Sali zt"l's 40th Yahrzeit was Sunday, 4th Shevat – January 14th of this year.



A Heart Full of Love - Flashes of Greatness by Rabbi Shlomo Landau

My friend once had a meeting one evening with **Reb Mattisyahu Salomon zt'l**. He showed up at the appropriate time, but when he opened the door, the foyer was full of young women and little boys, all waiting in line.

The Rebbetzen explained to him that these women were widows, and these were their sons. They would come to the Mashgiach, and he would do homework with them for 5 minutes at a time! He would shower them with affection and attention, and to make them feel

that somebody really cared about them, even though they didn't have a father.

We need to point out, that this was Reb Mattisyahu Salomon – who the weight of Klal Yisrael, and some of the biggest and most critical issues weighed heavily on his shoulders. Yet the way he spent his evening was doing homework with children who didn't have a father to do it with them!

That's not regular – that's gadlus!

Let's take a page out of Reb Mattisyahu's book, and let's do something for someone today, in a real substantial way. – What a way to commemorate his incredible legacy.

Chabad.ORG

From our Sages

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי ה' לֵאמֹר הֵן בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי וְאֵיךְ יִשְׁמָעֵנִי פַּרְעֹה – '***Moshe spoke before G-d, saying: "Behold, the children of Israel have not listened to me; how then shall Pharaoh listen to me?"*** *(6:12)*

A previous verse, however, states the reason that the children of Israel did not listen to Moshe - **מִקֹּצֶר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה** -"*because of their anguish of spirit and their cruel bondage.*" - Why, then, did Moshe deduce from this that Pharaoh would not obey him?

But Moses knew that the power of a leader derives from his people. If he had not succeeded in penetrating their hearts, he would not be able to achieve anything on their behalf. (**Sefat Emet**)

וַיִּקַּח עַמְרָם אֶת־יוֹכֶבֶד דֹּדָתוֹ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה – ***'Amram took Yocheved, his father's sister, as a wife.'*** *(6:20)*

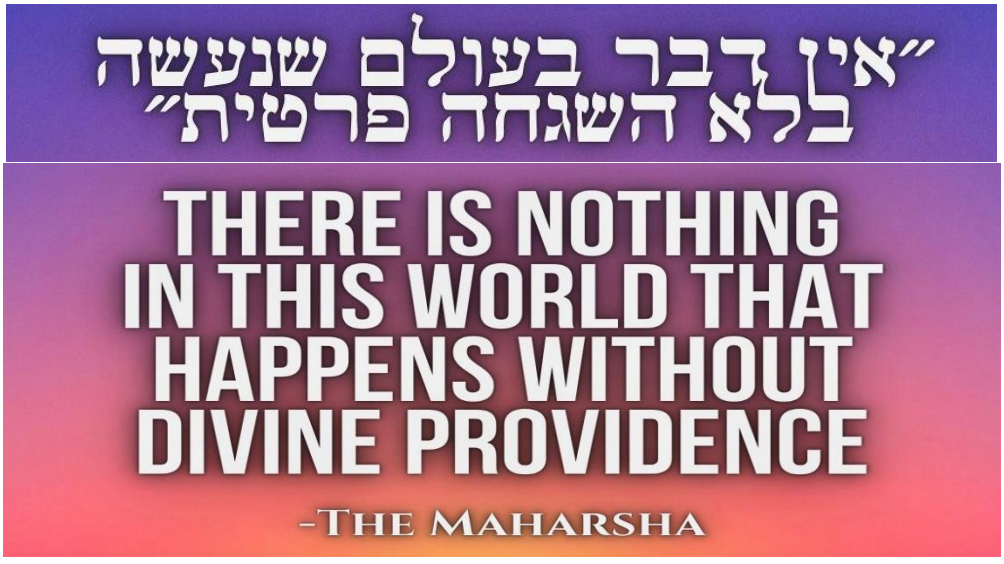
Why did Hashem agree that a great man such as Moshe should be the product of a marriage which is destined to be forbidden in the future? (After **מתן תורה**, marriage to one's aunt was forbidden.)

Because no man is appointed as an authority over the community unless there is something objectionable in his past, lest he lord it over the community. (As was the case with King David, who was descended from the seemingly legally questionable marriage of Boaz and Ruth.) (**Chizkuni**)



וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת־הַצְּפַרְדְּעִים עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם – ***'The magicians brought up frogs on the land of Egypt.'*** *(8:3).*

Only "on the land of Egypt"—*their* frogs did not jump into the ovens. (**Be'er Mayim Chaim**)





◣ Lasting Impression - Sefas Emes

וַיְדַבֵּר ה׳ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן וַיְצַוֵּם אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - "***And Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, and commanded them regarding the Children of Israel...***" (6:13)

Even though the Jews refused to listen, because of "their broken spirits and the hard labour" (Shemos 6:9), G-d commanded Moshe and Aharon to continue speaking to them. For G-d's words must, of necessity, leave a profound impression; they may not take effect all at once but eventually they must accomplish their purpose, for holy words can never be lost on humanity.

[Similarly, the **Kotzker Rebbe** teaches: In Shema, we say **וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיּוֹם עַל־לְבָבֶךָ** - "These words (of torah) shall be **on** your heart." But wouldn't it be more correct to place them "**in**" your heart?

At times, we may not be receptive to the words we learn, nevertheless, place them on your heart, so the moment your heart opens wide, they can fall right in!]

"Trusting in Hashem means recognizing that he is always working behind the scenes on our behalf." ~ Rabbi Mordechai Gifter (1915-2001)

◣ Attainable Greatness - Reb Alexander Zusia Friedman

וַיִּקַּח עַמְרָם אֶת־יוֹכֶבֶד דֹּדָתוֹ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד לוֹ אֶת־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת־מֹשֶׁה - "***Amram took into his [household] as a wife his father's sister Yocheved, and she bore him Aharon and Moshe***..." (6:20)

The Torah tells us that Moshe and Aharon were born like any other mortals, to normal human parents. They became prophets and leaders of the Jewish People due to their own actions and choices, not because they descended from on high like celestial angels. - From this we learn that every individual, through his own effort and free will, can reach even the highest spiritual levels - even as lofty as Moshe and Aharon.

◣ Leaving Exile Behind - Reb Shmuel Mohilever

הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר אָמַר ה' לָהֶם הוֹצִיאוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם - "***It is the same Aharon and Moshe to whom Hashem said, 'Bring forth the Israelites from the land of Egypt***...'" (6:26)

Just as in Egypt, where Hashem appointed two messengers to lead the Jews out of slavery, Moshe and Aharon, so too, will we have two emissaries by the final redemption, Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben Dovid.

Why will two emissaries be necessary?

One to take the Jews out of galus and one to take the galus out of the Jews!

"The measure of a person's greatness is not in what they possess, but in how much they give of themselves to others." ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler. (1892-1953)

◣ Remaining Humble - Rabbi Shalom Schwadron

וַיִּבְלַע מַטֵּה־אַהֲרֹן אֶת־מַטֹּתָם - "*...and the staff of Aharon swallowed their staffs.*" (7:12)

Typically, when one person vanquishes another and "swallows him up," it is common for the victor to "swell" with pride. - When Aharon's staff swallowed those of Pharaoh's magicians, however, it did not grow thicker nor show any increase in size at all. It remained "humble."

This was a reminder that just as Aharon's staff did not thicken, so too, Aharon never did swell with pride nor change his humble nature after the great miracle that was performed through him.

◣ Standing Tall - Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh

הַשְׁכֵּם בַּבֹּקֶר וְהִתְיַצֵּב לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה - "*And Hashem said to Moshe, 'Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh*..'" (9:13)

Because he was a humble man, Moshe was accustomed to bow to all men in greeting. Therefore, G-d commanded him explicitly to "stand before Pharaoh." - "When you go before Pharaoh," G-d told Moshe, "stand erect before him and don't bow to him in greeting, for you must not show him even the slightest sign of respect."

"When a person recognizes that the outcome of everything they do is completely in the hands of Hashem, they are constantly turning to him for help. Hashem is always on their mind, because everything depends on him." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.

"Chazal tell us to judge everyone favourably - this means that we must judge ourselves favourably as well." ~ Rebbe Nachman.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

Shai and Akiva were best friends who had enjoyed spending time together since they were kids. One unique aspect of their friendship involved Torah learning. Although they went to different schools, they tried to learn whenever they got together.

Shai was year older than Akiva, but the age gap never mattered. Akiva has a severe stutter that worsened when he was anxious. But it never mattered to Shai or to their other friends, who cherished Akiva and considered him a loyal confidant and good friend who could always be relied on.

In the winter of 1992, when Shia was a senior in high school and Akiva was a junior, their families both decided to go to Israel for winter break. In addition to a fun trip, this was yet another opportunity to study Torah together. Akiva came from a rabbinic family and was exposed to advanced Torah learning beyond his years. He was working through a difficult piece of *Kehillas Yaakov,* the magnum opus of the Steipler Goan, Rav Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky, zt"l. It was on *Meseches Pesochim*, and the Steipler discusses the opinion of the *Baal Ha'itur*, one of the *Rishonim.*

Akiva was struggling to understand the Steipler's explanation of the *Baal Ha'itur*. Something just didn't add up. He explained the problem to Shai, who had a difficult time following, because Akiva was more advanced in learning. Shai thought he got the gist of the question, if not all the details. He admired how hard Akiva was working to solve this quandary. If only they could ask someone…but the Steipler had passed away seven years earlier, in 1985.

"Maybe we could ask the Steipler's son, Rav Chaim Kanievsky!" Akiva suggested.

"Where does he live?" asked Shai.

"In Bnei Brak! Are you up for a trip?"

"Sure!"

While they were on the bus, Akiva said to Shai, "You know that I stutter, especially when I'm nervous. Can you please ask the question for me?"

"Akiva, I wish I could, but I don't really understand all the details. Sorry, you need to ask Rav Chaim yourself."

He was afraid it would take too much time to ask the question. But he wasn't going to back out of this special opportunity to understand an important Torah matter.

In Bnei Brak, the two boys found Rav Chaim. This was in the days before there were very long lines to see him, but Rav Chaim was committed to his massive learning schedule and had little time to talk.

The boys were ushered into Rav Chaim's study. Rav Chaim looked up from his *seforim* and took in the sight of the two nervous American high school boys. He smiled at them and waited for their question.

Akiva looked at Shai nervously. Shai introduced the question and then indicated that Akiva should continue. The look on Shia's face said, "Go ahead; you can do this."

Akiva was terrified. Here was one of the *Gedolei Yisroel*, an expert in every area of Torah, known far and wide for never wasting a minute. Had it been a mistake to come? Akiva took a deep breath. He tried to ask the question, but the words just wouldn't come out.

Rav Chaim immediately understood the situation and invited Akiva to sit down in the chair right next to him. He reached out and took Akiva's hand in his own two hands, smiled encouragingly and said, *"Od hapaam."* Akiva mustered up his courage and tried again. Rav Chaim gave him his undivided attention and was full of gentle encouragement. He even closed the *sefer* he had been learning. Gradually, Akiva was able to progress through the question.

Rav Chaim responded with great interest, getting up to take some *seforim* off the shelf and consulted them. He treated the two boys

with the utmost respect, and after 45 minutes, he told them that evidently there was a printer's error in his father's *sefer*. Akiva had rightly questioned what he had read!

Akiva felt like a million dollars. So did Shai. Here they were, American boys from *yeshiva* high school, and Rav Chaim had treated them warmly and invitingly, validating their concern and showing incredible patience in answering a question that took much longer than he had expected.

Shai would later recount that Rav Chaim saw the beauty of Akiva's *neshomoh*, the purity of his soul, and the courage it had taken to come that day and ask the question; he also saw Akiva's deep intelligence and learning ability, despite his speech impairment. He blessed them both, and the boys, elated, took leave of the great sage.

The boys returned to the States but went back later that year to learn in an Israeli *yeshiva;* Akiva skipped his senior year in high school in order to go back to Eretz Yisroel. He later discovered Yanky Kaufman, a former stutterer who became a successful therapist in this field. With the help of Hashem, Akiva – now Rav Akiva Resnick – is a *maggid shiur* Yerushalayim.

The boy who had timidly approached Rav Chaim *zt"l,* and who was barely able to explain his question now shares inspiring words of Torah with many *talmidim* on a daily basis. His loyal friend, Shai Stern, is now a prominent *askan* who is involved in many Jewish causes. Their friendship is stronger than ever, and they still learn together whenever they can.

Akiva shared this story in order to encourage others within similar predicaments, to seek help. It's also important for the wider public to understand to give these people patience and time.

Good Shabbos

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA



Are You a Religious Robot?

In this week's Parsha Hashem speaks to Moshe saying, **וָאֵרָא אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹב**- And I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. Rashi says: **אֶל הָאָבוֹת**, I appeared to the forefathers. Now Rashi is there to edify and illuminate. Everyone knows Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov were the avos. What is Rashi trying to teach us here?

The pasuk explicitly cited who Hashem appeared to – it enumerates Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. So, what is Rashi contributing when he says I appeared to the avos? We know exactly who Hashem appeared to from the pasuk itself!

I would like to share with you something incredible that I heard from my father, Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlita: The Chasam Sofer says something amazing. He says that avos in this context does not mean forefathers. Avos comes from the word avah which means to want, to desire, to yearn for.

Rashi is telling us that the reason why Hashem appeared to Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov was because they had sincerity. It was because they wanted. - They yearned. It was because they desired.

The mesirus nefesh, devotion, and passion they had for Hashem was unparalleled. There is something that they had that we could also tap into and that is avah. They had a tremendous desire to know and connect to Hashem. They didn't want to go through life observing

mitzvos just because it is popular, and it is the right thing to do. It's because they feel this visceral, deep connection – they want to do a mitzvah. That's why Hashem appeared to them.

Says the Chasam Sofer, anyone who yearns, anyone who wants, anyone who desires, anyone who's genuine and sincerely wants a relationship with Hashem that's va'eira. Hashem will appear to him! What an amazing thing!

The Netziv, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin zt"l , lived a few hundred years ago. He was one of the most famous rabbis of his generation. He related that when he was a child, he never paid attention in class. He would always sit around and do nothing.

הוּא אַהֲרֹן, וּמֹשֶׁה (ו/כו)

רש"י writes that the reason why the **תורה** sometimes writes **משה** before **אהרן** and sometimes **אהרן** before **משה** is to tell us that they were both equal in greatness. The question is; how can you say that **אהרן** was considered equal to **משה**, who was the greatest Navi and was the one through whom the Torah was given?

Answers **רבי משה פיינשטיין זצ"ל** - since **אהרן** used his abilities and potential to their fullest he is considered equal to **משה רבינו** even though **משה** was far higher than him in **מדריגה**.

ה' does not measure success by results, rather; success is measured by the effort and toil that one puts into his Avodas Hashem. As Aaron did all that he could do, even though Moshe was the greatest Navi, since they both did their best, they are both considered equal by Hashem. ~ **(דרש משה/ מובא בעלינו לשבח וארא/קלד)**

"Anyone who brings comfort to others, brings comfort to Hashem." Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa (Pirkei Avos 3:10).

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar

The Test of Life

Yirmi* was a bachur learning in Yeshivas Chevron-Geulah many years ago. During his first two years in yeshivah, he was shteiging and accomplishing in his learning, but in the beginning of his third year, Yirmi began suffering recurring headaches that interfered with his learning. His vision was blurred, and he often felt that he couldn't concentrate on the Gemara.

It was Yirmi's friend and longtime chavrusa who finally convinced him to talk to his parents and see a doctor. Several standard diagnostics later, Yirmi's GP sent for him a CT scan.

The results were devastating, revealing a giant tumor the size of a golf ball sitting on Yirmi's brain, near the cerebellum. As soon as his parents received the news, Yirmi's father grabbed him and ran, stricken, to the home of Rav Chaim Kanievsky.

Rav Chaim gazed penetratingly into the eyes of the distraught bachur. "Do you learn three sedarim a day?"

"Yes," Yirmi replied.

"And are you makpid on your sedarim?" the gadol probed. Again, Yirmi answered affirmatively.

"In that case, don't do any further tests," Rav Chaim instructed him. "Stop the tests and return full-time to the beis medrash. Your headaches will pass, but don't do any further tests." Before they could ask for further guidance, Rav Chaim wished them "Buha," his trademark blessing for 'brachah v'hatzlachah,' and returned his attention to his sefer.

Father and son left the home of the tzaddik, lost and bewildered. Yirmi's life was at stake; how could they dispense with all medical

care? Yet how could they disregard the direct instruction of a gadol hador?

Yirmi's father consulted with his uncle who was an esteemed rav and talmid chacham. After hearing Rav Chaim's explicit order to the bachur, he said, "If Rav Chaim told you not to continue with any further medical tests, then this is an eitzah relevant to someone on his level—the dargah of a malach Elokim. You, Yirmi, are not on this awesome level, which is why you should not flout medical advice. For you it is a matter of pikuach nefesh, of life and death. You are a regular person, and you do not have the level of bitachon of Rav Chaim. I believe that you should continue with the medical tests."

Following his great-uncle's advice, Yirmi progressed to the next level of tests, which, to his chagrin, revealed that the tumor was growing and far more deadly than they had previously imagined.

Heartbroken, Yirmi returned to Rav Chaim once again, confessed that he had continued with the tests against the gadol's advice, and told Rav Chaim the disheartening results that left him with little hope.

"But why did you undergo further testing?" Rav Chaim asked. "I told you not to."

"My rav told me that I must!" Yirmi replied.

"If that's the case, then go to your rav and ask him to heal you. Don't come to me...."

Confused and distraught, Yirmi returned to his great-uncle and repeated the tzaddik's message. Deeply humbled and distressed by what he'd done, and without wasting a moment, the great-uncle asked Yirmi to accompany him as he headed outside and flagged the first passing cab "Bnei Brak," he ordered the driver urgently.

Forty minutes later, Yirmi and his uncle alighted on Rashbam Street and proceeded to the home of the gadol hador.

Entering, Yirmi's great-uncle burst out in deep remorse and shame, "Ashamnu, bagadnu, chatanu. Rebbi, I am guilty of disregarding your words, but shall this bachur perish because of my sins? Rebbi, I beseech your forgiveness for my laxity in emunas chachamim and for instructing Yirmi to disregard your words! Please, do not let him suffer because of me!" Tears of regret slipped down his cheeks.

Turning to Yirmi, Rav Chaim asked, "Are you prepared to undertake to learn an additional seder in addition to the three you already learn?" Yirmi nodded avidly.

"This means," the gadol clarified, "that if, until now, you've learned three sedarim, now you will learn four."

"I will!" Yirmi professed unhesitatingly.

"From now on, you will stop all medical tests," Rav Chaim concluded, and the two were summarily dismissed.

Yirmi did not return to the hospital for the next scheduled test, or for the one after that, either. Instead, he remained sequestered in the beis medrash, investing all his energy and every spare moment of time into additional learning as a merit to save his life.

Several months passed, and with them, Yirmi's headaches. By six months, there was not a trace of the overpowering headaches that had stolen his concentration, his vision, and his peace of mind. Two years later, prior to beginning shidduchim, Yirmi once again visited Rav Chaim Kanievsky to ask if he was morally and halachically obligated to share the information about the tumor that had nearly taken his life with his prospective kallah.

"You need not say anything!" ruled the gadol hador.

Two months later, Yirmi got engaged. Today, he is happily married with a handful of beautiful children and still learning four sedarim every day!

Rabbi Jeremy Golker - Natural Habitat

The pasuk says כִּ֣י אִם־אֵינְךָ֣ מְשַׁלֵּ֔חַ אֶת־עַמִּ֖י הִנְנִ֣י מַשְׁלִ֑יחַ בְּךָ֣ וּבַעֲבָדֶ֔יךָ וּבְעַמְּךָ֖ וּבְבָתֶּ֑יךָ אֶת־הֶ֣עָרֹ֔ב וּמָלְא֥וּ בָתֵּ֖י מִצְרַ֣יִם אֶת־ה�ֶ֑עָרֹב וְגַ֗ם הָאֲדָמָ֛ה אֲשֶׁר־הֵ֥ם עָלֶ֖יהָ – '***For if you do not let My people go, behold, I will incite against you and against your servants and against your people and in your houses a mixture of noxious creatures, and the houses of Egypt will be filled with the mixture of noxious creatures, as well as the land upon which they are***.'

1. What exactly are these wild animals?
2. What does the pasuk mean by - וְגַ֗ם הָאֲדָמָ֛ה אֲשֶׁר־הֵ֥ם עָלֶ֖יהָ -*The land upon which they are on?*

Rashi says that these wild animals were a mixture of noxious creatures. [which includes] all species of wild beasts, snakes, and scorpions in a mixture.

The Rashbam says - **כי מיני זאבים הם שנקראים ערוב** – They were types of wolves.

רבינו בחיי makes a very interesting point: **הנני משליח בך וגו׳ את הָערוב**

The **ה** is a **ה״א הידיעה**. We know about these animals – what's it referring to? No other plague has the **ה״א הידיעה**. He says the **עָרֹב** was not a new creation, but a gathering of animals that were already in existence. All the other plagues were a new creation.

וְגַ֗ם הָאֲדָמָ֛ה אֲשֶׁר־הֵ֥ם עָלֶ֖יהָ -*The land upon which they are on.*

The **ספורנו** says that that this refers to the ground upon which the Egyptians were standing, which should become full of snakes. They would attempt to shut themselves into their property to keep out the wild animals, but the snakes etc came out of the ground upon which they were standing!

The **נחלת יעקב** says that this language is very strange. He explains that a dog that is not in its natural habitat will forget how to bark and be vicious. It requires the ground on which it was raised to retain

its wild brazenness to attack people. So Hashem brought the wild animals together with their natural habitats to ensure that they would all retain their natural tendances to be vicious and attack.

There is a famous **חנוכת התורה** that says **בר״ש פ״ח דכלאים מ״ה שיש חיה אחת ששמה ידעוני**. There was an animal called the Yidoni that was so wild, vicious and dangerous, that it was tethered by an umbilical cord to the ground otherwise it had the potential to destroy the whole world. If this cord was cut, the animal died straight away.

So Hashem even brought this Yidoni but it had to remain attached to its cord, so it had to come with the cord and ground remaining attached! Therefore the pasuk says - **וְגַם הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־הֵם עָלֶיהָ** -*The land upon which they are on.*

The Pursuit of Honour - Bathroom relief

The pasuk says - **וַיֹּאמֶר ה׳ אֶל מֹשֶׁה ... לֵךְ אֶל פַּרְעֹה בַּבֹּקֶר הִנֵּה יֹצֵא הַמַּיְמָה וְנִצַּבְתָּ לִקְרָאתוֹ עַל שְׂפַת הַיְאֹר** – *'And Hashem said to Moshe… Go to Pharaoh in the morning, behold, he is going forth to the water, and you shall stand opposite him on the bank of the Nile.'* **7:14,15**

What was Pharoah doing by the River Nile early in the morning?

Rashi explains **לִנְקָבָיו; שֶׁהָיָה עוֹשֶׂה עַצְמוֹ אֱלוֹהַּ וְאוֹמֵר שֶׁאֵינוֹ צָרִיךְ לִנְקָבָיו, וּמַשְׁכִּים וְיוֹצֵא לַנִּילוּס וְעוֹשֶׂה שָׁם צָרְכָיו** - *to relieve himself, for he had deified himself and said that he did not need to relieve himself; so, early in the morning he went out to the Nile and there he would perform his needs.*

Pharoah put himself through torture all day to make himself appear like a deity – all for a bit of honour. It wasn't enough that he was the most powerful person in the kingdom. This resulted in him having to sneak out of the palace very early in the morning to relieve himself. During the day however, he would be bursting …. So, he put himself through this daily torture for what? There was no practical

advantage. – That's what kovod does to a person. As the Mishna in Pirkei Avos 4:21 says - **רַבִּי אֶלְעָזָר הַקַּפָּר אוֹמֵר, הַקִּנְאָה וְהַתַּאֲוָה וְהַכָּבוֹד מוֹצִיאִין אֶת הָאָדָם מִן הָעוֹלָם**. Says the **תפארת ישראל** - 'from this world as well'.

There is another example of Pharoah's pursuit of kavod in the plague of frogs: The pasuk says **וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן, וַיֹּאמֶר הַעְתִּירוּ אֶל ה', וְיָסֵר הַצְפַרְדְּעִים מִמֶּנִּי וּמֵעַמִּי, וַאֲשַׁלְּחָה אֶת הָעָם, וְיִזְבְּחוּ לַה'. וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְפַרְעֹה ... לְמָתַי אַעְתִּיר לְךָ וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ וּלְעַמְּךָ, לְהַכְרִית הַצְפַרְדְּעִים מִמְּךָ וּמִבָּתֶּיךָ ... וַיֹּאמֶר לְמָחָר, וַיֹּאמֶר כִּדְבָרְךָ, לְמַעַן תֵּדַע כִּי אֵין כַּה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ** – Pharaoh summoned Moshe and Aaron, and said, "Ask Hashem that He remove the frogs from me and from my people.", And Moshe said to Pharaoh, "When shall I entreat for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and from your houses? " And Pharaoh said, "Tomorrow." And Moshe said, "As you say, in order that you should know that there is none like Hashem."

What?! – Pharoah is plagued by frogs. They're in his home, bed, ovens etc. Any normal person would have said, "Get rid of them straight away." – He was willing to endure another 24 hours of torture in an attempt to prove that the frogs came by natural means and would go on their own by natural (astrological) means – all to prove that Moshe and Hashem were not in charge of this phenomenon! [**אבן עזרא**]

We see that Pharoah's pursuit of honour dictated his irrational behaviour and destroyed his logic and ruined his life in this world.

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 37a) teaches, "Each person must say, 'The world was created for my sake.'" We are obligated to be aware of our own greatness. Feel proud that you are created in the image of G-d. Pride in the awareness of the greatness and elevation of your soul is not only proper, but it is actually an obligation. It is a binding duty to recognize your virtues and to live with this awareness. ~ Rabbi Avraham Grodzinski

Hakaras Hatov

The pasuk says **וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה אֱמֹר אֶל אַהֲרֹן קַח מַטְּךָ וּנְטֵה יָדְךָ עַל מֵימֵי מִצְרַיִם** - "***Hashem said to Moshe, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch forth your hand over the waters of Egypt.***" 7:19

Rashi says later 8:12 **לֹא הָיָה הֶעָפָר כְּדַאי לִלְקוֹת עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה, לְפִי שֶׁהֵגֵן עָלָיו כְּשֶׁהָרַג אֶת הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ בַּחוֹל, וְלָקָה עַל יְדֵי אַהֲרֹן** - *'It was inappropriate for the dust to be smitten through Moshe since it had protected him when he slew the Egyptian and had hidden him in the sand. [Therefore,] it was smitten through Aaron instead.'*

The ground saved Moshe Rabbeinu as it hid the Mitzri. And so too the waters of the Nile that had protected Moshe when he was a baby in the basket. And therefore, Moshe showed gratitude to the ground.

Rav Mattisyahu Salamon makes a very pertinent observation: When Moshe buried the Mitzri in the earth, how long was the body hidden for? For how long did it protect Moshe? ---The Mitzri's death was kept secret for only a single night! Is that the degree of gratitude Moshe had to have - for one night? [60+ years later!] – Says Rav Mattisyahu – Yes, absolutely! That is the nature of hakaros hatov – if Moshe Rabbeinu slept more calmly, confident that his secret was safe, he has a debt of gratitude.

Last week was Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler's yartzeit [Tevet 24]. Because of the turmoil of WW2, his son Rav Nochum Zev was learning in a yeshiva in Europe and escaped to Shanghai and eventually made his way to America and finally settled in Cleveland.

Rav Dessler couldn't meet up with him until 1947. At that reunion, Rav Dessler asked his son, "Who in America helped you and looked after your needs?"

His son said, "Rav Eliezer Silver of Cincinnati was the one who really helped me."

"So", Rav Dessler said, "We need to thank him."

So, Rav Nochum Zev thought that his father would pick up the phone and call Cincinnati and relay his appreciation that way. But Rav Dessler told his son, "No, we're going to thank him in person."

"But Daddy, it's 9½ hours by train!"

Rav Dessler said, "Yes, I know!"

So, they travelled 9½hours overnight and stood outside Rav Eliezer Silver's house early in the morning. They went with him to shul, and he invited them in at his house for breakfast. Rav Dessler thanked him immensely for his kindness in looking after his son. Rav Silver then asked Rav Dessler, "So how can I help you? What are you here for?"

"No, no – We just came to say thank you!"

Rav Eliezer Silver couldn't believe it. "You came 9½ hours each way to say thank you?"

That is the debt of hakaros hatov!

Fascinating INSIGHTS

A Terse Verse

After the plague of **דם**, it states **ויפן פרעה ויבא אל ביתו ולא שת לבו**, Paroh turned away and came to his palace, he didn't take to heart the wonder that the stick turned into a snake or to the plague of **דם**. - It seems out of order as first it should say that he didn't take it to heart and then he turned away, since he didn't pay attention to these and then he turned towards his house.

When we have a moment of inspiration, we must not let it fade. How do we do this? By putting that inspiration into something tangible.

An example of this if we hear an inspiring talk about Lashon Hara. We can make it tangible by learning Shmiras Halashon daily or designating an amount of time daily where we are careful with our speech. If it's not made tangible, then the inspiration will just fade into oblivion.

The Ramban shows how this concept is expressed in the Torah. The pasuk says **ואם תעוררו את האהבה עד שתחפץ**. He interprets this to mean that when a person has an awakening of Ahavas Hashem, it's lacking unless he makes it concrete.

We must make inspiration real. After experiencing the wonders of the stick turning into a snake as well as the plague of **דם**, Paroh had an awakening. However, he didn't want it to make an impression on him. As a result, he turned to his house immediately afterwards, diverting his mind. Consequently, he didn't take it to heart. - So now we see that the pasuk is in the proper order: **וַיֵּ֥פֶן פַּרְעֹ֖ה וַיָּבֹ֣א אֶל־בֵּיתֹ֑ו וְלֹא־שָׁ֥ת לִב�ֹּ֖ו** (7:23)

We need to make sure that the Paroh found inside of us doesn't convince us to do the same. It can be in the disguise of a cell phone, computer or some other gadget. May we all merit to be protected!

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

Kiddush Hashem On Board

A chassidish bochur davened every day for the release of the hostages in Gaza but mentioned specifically the name of British-Israeli citizen Emily Damari, who b'chasdei Hashem, was released on Sunday together with Romi Gonen and Doron Steinbrecher.

The story, as reported by Kikar Shabbat, was told over by the son's father. "Our son, a yeshiva bochur, returned from Israel to London after Sukkos. When he boarded the plane, he noticed that his seat was assigned next to a woman. My son politely asked her if it was okay for her to move to sit in a nearby seat next to another woman

so that he could sit next to a man. But the woman reacted angrily, belittled him for even asking, and, of course, refused to move."

The bochur didn't respond to her, but when he couldn't find another seat, he remained standing, at a loss of what to do.

Suddenly, a seemingly secular woman approached him and told him that his sincerity in keeping halacha had deeply moved her, and she was willing to exchange places with him – she would sit next to the woman, and he would sit next to a man.

But it didn't end there. The woman, who agreed to swap places, asked him for something else – "I have a daughter who was abducted to Gaza. Please, I want you to daven for her every day that she'll come out from captivity healthy and whole."

That woman was Mandy Damari, who was born and raised in the UK and made aliyah in her 20s, where she married and raised four children on Kibbutz Kfar Azza. - Since then, the bochur has davened daily for Emily Tehilla bat Amanda Francis – Emily Damari – to be released from Hamas captivity in Gaza, until he was informed at the beginning of the week together with all of Am Yisrael that she was being released along with two other women.

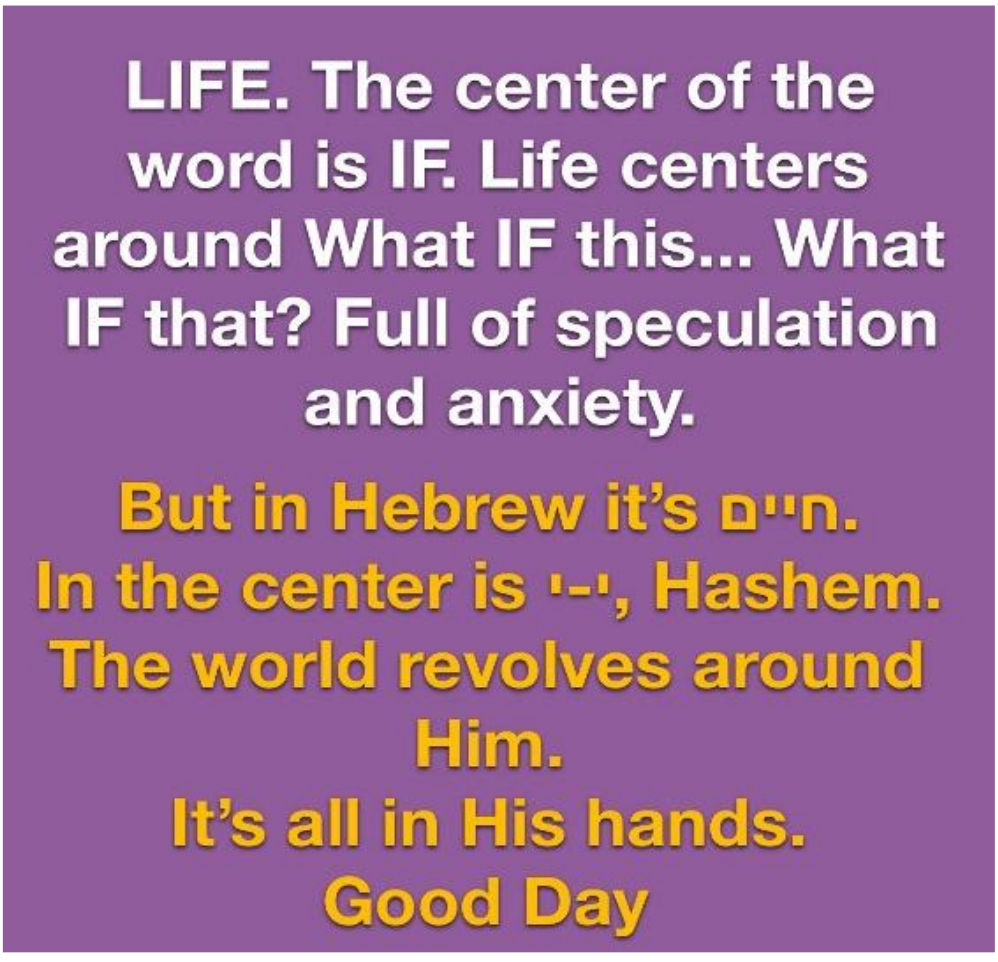
"There is a marvellous story of a man who once stood before G-d, his heart breaking from the pain and injustice in the world. "Dear G-d," he cried out, "look at all the suffering, the anguish and distress in your world. Why don't you send help?" G-d responded, "I did send help. - I sent you."

When we tell our children that story, we must tell them that each one of them was sent to help repair the broken world - and that it is not the task of an instant or of a year, but of a lifetime.' ~ Rabbi David Wolpe.

The True Liberator

If HKB'H wanted the Jews to be freed from their bondage in Egypt, why did He harden Pharoh's heart (7:3) so that he would refuse to free the Jewish people instead of causing him to agree to allow the Jews to leave so that they could receive their freedom and the Torah that much sooner?

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander explains that there was a danger that if Pharaoh willingly freed the Jews, they would feel gratitude toward him and view him as the one who was responsible for their independence. HKB'H wanted to make it absolutely clear that their freedom came solely from Him and they were indebted to nobody else, and in order to do so, He hardened Pharaoh's heart until the plagues made it clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was HKB'H who was liberating them and not Pharaoh.





The Torah's Measure of a Man by Rabbi Moshe Krieger

Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon Hakohen are mentioned together in numerous verses in the Torah. Usually, Moshe's name appears first. There are exceptions, however, the first of which is in Va'era: "This was the Aharon and Moshe to whom Hashem said: Take the Children of Israel out of Egypt according to their legions" (Shemos 6:26). There, Rashi explains that "sometimes, Moshe is mentioned before Aharon, and other times, Aharon is mentioned before Moshe, to show that the two were equal."

This is puzzling. Moshe and Aharon were equal? The Torah concludes with the statement that "there never rose a prophet like Moshe" (Devarim 34:10). Despite the greatness of Aharon's role as Kohen Gadol, Moshe Rabbeinu was the leader of all Klal Yisrael. It was he who brought the Torah from heaven to earth, who saved the nation at the sin of the Golden Calf, and more. How can Rashi state that Moshe and Aharon were equals?

Harav Moshe Feinstein explains that indeed, Moshe and Aharon *were* equal, because they both wanted to serve Hashem with all of their might, and they both did this — each according to the abilities he possessed. Therefore, even though Moshe's accomplishments outweighed Aharon's, the Torah affirms that the two were equal.

Even if this idea sounds familiar, that what counts is the efforts one puts in, this may be far from our way of thinking. For example, in the working world, what counts is productivity. A boss values workers who bring him profit. A worker who puts in all his strength but shows only meager profits will probably be fired. The same is true concerning grades in the secular academic world — only the results

matter. If this perspective affects the way we view Torah and mitzvos, our thinking is flawed.

When it comes to Torah, maximizing one's efforts is what counts. A bright bachur may impress us, but if he is not using his abilities to the fullest, he is not fulfilling his purpose. Whereas the bachur that needs to put in extra hours just to keep up with his shiur will receive much greater *s'char*, so long as he does all that he can.

This idea is expressed in Bava Basra (10b), where Rav Yosef, the son of Rabbi Yehoshua fainted, and in his swoon he saw a vision.

"What did you see?" asked his father.

"I saw an upside down world," he said. "Those who in this world are on top; there, they are on the bottom."

"What you saw was a clear, correct world," said Rabbi Yehoshua.

Rav Yosef saw men who were recognized as great scholars placed lower than simple Jews who set aside times for learning. The sages teach us from here that in the Next World, the measure of a person will not be his accomplishments in *ruchniyus,* but rather how much of himself he put into his accomplishments.

This should give many of us *chizuk*, particularly if our situation demands that we devote certain hours of the day to a job that takes us away from Torah study. We may view ourselves as hopelessly far from those who learn in kollel and spend their days and nights growing in Torah knowledge.

While we should surely aspire to such a level, if the maximum amount of time we can devote to Torah study is only an hour each morning and an hour each night, we should not view ourselves with the business/academia viewpoint that only the results matter. - In Torah, it is not quantity but quality; not how many pages of Gemara or even how many hours spent, but rather how much of ourselves we invest.

The time and energy we devote to learning, the money we devote to tzedaka or the resources we use in *maasim tovim* — it all depends on how much we are capable of and how pure our intentions are. We may again make the mistake of focusing on quantity, but the Mishna shows us that this is wrong. What matters is how much of ourselves we put into our avodas Hashem, and how sincere are our intentions.

These ideas once bothered a father, who asked **Rav Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz**: "I don't have much time to devote to learning, and I am far from what anyone would call a 'talmid chacham.' My son learns in a cheder and is being taught to aspire to greatness in Torah. How can I be a role model for my son?"

"You don't have to learn all day to be an example," answered Rav Lefkowitz. "The main thing is that your son sees that *ruchniyus* is what you value. Even if you are not always learning, he should see that learning is the main part of your life. Also, your son should see that his success in learning or in avodas Hashem is what makes you happy. Tell him how happy you are when you see him learning or hear from the rebbe how hard he tries in learning. This is the main thing."

May we be *zoche* to put ourselves fully into Torah and mitzvos!



וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה כֵּן אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה מִקֹּצֶר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה - '***And Moshe spoke to the Children of Israel, but they did not listen to Moshe due to shortness of breath and due to the hard labor.***' (6:9)

In this verse we find Moshe approaching the Jewish People to inform them about their imminent redemption, but they do not listen to him due to their suffering.

The Ohr Hachaim explains that their inability to believe Moshe was due to the fact that they had not yet received the Torah. If they would have done, explains the Ohr HaChaim, they would have been able to have a more open mind and the faith in their redemption despite their immensely difficult circumstances.

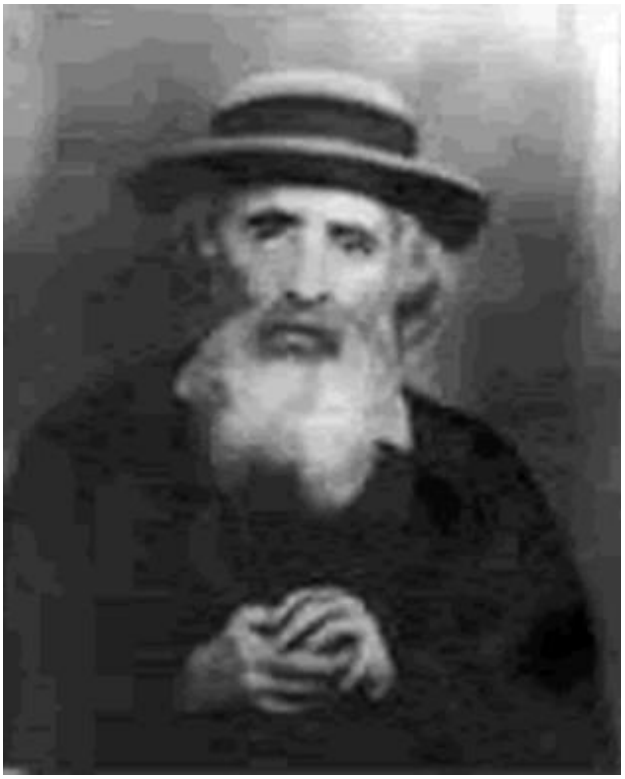
Learning Torah does not simply give a person more knowledge, it changes their essence, widens their perspectives and provides the strength to withstand the most challenging circumstances. Regarding the Jewish People in Egypt, if they would have had the Torah, the fabric of their faith would have been strengthened and they would have been able to accept Moshe's words, despite the backbreaking labor.

One incredible example of this was demonstrated by the **Klausenberg Rebbe** one Shabbos evening after the war. During his derasha, he seemed overjoyed with happiness and his face radiating with an otherworldly glow. His students approached him afterwards to ask him what was so special about this derasha in particular. The Rebbe answered that he was once punished in the camps for something, and his punishment was to be tied to the back of a car with a rope as an SS officer drove at great speed. "As I was being hurtled all over the place and crashing into rocks and trees," said the Rebbe, "I thought of this derasha, which is why it means so much to me!"

An individual is called upon to realize that everything that happens to him, whether by the hand of his parents, siblings, other relatives, or friends, really comes from Hashem, and these individuals are merely messengers carrying out Hashem's Divine plan. ~ Sefer Mitzvos HaBitachon

The Weekly Vort

Maharil Diskin



Rabbi Yehoshua Yehuda Leib Diskin (1818–1898)

◣ R' Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, the Bais HaLevi, used the title of "Rebbe" or "Mashiach Hashem" when he referred to **R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin**, without even mentioning his name. He took it for granted that people knew whom he was referring to. The Bais HaLevi once spent three months writing a letter to R' Yehoshua Leib. Every time he lifted his pen to write the proper salutation, his hands began to tremble and the pen would fall from his hand.

R' Chaim Brisker asked his father, "Are you not sufficiently accustomed to corresponding with this generation's greatest leaders that you should no longer have to tremble at the prospect?" The Bais HaLevi told his son, **"My trembling and trepidation have not yet reached half that which we are required to have for the great *gaon* and *tzaddik*, R' Yehoshua Leib!"**

The Gaon HaMalbim was once enumerating the praises of the rabbanim of his generation. Someone asked him why he had omitted mention of R' Yehoshua Leib. He replied, **"I am an expert at evaluating gold and silver, but I have no knowledge of precious gems."**

◣ R' Yehoshua Leib was born in Horodna in 1817. His father, R' Binyamin Diskin, the Av Beis Din, was an unusually holy *tzaddik* and towering *talmid chachom*. From the cradle to the Torah… R'

Yehoshua Leib was instantly introduced to the world of Torah, as his cradle remained by his father's side as he learned.

◣ When R' Yehoshua Leib was a young boy, the *shammash* of the shul organized a raffle for an item of value. After the lottery, the *shammash* discarded the box with the numbered tickets and let the children play with it. They held a mock drawing and discovered that one number appeared twice. R' Yehoshua Leib stated that the drawing had been invalid, pressing his point with the adults in the shul. They told him that it made no difference since the owner of the double ticket had not won. But the young boy refused to give in, maintaining that the lottery must be drawn again. He explained his reasoning: What if the man whose number appeared twice had, in fact, won the drawing? Then they would surely have invalidated the entire drawing since it was not right for him to have had a double chance. Thus, the man with the double number had forfeited his chance of winning, which was not fair. And what if the *shammash* had omitted one number? Would not the people have demanded a new drawing, just as well? Why is this case different, then? - The adults agreed that, indeed, his logic was unshakable.

◣ He became a *chosson* before his bar mitzvah, to the daughter of one of the most distinguished families in Broide. During his engagement, R' Yehoshua Leib became critically ill. Someone close to his father suggested that they annul the engagement as a *segulah* for his recovery. But before making any such move, R' Binyamin said that he had to consult with his son.

R' Yehoshua Leib rejected the idea firmly, saying, "And what should all the sick people do for a *segulah* if they happen not to be engaged?" He was married at fourteen and was supported at his father-in-law's table in Valkovisk. Throughout this time, R Yehoshua Leib devoted all of his waking hours to Torah study. R' Benzion Sternfeld, a resident of Valkovisk, said of R' Yehoshua Leib, "I can testify that during his stay in Valkovisk, he was already fluent in

Talmud Bavli with all the commentaries and even knew the entire Talmud Yerushalmi by heart."

◣ It was on his 18th birthday that his father called R' Yehoshua Leib aside and spoke to him about the unique path that he was to follow for the rest of his life. This was the first day on which he set upon his chosen path of asceticism, dedication, holiness and scrupulousness in every detail of his service of Hashem.

◣ Though **R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin** planned to study Torah in seclusion, in 1844, upon the passing of his great father, he found himself appointed to fill his father's place as Rav of Lomza. He was only 27 years old.

◣ A short while later, the government passed a law mandating schools to teach the language of the land. R' Yehoshua Leib opposed secular studies of any type in the Lomza *chadarim*. An informer went to the governor and revealed the religious schools' non-compliance. The governor summoned R' Yehoshua Leib, demanding that he write out orders to the members of his community to obey the law of the land. R' Yehoshua Leib refused. The governor leapt up in a rage and shouted that he had no time to deal with the matter right then, as he had to immediately leave for Warsaw. But he vowed to take forceful measures to have R' Yehoshua Leib write and sign the mandated orders. The governor, however, was never able to make good on his threat. As he was leaving the city, the bridge collapsed under his coach and he drowned.

◣ He was once summoned to appear, along with select Jewish and gentile leaders, before General Ganitzka, a figure who struck terror in the hearts of all. R' Yehoshua Leib's complete composure astonished all those present. He was later asked why he had been so unruffled. R' Yehoshua Leib replied, "The commandment 'not to fear any man' is obligatory upon all of a person's organs and sinews. If one controls one's entire body, then there is no room left for fear. My

father perfected this mastery over fear until it became natural, a part of his makeup. With me, it is only hereditary."

◣ R' Yehoshua Leib was in the habit of drawing the letters of Hashem's Name in the air with his finger, to fulfill his obligation of keeping Hashem before one at all times (Tehillim 16:8). Even while speaking to people or walking along the street, he would wave his finger back and forth. On Shabbos and Yom Tov, his fingers rested, but he murmured the *pasuk* repeatedly.

◣ Night and day, the people of Lomza saw their beloved Rav at his studies, never resting. They came to refer to him as 'the *malach* (angel)'. From the age of thirteen, he never slept in a bed but would sit and study until sleep overtook him and he dozed off at his place. He never slept more than two hours at a time.

◣ He never engaged in conversation for its own sake, not uttering one unnecessary word. He was in perfect control of his tongue. A questioner would leave his home with a clear-cut 'No' or 'Yes,' 'Do' or 'Don't.'

Due to the curtness of his reply, some people did not take it seriously enough. They did not realize that in his two or three-word reply, he had grasped all the elements of the question and resolved it in the best possible way.

◣ For hundreds of years, Brisk had been renowned as a fortress of Torah, with such luminaries as the Maharshal and the Bach serving as its rav. With R' Yehoshua Leib serving in Shklov, Brisk's reputation as having the foremost Rav as their leader was at stake, and they were determined to remedy this. In 1873, R' Yehoshua Leib became Rav of Brisk. It was to be his last position in the Diaspora, and he was henceforth referred to as the Rav of Brisk. The people accorded him royal honor. His rulings, teachings and customs served as a beacon and guide. His mere nod or word became the object of extensive interpretation. The *talmidei chachomim* of Brisk knew

that everything that left his holy mouth was untainted Torah and worthy of intense study.

◣ Though R' Yehoshua Leib was delighted to find Brisk well-fortified in religious observance, he still found room for improvement. He abolished the widespread practice of a Jew giving an oath in a government court of law by swearing with a *Sefer Torah* in his arms. R' Yehoshua Leib felt it was a disgrace to have to bring a *Sefer Torah* to the courtroom each time a Jew had to swear on one.

One day, he declared that the scrolls could no longer be removed for the purposes of secular oaths. Soon afterwards, a Jew had to appear in court. The clerks went to fetch the *Sefer Torah* but were confronted with the Rav's new regulations. R' Yehoshua Leib was summoned to court, and when questioned by the judge, he explained, "The Torah scroll is too precious an item to be carried about so freely. For its sake, the blood of myriads of our people has been spilled; they were tortured, burnt at the stake, and massacred. Hundreds of thousands of our people were sacrificed for the sake of each letter."

The moving explanation convinced the judge. He rose from his chair and ceremoniously promised to abolish the practice. R' Yehoshua Leib's presence and his bearing so impressed the judge that he announced that he was transferring the case to R' Yehoshua Leib's court. From then on, that judge would frequently refer complex cases to him.

◣ He preferred to remain out of the limelight, living in a simple two-room dwelling. He followed the example of the Vilna Gaon in everything he did, always acting discreetly and modestly. He refused to benefit from others, never accepted a gift, and owned very few *seforim*. He never left money in his possession from one week to another; anything left over was distributed to *tzedakah*.

R' Yehoshua Leib invested considerable effort in hiding his true spiritual stature from his contemporaries. Once, when he changed

his dwelling place, R' Yehoshua Leib accompanied the porter who was carrying the two boxes of his writings. He followed the porter all the way, at each step reminding him to be careful not to change the order of the boxes. The porter could not understand the Rav's anxiety and asked, "And what would be so terrible if I did change the order of the boxes?" R' Yehoshua Leib explained, "The upper box contains my father's *chiddushim*, the lower one mine. It is not fitting for my writings to be on top of my father's!"

◣ Every pain that afflicted a *talmid chochom* affected him directly. One morning, R' Yehoshua Leib learned that the home of the very elderly Maggid of Vilkomir, who had moved to Yerushalayim in his later years, had been burglarized and his clock was stolen. R' Yehoshua Leib told his wife to find out what kind of clock it was and to buy an exact replica so that it could be replaced before the Maggid learned of the loss. He explained, "Any anxiety or grief for a man of the Maggid's age (he was then more than 100 years old) might shorten his life and must be prevented at all costs."

◣ R' Yehoshua Leib accorded the utmost respect to yeshiva students. In Lomza, he assured that they were assigned to eat their meals at the homes of people who respected and appreciated *talmidei chachomim*. Upon learning that one host was not treating his student-guest with the proper deference, he summoned the man to his home and scolded him accordingly.

One of the communal leaders of Yerushalayim was once sitting at R' Yehoshua Leib's table, when a poor, shabbily dressed young kollel student entered the room. R' Yehoshua Leib stood up while the other man remained seated. R' Yehoshua Leib objected and told him, "Stand up for this *ben yeshiva*!"

◣ He fully participated in the pain of every individual Jew, literally fulfilling the commandment of loving one's neighbor as oneself. An impoverished woman once came to R' Yehoshua Leib to ask him to *daven* for her young son, who was in critical condition. He agreed,

and asked her to update him on her son's progress. When the boy began improving, the woman returned to him. Before she had even reached his door, the neighbors rushed up to her to ask how her son was feeling. She replied joyfully that he was much better. Apparently, the matter was of such import to the Rav that even the neighbors knew of his concern for the boy's welfare. When R' Yehoshua Leib heard the good news, he raised his hands toward Heaven and cried out, "Blessed is He and blessed is His Name!"

◣ R' Yechezkel was a devout and upright Jew who merited the privilege of supplying R' Yehoshua Leib with vegetables. R' Yechezkel contracted tuberculosis, and the illness sapped his strength. His business dwindled to nothing. To the family's surprise, the Yerushalmi milkman offered to bring them a quantity of fresh goats' milk, known to be especially beneficial for tuberculosis patients. The milkman continued to supply the daily milk for a long time, without accepting a penny. On the day that R' Yehoshua Leib passed away, the supply stopped. He had anonymously been paying for the milk from his own pocket.

◣ He was especially careful not to cause people even a hint of embarrassment or pain. Once, his attendant inadvertently put salt instead of sugar into R' Yehoshua Leib's tea. Since the doctor had prescribed that the Rav use large quantities of sugar to increase his energy, the attendant put several heaping spoons of salt into the glass he served to the Rav after his Motzei Shabbos *shiur*. R' Yehoshua Leib sipped the tea without showing the slightest sign of distaste.

When the Rebbitzen discovered the error, she quickly cleared away his glass. She later asked him how he could ingest such a salty drink which could be harmful to his health. He answered, "What? And shame a Jew in public?"

◣ R' Leib, an elderly Yerushalmi, ate his meals for a period of time at R' Yehoshua Leib's home. R' Leib found it difficult to eat, for most

of his teeth were missing. R' Yehoshua Leib sat next to him, separating the soft part of the bread from the crust, giving it to R' Leib, slice after slice, with fatherly concern.

◣ R' Yehoshua Leib refused to accept any free service. Mr. Moshe Grosbard often ate at R' Yehoshua Leib's table. He once found the Rav standing alone in the kitchen, boiling water. R' Moshe took the kettle from him, set it on the flame and made him a glass of tea. R' Yehoshua Leib would not accept this service "free." He rose to his feet and blessed him with long life.

His Rebbitzen once paid a porter who delivered a large package to their home. When the Rav saw the dimensions of the package, he calculated that the porter should have received a higher fee. He sent a messenger out late that same night with some coins to pay the porter his rightful earnings.

R' Moshe Jules, who served as the druggist/doctor in Yerushalayim, devotedly treated R' Yehoshua Leib when he was ill. When R' Moshe persistently refused to accept payment for his treatments and drugs, R' Yehoshua Leib insisted on 'paying' him by at least personally serving him a glass of tea each time he came to his home. When in his advanced age the Rav required more frequent treatment, he found it necessary to raise R' Moshe's "fee." He offered to teach R' Moshe anything he wished to know on any Torah-related subject.

◣ His *talmidim* held a eulogy for R' Leib Chafetz. At the end of the gathering, after the crowd had dispersed, R' Yehoshua Leib paid the *shammash* a coin for the *tefillah*. He had heard the *shammash* recite the formula "…for the entire congregation who pledge charity…" and had felt obligated to make good that pledge so as not to bring that gathering of Jews to task for not having given *tzedakah*.

◣ As young boy, R' Moshe Blau, who later became famous as a leader of Agudas Yisroel, had free access to R' Yehoshua Leib's home. Young Moshe followed the directive of his father, who told him, "Moishele, in your free time, while your friends are busy playing and running,

try to be close to the home of the *tzaddik hador*, the great man from Brisk. Perhaps you will be fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of his saintly face. Perhaps you will even be worthy of serving him as a messenger for some service. That will be your merit for immediate entry to *olam haba*."

◣ A young child became so ill that the doctors despaired of his recovery. A relative went to R' Yehoshua Leib to ask him to *daven* for the child. He calmly replied that the boy would recover. The relative was not convinced and asked if they should add a name. R' Yehoshua Leib repeated, "I said that he would recover, so why bother?" Sure enough, the child recovered.

The holy *tzaddik*, R' Tzvi Michel Shapira's ten children passed away during infancy in rapid succession. He begged R' Yehoshua Leib to *daven*. He did so and R' Tzvi Michel was soon blessed with a son who survived and grew to become the holy R' Ben Zion Shapira.

On another occasion, a father came crying to R' Yehoshua Leib as his daughter developed a life-threatening affliction in her feet. The doctors said there was no choice but to amputate the legs. R' Yehoshua Leib advised against it; the girl recovered completely. And there were numerous similar incidents…

◣ In Lomza, he was once visited by a poor girl who served as a maid in the homes of wealthy Jews. She was emaciated, as everything she ate tasted like tallow fat and was repugnant to her. The doctors could not cure her strange affliction. R' Yehoshua Leib understood that this was no mere physical ailment. He asked her when she had begun feeling this way. She recalled how she had once worked for a rich but miserly Jew. A *treif* tallow candle once fell into a pot of food. Her master told her not to reveal the incident to anyone. The girl had remained silent while the entire family ate from the forbidden dish. From that time on, she now realized, everything she ate tasted of tallow. R' Yehoshua Leib told her, "You have been

punished enough. You need not suffer any longer for Hashem has forgiven you. Everything will be alright." And she was indeed cured.

◣ When people asked R' Yehoshua Leib to *daven* for a sick relative, he sometimes offered a brief *tefillah* and at other times gave advice. Sometimes his counsel would be logical; other times, it required faith. His instructions would be given tersely. Once he had spoken, he would offer no explanations nor add anything.

A woman sought his *brocah* as all her children had died in infancy. He advised her to recite *birkas hamazon* after meals from a *siddur*, rather than by heart. She followed his counsel and was soon blessed with children who survived infancy.

◣ A woman received a letter from the commander of her husband's army division that he had died in combat. On the basis of this letter, the wife received permission from a *beis din* to remarry and was soon engaged to a Chabad *chassid*. The *chassid* went to the Tzemach Tzedek for his permission and his *brocha*. But the Tzemach Tzedek refused unless R' Yehoshua Leib also signed the permission to remarry.

Instead of granting his permission, R' Yehoshua Leib told the woman to send a special messenger to the city where her husband had been stationed during his military service and check on his whereabouts. The messenger would have to stay over Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur to satisfy his specifications. The woman followed his directives. The messenger met her still-living husband at the shul on Yom Kippur.

◣ An elderly *talmid chochom* in Lomza denied a teaching of Chazal, claiming that the *pasuk* in the *Shiras HaYam*, "For the horse of Pharaoh, with chariot and horsemen, entered the water and Hashem brought upon them the waters of the sea," should not be written spaced and staggered in the *Sefer Torah* with the rest of the *shira*, as it was a summation and not part of the *shira*.

R' Yehoshua Leib was appalled and sent a message to the man demanding that he not repeat his remarks. The man scoffed at the (then) young Rav's warning and persisted. R' Yehoshua Leib sent him another message, threatening that he would be punished if he continued to publicize his opinion, which was contrary to our Chazal's teachings.

One Friday, when the elderly man immersed himself in the *mikvah*, he fainted in the water and drowned. This incident made a strong impression in the city, as it was felt that the drastic punishment exactly fit the man's sin, as in the *pasuk* he contested it stated, "And Hashem brought upon them the waters…"

◣ R' Moshe Jules, the righteous Yerushalayim medic, would relay that upon the frequent occasions that he was called to treat R' Yehoshua Leib's hernia, from which he suffered greatly in his later years, the Rav would refuse to lower his hands below his waist – as a sign of purity which Chazal had testified to the credit of R' Yehuda HaNassi – even though his pains were thus greatly increased. The same was true when the Rav experienced intense pain in his thighs; R' Moshe wanted to examine his holy body, but the Rav refused to raise his hands above his head, fearing the Zohar's admonition against it.

◣ A Yemenite Jew used to supply clay to R' Yehoshua Leib each year to build a new Pesach oven. One day, when the Yemenite came to his home, R' Yehoshua Leib called him over and told him, "I don't advise you to go digging for clay today." The man seemed to hesitate. R' Yehoshua Leib then promised to pay him a full day's wage if he would say Tehillim all day in the yeshiva. The man agreed. The next day it was learned that there had been an avalanche at the clay pits. An entire mountainside had collapsed, burying alive several of the Arab clay-diggers.

◣ Communal activists once came to R' Yehoshua Leib to bless the establishment of a hospital for which they had just purchased a plot

of land. The Rav told them, "May it be the Hashem's will that the *Shechinah* not rest upon your endeavor." He meant that there should be no sick people, as the Gemara says, "*The Shechinah rests upon the head of a sick man*" (Shabbos 12). The literal meaning of his *brocha* was also fulfilled. The sale fell through, and the land was not purchased. Later, a different plot was bought in the new part of Yerushalayim, upon which the old Shaarei Tzedek Hospital stood for many decades.

◣ Immediately prior to WWI, R' Yitzchak Yerucham Diskin emptied out the cash reserves of the Diskin Orphanage and bought a large amount of wheat. He told no one except for those closest to him, who could not understand his curious actions.

When wheat became the most crucial commodity during the war, people marveled at R' Yitzchak Yerucham's far-sightedness. Even the Turkish police resorted to purchasing wheat from the orphanage's stock. R' Yitzchak Yerucham later explained that his father had appeared to him in a dream and told him to purchase the wheat. In his deep concern for the orphans, even in the *Olam Ha'emes*, R' Yehoshua Leib assured that they would not suffer hunger during the war.

◣ R' Yehoshua Leib told his *talmid*, R' Yakov Orenstein, that whenever he was in doubt and had to check a source, he would invariably open the right *sefer* to the right place. He also never had to leaf through a *sefer* to find what he was looking for, recognizing each page according to its individual character. From a mere glance, he would jab his finger directly at a spot and find what he was seeking.

◣ During the twenty years that he lived in Yerushalayim, R' Yehoshua Leib could be seen each day walking through the alleys of the Old City. It was wondrous how the Arabs would rise to their full height, each time, and make way for him to pass.

◣ A man once received a letter from a relative in Hungary asking his advice about a complex business matter. The man brought the letter to R' Yehoshua Leib, asking his advice on how to reply. The Rav glanced casually at the closely-written two-page letter, and gave his opinion.

The man left with the impression that the Rav had not grasped the matter fully and returned to ask his advice a second time, asking if the Rav had read the letter.

R' Yehoshua Leib countered, "And did you read the letter? Can you tell me how many words it contains?" He then told the man how many words were in the letter, which the man later verified was a perfectly accurate count!

◣ R' Yehoshua Leib was endowed with amazing physical strengths. Until his last day, his hearing and vision were acutely attuned. He never wore glasses. When he was over 80 years old, he was found studying by the light of the moon shining in through his window.

The *shammash* of Yeshivas Ohel Moshe was once about to climb up on the table to take down the plaque of donors whose names they wished to mention in a *tefillah*. The writing was so small that he had to remove the entire plaque in order to read them. Before he could do so, R' Yehoshua Leib, from his place at the eastern wall, began reading the names on the plaque hanging on the opposite wall.

◣ R' Yehoshua Leib once fell seriously ill and the doctors despaired of his life. He turned to his family and said, "If so I must prepare for my journey!" He proceeded to say the *pasuk*, "*Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path*" (Tehillim 119:105), with great intensity. In his fervor he leaped from bed and paced the room repeating the *pasuk* with the last ounce of his strength. Several days later he was pronounced cured of his illness.

◣ On his way back from the Kosel one Chol Hamoed Succos, he paused to gaze upon the *Har ha'Bayis*. People saw him stop and,

thinking that he was too tired to return home, wished to order a wagon to take him home. R' Yehoshua Leib would not hear of it, explaining that he would not sit, even for a short time, outside the succah. He began walking in long strides and was soon home.

◣R' Yehoshua Leib's love for the orphans in his orphanage knew no bounds. When taking his evening walk, he would bend down to gather twigs and branches along the way. He stuffed them into his pockets exclaiming, "This wood will make good fuel to heat the orphanage and feed the unfortunate children there." When the rebbetzin learned of this, she sewed a special pocket into his coat which he continued to fill upon his nightly walks.

◣R' Yehoshua Leib would utilize money from the Diskin Orphanage to pay people to go from house to house in Yerushalayim and check the *kashrus* of *mezuzos*. When asked how he could justify using the orphanage funds for this, R' Yehoshua Leib explained: "Kosher *mezuzos* lead to long lives. If parents live long, then their young children will not become orphans." Paying people to check *mezuzos* was actually saving the orphanage money.

◣Someone once visited R' Yehoshua Leib and noted dozens of birds flitting about his home. The man reminded him of the Gemara (Sanhedrin 111), "*Kosher birds make their nests by tzaddikim.*" R' Yehoshua Leib modestly replied. "What makes you so sure that these are kosher birds?"

◣ On 24 Teves, five days prior to his passing, R' Yehoshua Leib's health deteriorated. He had been ailing for the previous two weeks, but the pneumonia was beginning to take its toll. R' Yehoshua Leib felt his hours were numbered. He asked his rebbetzin for water to wash his hands and a small measure of bread, enough on which to recite the *birkas hamazon*. Men, women and children streamed to the shuls and the yeshivos to *daven* for mercy. The *tefillos* continued for four consecutive days and the sound of *shofaros*, *tefillos* and

Selichos reverberated throughout the holy city. His students dispatched cables to all Jewish cities abroad, begging them to *daven*.

◣ On 26 Teves, R' Yehoshua Leib's health took a serious turn for the worse. R' Shmuel Salant, Rav of Yerushalayim, ordered all residents of Yerushalayim to rise at dawn and gather in the shuls for *tefillos* – men, women and children. In shuls throughout the city, the *aron kodesh* was opened for the recital of Tehillim, *Selichos*, *Hoshanos* and the 13 *Middos Ha'Rachamim*, accompanied by the blowing of *shofaros*. The *zekeinim* and *talmideo chachomim* of Yerushalayim sobbed openly together with the masses. Many people fasted that day, as did the orphans of the Diskin Home. Young children ceased their study in order to *daven* and arouse *Rachmei Shomayim*. Stores were shuttered. Multitudes swept towards the *keavrim* of *tzaddikim* to *daven*. The Rav of Yaffo, R' Naftali Herz, summoned the entire city to an *asifas tefillah*

◣ During his final three days, R' Yehoshua Leib remained enveloped in his *tallis* and crowned in his *tefillin*. He appeared like a holy angel. His pure eyes burned like torches and his whole being radiated an awesome grandeur, while only his lips moved. Before the approach of Shabbos, R' Yehoshua Leib removed his *tefillin* and held them tenderly, kissing them fervently. He laid them down, but picked them up again, reluctant to part with them, realizing that it would be a final parting.

◣ With the advent of Shabbos, R' Yehoshua Leib lay still in his bed, his eyes burning like the Shabbos flames. Several of his closest disciples sat in an inner room, eating the meal and softly singing the *zemiros*, careful not to disturb their master. The emotion and tension of that Shabbos in Yerushalayim was tangibly thick. People were encouraged to *daven* throughout the day for their master's recovery. As twilight approached at the end of Shabbos, masses of people flowed towards R' Yehoshua Leib's home, wanting to *daven* as close as possible to their beloved master. As soon as *havdalah* was

recited, R' Yehoshua Leib breathed his last in purity, surrounded by his disciples who cried out *Shema Yisrael*.

◣ News of the tragedy cast Yerushalayim into deep mourning. With masses of people expected to participate in the funeral, R' Shmuel Salant and his *Beis Din* feared holding the *levayah* that night due to the danger of insufficient lighting to prevent trampling. They decided to hold the *levayah* on the morrow. All night, people streamed to R' Yehoshua Leib's house. His pure body was surrounded by the prominent *talmidei chachomim* of Yerushalayim and his foremost *talmidim*. R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, R' Yakov Orenstein and other *talmidim* wept bitterly until dawn.

◣ Before the *levayah*, it was announced that anyone whose sons or daughters were enrolled in secular schools was not to touch the *aron*. Those who were to bear the *aron* were required to immerse themselves in the *mikveh*. The Ashkenazi and Sephardi *Batei Dinnin* announced a cessation of work, and for all yeshivos to be closed for the *levayah*. The entire city emptied out; police had to guard the deserted property and homes.

Hespeidim were delivered in the *beis medrash*, with R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld and the Chief Sephardic Rav, R' Yakov Shaul Elyashar, leading a long line of *maspidim*. The *aron* was then carried through the city streets towards the R' Yehuda Hachassid shul, where R' Shmuel Salant and R' Shneur Zalman of Lublin awaited it. The children of the Diskin Orphanage walked before the *aron* and were followed by rows upon rows of boys from all the *chadorim* in the city.

It took all morning for the procession to proceed, as it had to wend through the thousands of compressed people packed all along the way. At the Churvah shul, the wailing of the massive crowd increased as R' Shmuel Salant and R' Shneur Zalman of Lublin delivered *hespeidim*. As the people made their way towards *Har HaZeisim*, R' Yitzchak Winogard, Rosh Yeshivah of Toras Chaim, highlighted the battle which R' Yehoshua Leib had waged for the purity of Torah

chinuch and all that he had sacrificed for it. He concluded, quoting, "Who shall stand up against the doers of evil?"

◣ *A tzaddik* and *gaon* of the stature of R' Yehoshua Leib seldom appears on the horizon of the Torah world. The *Gedolim* of his time stood in awe before him. The Beis HaLevi's hand trembled violently each time he took up his pen to write to R' Yehoshua Leib. The Beis HaLevi was once in excellent spirits, explaining that he had received a letter from R' Yehoshua Leib that day, and he felt like it was a Yom Tov.

◣ R' Nochum'ke of Horodna was once seen at dawn, shivering with cold, sweeping the snow drifts to the right and left and blazing a path down the street. A raging storm had blanketed Horodna with thick layers of snow and ice. He explained, "R' Yehoshua Leib must pass here. I am clearing a path for him so that he will not have to walk in the snow."

◣ The Chiddushei HaRim greatly revered R' Yehoshua Leib. Whenever *chassidim* from Lomza came to him, he would inquire about R' Yehoshua Leib and send back his warm regards. They had met once in Warsaw and the Chiddushei HaRim was deeply impressed by R' Yehoshua Leib's grandeur.

◣ R' Elya Chaim Meisel of Lodz used to bake Pesach *matzos* with his own hands to bring to R' Yehoshua Leib in Lomza saying, "I would run 80 miles by foot to please him." The Rogatchover Gaon described his rebbe, R' Yehoshua Leib, as another R' Akiva Eiger, an opinion shared by R' Shmuel Salant, Rav of Yerushalayim.

◣ R' Yitzchak Elchonon Spector, the leading *poseik* of the generation, was a childhood friend of R' Yehoshua Leib and had studied together with him under his father, R' Binyomin Diskin. He would utter R' Yehoshua Leib's name with veneration and referred to him as "the pride and glory of our times." R' Chaim Brisker once said, "Had R' Yehoshua Leib lived in the times of the Rama, he would also have been considered a *gaon*."



◣ When R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld was told that R' Yehoshua Leib descended from the House of Dovid, he commented, "Anyone with eyes in his head can see from his features that this is so." R' Yosef Chaim often visited his master's *kever* where he recited the entire Tehillim. He did not miss any of R' Yehoshua Leib's yahrzeits. Even in 1931, when he was 83, he climbed to the *kever* on a wet and stormy day.

◣ R' Yakov Orenstein, a devoted *talmid* of R' Yehoshua Leib in Yerushalayim. was once enumerating to his students the praises of one of the great men of the generation. R' Yakov was so effusive in his praise of the *gadol*, that one of his students asked if that *talmid chochom* could be compared to R' Yehoshua Leib. R' Yakov was stunned. "What?!" he cried out. "R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin? He is an angel. Who can begin to fathom his greatness? Who can begin to understand him? He is awesome, awesome, far removed from his generation."

◣ He is buried on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, Israel. Y.L. Diskin Street in Jerusalem is named after him.

May the merit of the tzadik Rabbi Yehoshua Yehuda Leib Diskin protect us all. Amen

[*The yarhzeit of R' Yehoshua Yehuda Leib ben R' Binyamin Diskin zt"l is on 29 Teves (1898). May his merit protect us.]* (Pillar of Fire, The Heavenly City)



The Scrolls They Read On Shabbos Gave Them Hope

There is an interesting Medrash Tanchuma that comments on Pharoah's reaction to the plagues. The pasuk [Shemos 5:9] says that Pharoah's reaction to the plagues was to turn the screws tighter against the slaves: "Increase the workload upon these people and make sure they do it and do not allow them to occupy themselves with false words."

The Medrash elaborates on the "false words" that concerned Pharoah: "They had scrolls (megillos) in their possession that they used to enjoy reading each and every Shabbos. In the scrolls was recorded a promise that G-d would redeem them and take them out. Pharoah wanted to increase their workload so they would no longer have time to read these scrolls of 'propaganda and fantasy'.

We need to understand: Why did the spare time activities of the slaves bother Pharoah? Why did he care that they were reading these scrolls, as long as they completed their work? What was his obsession with these megillos?

Perhaps these scrolls represented more than merely something to help pass the time on Shabbos. Pharoah was not merely interested in having people work for him. He was interested in breaking the

spirit of the people. The way to break the spirit of a nation is by taking away from them that which every human being and every nation needs — hope. The scrolls that they would read every Shabbos promised that G-d would redeem them. These scrolls kept them going. No matter how bad it became and how terrible it was, they knew that it would come to an end. Ultimately, G-d would take them out.

The Jews did not understand the reason for their dire circumstances. They were righteous. The Egyptians were wicked. They asked the question: Why do the righteous suffer? But somehow, despite the questions, they had the strength to continue. Why? Because they read in the megillos that G-d would redeem them and they had hope.

Taking hope away from a people breaks a people. No matter how desperate a person becomes, as long as there is hope, he is not broken. This is what Pharoah wanted to destroy.

The HaKaras HaTov of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach

For the first three plagues – Blood, Frogs, and Lice – it was Aharon who hit the water and hit the sand with the Staff of Hashem, thereby bringing on these plagues. Chazal say that Moshe Rabbeinu owed Hakaras HaTov (gratitude) to the water which saved him as an infant, when the basket his mother hid him in floated in the Nile River. Likewise, it was the sand that saved Moshe when he buried therein the Egyptian whom he killed. Moshe "owed" so to speak to the water and the sand and therefore did not want to be the initiator of a plague which came from these entities.

We are all aware that water and sand are inanimate objects who don't appreciate a 'Thank-you' and don't even know what a 'Thank-you' is. And yet, we see that a person needs to have *Hakaras*

HaTov even to inanimate objects. So clearly, *Hakaras HaTov* is not for the benefit of the person (or object) receiving the *Hakaras HaTov*. It is for the benefit of the person who gives the *Hakaras HaTov*. If a person learns to show gratitude even to something like a rock or sand or water, then he will certainly show *Hakaras HaTov* to a human being.

I recently heard the following story: **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** was once in the hospital. He made a point of thanking every doctor and every nurse for the care they provided for him while he was in the hospital. (This is something that someone does not need to be Rav Shlomo Zalman to do. Many people rightly have this practice under similar circumstances.) But then he asked if he could see the woman who went from room to room to water the plants in the hospital rooms. He said that the plants brightened up the room and therefore the woman who poured the water into the plants to make sure that they would stay fresh also needed to be thanked for her efforts.

Most people may thank a doctor or a nurse who was helpful to them. But thinking about the lowly woman that goes from floor to floor and from room to room watering plants? She also should receive *Hakaros HaTov,* because if even inanimate objects receive *Hakaros HaTov*, certainly every human being deserves no less.

"I'll Have My Steak from the Jews' Cattle"

Prior to the plague of *Dever* [Pestilence], Moshe Rabbeinu warns Pharaoh in the name of the Master of the Universe: "For if you refuse to send out, and you continue to hold them, behold the Hand of Hashem is on your livestock that are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the cattle, and on the flock – a very severe epidemic. And Hashem shall distinguish between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, and not a thing that belongs to the Children of Israel will die." [Shemos 9:2-4]

The Jewish people were shepherds. They had large flocks. However, Hashem promises that the *Dever*-epidemic will not affect their sheep and cattle. In fact, it occurred exactly as Moshe warned: "Hashem carried out this word the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died, and of the livestock of the Children of Israel not one died." [Shemos 9:6]

The very next *pasuk* is noteworthy: "Pharaoh sent and behold, of the livestock of Israel not even one had died…" [Shemos 9:7]. Lo and behold, Pharaoh discovered that Hashem was right! Not one Jewish animal died! What was his reaction? "…and Pharaoh's heart became stubborn and he did not send out the people." [ibid.] On the face of it, this is totally counterintuitive and illogical. Everything happened exactly as Hashem had foretold; Pharaoh verified that this was the case; and so he decided "You know what? I am not going to send them out!" What sense is there to this? How do we understand this *pasuk*?

The answer is that Pharaoh is exhibiting the classic response of a wicked person, a person who consciously decides, "I am not going to recognize the Hand of G-d." Pharaoh says to himself: "Okay, my entire flock died out. There is nothing to eat! So where am I going to get supper tonight? What are we going to serve? No problem. The Jews still have meat. Aha! If the Jews still have meat, there is no problem. I have a way out!"

I do not know exactly what terminology to use to define this type of behavior. It is either myopia, shortsightedness, live-for-the-here-and-now, or eat-drink-and-be-merry-for-tomorrow-you-die. No matter how we describe it, the idea is that I am just going to look at the here and now in front of me, and as long as I still have the ability to have my steak for supper, why should I give in?

This is true by the wicked when it comes to their stomach or to their kavod [honor], or to their power. They do not think strategically. They think for the here and now.

He saw that the plague did not affect the Jewish cattle, so he had an escape by which to provide himself with tonight's steak for supper. With supper for that night covered, Pharaoh decided, "I have time. I am not going to give in."

Pausing To Think

Prior to the Plague of Hail, Pharoah and the people of Egypt were warned. They were told that the land would be smitten with a hail the likes of which they had never witnessed, and that anything left out in the field would be crushed and destroyed by the hail.

The Torah relates that anyone who feared the Word of G-d brought all his cattle and property into his home. Only those who did not heed G-d's word left their servants and cattle out in the field. The Medrash identifies "the one who feared the Word of G-d" as Iyov (Job) and "the one who did not fear the Word of G-d" as Bilaam (the Talmud says that both Iyov and Bilaam were advisors to Pharoah [Sotah 11a]).

If we consider the circumstances, one would have to be quite obtuse (not to say "stupid") to not "get" what was happening. Hail was already the 7th plague. By this time, Moshe had an established track record! How could Bilaam not at least take some precautions, fearing that "perhaps" Moshe would be right again? The answer is that this was the very essence of Bilaam. He exemplified the attribute described by the Torah as "asher lo sam leebo", literally meaning that he never paid attention. He was a person who never stopped to think and consider or ponder. People like that can be banged over the head six times and it will not make an iota of difference, because they have a disease called "he does not stop to think" (asher lo sam leebo).

Later in the Chumash, we see that this attribute did not only plague Bilaam in Egypt. It plagued him throughout his life. When Bilaam was

hired to curse the Jews, he initially declined, but when he was offered more money, G-d allowed him to go. He mounted his trusted donkey and began the journey. Then his donkey suddenly stopped in the middle of the road. The donkey refused to budge because an Angel was standing in the middle of the road blocking the way. Bilaam, who did not see the Angel, became angry and hit and cursed the donkey. G-d opened the mouth of the donkey who began to question Bilaam. "Is this my normal pattern of behavior? Have I not been your trusted donkey for all these years? Have I ever stalled on you once or given you a moment of trouble?" In other words, the donkey was telling its master, "Don't you think something extraordinary is happening here? Why don't you wake up and look, Bilaam?" But that was always Bilaam's problem — he did not pay attention to the obvious. He did not open his eyes and pay attention to what was happening around him.

The Chofetz Chaim makes the following fantastic observation: in the entire narrative of the blessings that Bilaam gave to the Children of Israel, there is not one pause in the entire reading. Throughout the entire story of Bilaam, from the beginning of Parshas Balak virtually through Bilaam's departure from the scene at the end, there is not a single pause. There is neither a "full break" [to the end of the line] nor a "closed break" [in the middle of the line]. The parsha is certainly long enough to warrant multiple "paragraphs," as is common throughout the Torah.

The Chofetz Chaim explains as follows: The reason why there are parsha divisions in the Torah is that they were given to allow Moshe Rabbeinu pause to ponder and reflect on the previous set of verses. The purpose of the breaks is to allow for a period of introspection and analysis of what is transpiring. Parshas Balak does not have any breaks, because Bilaam never paused to think or ponder.

We dismiss Bilaam; we think to ourselves "how stupid!" But let us ask ourselves – do we ever stop to ponder and think about what is

happening around us? We suffer from the same disease. Our whole life is rushing. Everything is quick — on to the next thing.

We have an array of conveniences to speed up our lives. We do not need to do laundry by hand any more. We do not need to walk to where we are going anymore. We can cook in less than an hour. Life is so easy. But does anyone feel that his life is slower and more relaxed than his parents' lives? Inevitably, our lives are quicker and more high-pressured than our parents' lives. Everyone is in a rush. It is always so hectic.

Why should it be like that? Dinner takes less time to prepare. We can even buy it ready-made. It takes less time to do everything. The disease is that the more time we are given, the more we feel we are on a treadmill. As a result, we try to rush to try to accomplish more. When one is in a rush, one doesn't stop to think or ponder.

This is a terrible disease. It can become so bad that one can see 6 miracles and it will not make an impression on him.

Rabbi Zev Leff relates: The Talmud [Brochos 43b] says that a person should not take big steps, for the Master taught that big steps diminish one's eyesight by 1/500th. The remedy, it is taught, is Kiddush and Havdalah. What is the meaning of this Gemara?

The Gemara is allegorical. A person who is continuously taking big steps – i.e. – a person who is in a perennial rush – causes his perspective to be affected. Such a person has no time to stop and ponder. His physical eyesight is not affected, rather his VISION is affected – the way he perceives life — becomes diminished.

What is the remedy? Kiddush and Havdalah. Kiddush and Havdalah represent distinctions in life. People must realize that there are differences between holy and profane. These differences must be thought about and pondered.

The Gemara says that Rabbi Akiva started out as an ignoramus. When he was 40 years old, he decided that he wanted to learn. It

was a daunting task to begin study at that age – so what made him do it? The Talmud says that he was at a pond and noticed water dripping on a stone. He observed how the water had made the stone smooth and reasoned to himself that if water could make even a hard stone smooth, then Torah (which is compared to water) could penetrate his hard head as well.

How many people, in the history of mankind, looked at water falling on a hard stone and making it smooth, and changed their lives? It took a Rabbi Akiva – a person who did pay attention, who did stop to think. Because he was a person who pondered, he became the great Rabbi Akiva.

Sometimes in life we must slow down to think and reflect. Rav Simon Schwab (1908-1995) related how he once spent Shabbos Parshas Be'Shalach in the home of the Chofetz Chaim (1838-1933). They were discussing the Manna. The Medrash relates that the Manna would taste like whatever a person would desire. If you thought fried chicken, it would taste like fried chicken; if you thought macaroni, it would taste like macaroni, etc. So they asked the Chofetz Chaim – what if someone ate the Manna without thinking about anything – then what would it taste like? The Chofetz Chaim responded, if you did not think – then it had no taste! [oib me'tracht nisht; es haat ken ta'am nisht.]

We must "take things to heart". It is necessary to stop and think about what is going on around us – globally, in our community, in our family. When a person goes through life without thinking, then life itself has no "taste". It is just "living" life on a treadmill.

"G-d does not create anything that is unnecessary. The very fact that you exist, means the world needs you." ~ Based on the teachings of Reb Chanoch Henoch of Alexander (1798-1870)

Prayer Is THE Key To Invoking Divine Assistance

Parshas Va'eyra contains the majority of the 10 plagues brought upon the Egyptians. There is a definite pattern of how the plagues came and how they left. For instance, with the plague of Tzefardeah, Moshe threatened Pharaoh "Let my people go or else I will bring a plague." The Frogs came, Pharaoh asked that Moshe pray to Hashem to take them away. Moshe Rabbeinu prayed, and they went away. The same thing happened with the plague of Orov. They came, Pharaoh suffered, he begged Moshe and Aharon. They prayed to G-d and the wild animals left. Likewise, with Barad [Hail] and Arbeh [Locusts], the King begs that Moshe daven for him, Moshe davens, the Hail stops, and the Locusts leave.

It almost seems like a play. Why was it necessary that every single time that Pharaoh had to ask "daven," Moshe would daven, and only then, the plagues would cease?

The answer, according to **Rav Yeruchem Levovitz** (the Mir Mashgiach) is that this narration teaches us something very fundamental about life. The way to obtain things in this world is to pray for them. This is the ONLY way to achieve things in this world.

Someone who has a pressing need – say a sick family member in need of a cure – might wonder what is the most effective spiritual way to help the person in need – to pray or to learn in the person's merit. Most people might tend to feel that learning on behalf of the sick person would be more spiritually beneficial than merely praying for the person. After all, "Talmud Torah k'neged kulam" – the merit of Torah learning outweighs all other merits [Peah 1:1].

Rav Yeruchem states otherwise: "And know that even though 'Torah learning outweighs everything' nevertheless, obtaining something in this world only happens through prayer." In other words, the concept that "Talmud Torah k'neged kulam" means that in the next world, when we look to collect our reward for all our good deeds in "this world," the greatest reward we will receive is for Torah learning.

However, the way to get things in this world is with a different mechanism. The way to obtain things is to daven for them.

Rav Yeruchem sites Moshe Rabbeinu as a case in point. Moshe was the prime example of one who occupied himself in Torah study and Torah teaching. Nevertheless, when Moshe requested the nullification of the decree against the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf, his approach was not to "sit and learn" or to rely on any other merits he might have had, but to pray intensively to the Almighty for their forgiveness. The decree was not nullified through the strength of Moshe's Torah or his good deeds, but rather only through prayer as it is written, "And Moshe besought the L-rd his G-d" [Shemos 32 11]. Why didn't Moshe learn for Klal Yisrael? The answer is that G-d set up this world such that if a person wants things, the person needs to daven for them. However, the concept that "Torah study outweighs everything else" applies to reward in the World to Come.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, among his many other attributes, was a prolific writer. He spent an unbelievable amount of time writing down his thoughts and words of Torah. During every spare moment, he was either learning or writing. One of Rav Moshe's children once called and told him that one of Rav Moshe's grandchildren was very sick and was being taken to the hospital. Rav Moshe closed his Gemara, closed his notebook, went to his shtender, took out a Tehillim, and began reciting Psalms. Every 15 minutes he would ask – "Have they called that it is better? Have they called yet?" He was sure that in the merit of his Tehillim, things would be all right.

Why did Rav Moshe start saying Tehillim? Why did he not dedicate the merit of his writing a certain piece of Torah or a certain responsa to the merit of his grandchild, for a speedy recovery? The answer is that in this world, when we need something, there is only one way to obtain it – through prayer. The uniqueness of the reward of Talmud Torah only applies to the World-to-Come.

Our parsha emphasizes this idea through the recurrent theme of Pharaoh beseeching Moshe to pray and Moshe's praying to have each of the plagues removed.

Taking Concrete Action Leaves Strong Mental Impressions

Prior to beginning the narrative of the Exodus from Egypt, the Torah lists the genealogy of the Tribes of Israel, beginning with Reuven, Shimon, and Levi. When the Torah reaches Levi, it enumerates Levi's descendants through Moshe and Aharon, who will be playing the central role in the story of the Exodus. The Torah then stops its genealogical listing.

The Shalo"h Hakadosh points out there is a striking difference between the way the Torah introduces the sons of Reuven and Shimon on the one hand and the way it introduces the sons of Levi. Regarding the sons of Reuven [Shemos 6:14] the Torah writes "The sons of Reuven the first born of Israel were…" Regarding the sons of Shimon the Torah writes [Shemos 6:15] "And the sons of Shimon were…" However, regarding the sons of Levi, the Torah writes [Shemos 6:16] "And these are the names of the sons of Levi, according to their birth…"

The Shalo"h says that there was something special about the Tribe of Levi. Chazal teach that the entire tribe was never enslaved throughout the period of Egyptian bondage. Levi, knowing this prophetically, was concerned that his children might grow up having no sense of the suffering that the rest of Klal Yisrael was feeling. Levi said, "I want to do something – to make a point to my descendants – so that despite the fact that they will not be physically enslaved, they will at least be able to empathize with their brethren who are unfortunately suffering.

In order to do this, Levi gave his children names that connoted something relating to the enslavement. The first son was called

GERshon because they were kicked out of their land and were strangers (GERim) in the Land of Egypt. The second son was named KEHAs which is related to the expression KEEHu as Shineihem (literally their teeth became blackened and indented by the enslavement). The third sons was name MERARi from the word MAR which means bitter.

In fact, we see that Levi's strategy worked. In the famous incident when Moshe sighted the Burning Bush – we are taught that he inferred from this miraculous phenomenon that salvation would come to the Jewish people: If the bush can burn and yet not be consumed, this is a positive omen that the Jewish people will be able to endure the suffering they are experiencing in Egypt and yet not be destroyed.

Reb Elya Svei once made the interesting observation that this event took place 40 years after Moshe left Egypt. We see that despite the fact that Moshe was geographically removed from the enslavement (and physically removed from it even while in Egypt) and despite the fact that he was now 40 years removed from it in time, the first association he made when seeing the Burning Bush was with the plight of his brethren in Egypt. Their suffering must have been constantly on his mind. Why else would he associate the phenomenon he viewed in the desert outside Midian with Klal Yisrael?

This was Levi's plan and strategy all along. He gave names to each of his sons that symbolized the enslavement, so that the suffering of their brethren would always be part of their self-awareness, despite the fact that they themselves were not in bondage.

We can learn from this Shalo"h that when one wants to empathize with someone else's pain, it is not enough to say merely "tsk, tsk, it's a shame". It is not enough to merely say "I feel your pain." That may be good for a politician's speech, but it does not really mean anything. In order for a person to really empathize, he needs to do something tangible.

During World War II, the Rebbetzin of Rav Aharon Kotler did not put sugar into her tea. As part of G-d's Mercy, she and her husband escaped the holocaust, but she knew what was going on in Europe. She wanted to identify with the suffering of her brethren, so for the entire period of the war, she did not sweeten her tea.

One may ask: What good does that do? Certainly it did not in any way mitigate the suffering of the Jews in Europe, but at least from Rebbetzin Kotler's perspective, every time she had a cup of tea, she was forced to think about what was happening to her brethren and sisters in Europe.

Rav Moshe Eiseman once told me that his father-in-law, who was somewhat of a classical music fan, did not listen to music the entire period of World War II. This is how a person can identify with the pain of his brethren. To empathize with another, one must do something physical which becomes part of his everyday life.

Otherwise, people usually become momentarily inspired, but then life goes on. With the passage of time, we forget. The only way to capture the emotion and make it last is to put it into concrete form (a 'davar gashmi'), that will provide a constant tangible reminder.

The Unique Lesson of the Plague of Frogs

The Kli Yakar makes an interesting inference in this week's parsha. After the conclusion of the Plague of Frogs, the Torah states: "…and the frogs died – from the houses, from the courtyards, and from the fields. They heaped them up into many piles, and the land became foul. Pharaoh saw that there had been a relief, and kept hardening his heart. He did not listen to them, as Hashem had spoken." [Shemos 8:9-11]

The Kli Yakar asks: Why is it only by the plague of Frogs that we have the expression "Pharaoh saw that there had been a relief" (vayaar Pharoah ki haysa harvacha)? By definition, this was true of

all the plagues – first there was the plague (be it blood, frogs, lice, etc.) and then the plague stopped and there was relief. What is unique here about Frogs that the Torah needs to call to our attention that Pharaoh took note of the fact that it let up?

The Kil Yakar makes an interesting point. With every other plague, when it was over it was over. When it stopped hailing, it stopped hailing. When the plague of Darkness finished, it was light outside. With the Frogs, there was a unique situation. Even after the frogs finally died, the Egyptians now had billions and billions of frogs sitting, rotting, and reeking. The Torah testifies to the fact that the land stank! Thus, even when it was "over", it was not really over! However the pasuk says that Pharaoh saw that there was some "harvacha" (literally "wide open spaces", the simple interpretation however is that the word in this context means "relief").

The Kli Yakar explains that if one has a large enough territory, one can escape the smell. It is only in a confined area that a foul odor is so offensive. The wider the area, the more the smell will dissipate. Therefore, the pasuk states that when Pharaoh saw that there was "harvacha" — i.e. – wide open spaces in Egypt that he could escape to where it did not smell so bad — his heart was hardened as before.

The lesson, says the Kli Yakar, is that as soon as Pharaoh saw there was the slightest let up, he felt "now I can go back to my old ways". With the other plagues, it is simple that this is what happened. When the hail stopped, Pharaoh went back to being the wicked Pharaoh. However, over here, one would have thought that it never really stopped and the aftermath should still give him pause from his evil ways. No! As long as he found a little wiggle room – of "harvacha" in the wide open spaces of Egypt – he immediately went back to being the old Pharaoh.

What is the lesson for us? This is the way we all are. When Heaven forbid we are confronted with trials and tribulations, we daven better, we act better, and we do all the things we are

supposed to be doing. Then as soon as there is somewhat of a letup – "Okay, it's not so serious, we can go back to the way we were." Such is human nature. As soon as the pressure is off, we revert to our old patterns.

Pharaoh should remind us of this lesson: "And he saw that there was relief". Our challenge is that if we know how to daven properly "when things are bad" then how much more so we should be davening like that when things are good!

What Am "I" Doing Wrong?



During the start of the Gulf War in 1991, on one Friday night there was a scud attack on Ramat Gan, which is not all that far from Bnei Brak. A relative of **Rav Schach** came into him the next day quite smug that the scuds hit the less religious city of Ramat Gan but did not hit the "holy city" of Bnei Brak. The relative told Rav Schach, "We have witnessed fulfillment of the pasuk, "And I will separate the Land of Goshen… so that the plague of Arov will not be there so that you will know that I am Hashem in the midst of the land." [Shemos 8:18]

Rav Schach told this relative that his own reaction was just the opposite. "My reaction," he said, "was that of the prophet Yonah." When Yonah was on the boat and the boat hit a storm, each of the sailors took out their little idol and started praying to it. Yonah announced, "Because of me has this great storm come." [Yonah 1:12]

Why did Yonah think that? The boat was full of idolaters. Why did he assume the storm was a message to him?

Rav Schach asked him, "Why do you think the scuds fell Friday night?" The scuds fell around 7:00 pm Friday night. At 7:00 pm in January on Friday night people should be sitting and learning — they should be reviewing the Torah portion of the week. Instead, they are sitting around schmoozing. The fact that the scuds started falling Friday night was a Divine message that Bnei Brak is not doing what they are supposed to be doing. "Because of me has this great storm come." It is always easy to point a finger at others as the cause of our problems. "It is happening because of the irreligious. It is happening because of the secular Jews. It is because of the idolaters. It is their problem. It is their fault."

No. A Torah philosophy demands that one first judge himself before judging others. "It is OUR fault. It is MY fault."

"But What About Our Appliances and What About Our Mortgages?"

The verse says "…And you will know that I am the L-rd who brings you out from under the sufferings of Egypt" (tachas sivlos Mitzraim) [Shemos 6:7].

The Chidushei HaRim and the Kotzker Rebbe both say a very interesting thought. The words of the verse mean something else. 'Sivlos' doesn't mean suffering, rather it comes from the expression "I can be 'sovel' this", meaning I can take it. (I have the patience.)

The Chidushei HaRim says that the first step of redemption is for the people to say, "I can't take it any more." As long as one can be complacent in the Exile, redemption can never occur.

"I bring you out from the 'sivlos' Mitzraim" means that G-d implanted in the Jews the concept of "No more! We have had enough of this

rotten Galus!" Up until this point they were 'sovel' it. They bore the burden; they felt they could take it. The Geulah doesn't come to one who can take it.

Our Sages say, "no slave ever fled Egypt" The simple interpretation is that Egypt had a great security system — guards, walls, and dogs — all the things that ensure no slave could get out. Rav Gedaliah Schorr quotes a different interpretation from one of the Chassideshe Rebbeim: No slave ever left Egypt, because they had a great propaganda machine. Each slave thought — this is okay, there is nothing better on the outside world.

When people have such a slave mentality, that it is not so bad and they can take it, Geulah will never come. Geulah can only come when one gets fed up with the Galus. This has to be the first stage of the Geulah.

I saw a Chassideshe story about **Reb Nochum Chernobler**. Reb Nochum was once in an inn and he arose at midnight to say Tikun Chatzos. (These are prayers that holy Jews say at midnight, imploring G-d to bring the Messiah and end the Exile). The innkeeper, a very simple Jew, heard Reb Nochum reciting Psalms in the middle of the night and went down to him and asked him "What are you saying?"

Reb Nochum explained, "I am saying Tikun Chatzos that the Master of the World should end our bitter Galus and that we should all go to Eretz Yisroel, and it should be finally over".

The innkeeper was impressed. He went back upstairs, woke up his wife and told her, "You know, there is a Jew downstairs who is praying that the Galus should end and that we should all go to Eretz Yisrael."

His wife turned over and said, "Go to Eretz Yisrael? What is going to be with the farm? What is going to be with the cows? What is going to be with the horses?"

The innkeeper was bothered by his wife's questions. He went back to Reb Nochum and said, "But Reb Nachum — what will be with the farm and the cows and the horses?"

Reb Nachum said to him "You're worried about the cows and the house and the barn? — And when the Cossacks come and the Tartars come and they pillage and plunder — then you're happy? Is that what you want? G-d will take us to Eretz Yisrael — no more Cossacks, no more Tartars!"

Again the innkeeper was impressed. He ran back upstairs and related Reb Nachum's response to his wife.

The wife said "Go tell Reb Nachum that G-d should take all the Cossacks and all the Tartars to Eretz Yisroel and we'll stay here with the farm and the cows and the horses!"

This is what it means — "One is 'sovel' the Galus". If one doesn't leave the 'sivlos' of Egypt — if one can still tolerate it — then Redemption is still far away.

Today we may not have barns and cows and horses. But we do ask — what's going to be with our appliances, and what's going to be with our mortgages, and what's going to be with the great life that we have. If we are still attached to all this, the Geulah will not come for us. We have to reach the level of saying, "We've had it! No more bitter Galus!"

When that is how we feel, **then** the Geulah **will** come, may it be speedily in our day.

"We can learn three things from little children: they're always happy; they're always busy; and when they need something, they always cry out for help." ~ Maggid of Mezritch, Reb Dov Ber (1704-1772)

Prayer Helps

After Pharaoh begged Moshe to remove the plague of Frogs from Egypt, "Moshe cried out (*Va'Yitz'ak Moshe*) to Hashem concerning the Frogs He sent to Pharaoh" [Shemos 8:8]. The Torah does not use this expression of *Va'Yitz'ak* by the other plagues. The Torah says that Moshe prayed (*Va'Ye'etar*) when requesting the cessation of the other *makkos*, but not this expression of "crying out" (*tz'a'kah*).

The Zohar explains that *tz'a'kah* is a more dramatic or more panicked form of prayer. *Va'Yitz'ak* shows an urgency. What was Moshe Rabbeinu's urgency in stopping the plague of Frogs? Why not let Pharaoh suffer a little longer?

In our minds, Hitler *y'mach shmo* (may his name be obliterated) is the personification of evil to Klal Yisrael. That is because the Nazi's atrocities are relatively fresh in our memories. Pharaoh was as big a *Rasha* as Hitler, if not worse. He bathed in Jewish blood. He took Jewish babies and squashed them into the walls of the pyramids. It was no less horrible than the Holocaust. So – Pharaoh is feeling the pressure of the *Tzefardim* – what is the problem? Why didn't Moshe take his time with a long leisurely *Shmoneh Esrei* when he prayed for cessation of the plague?

The Rebbe, **Reb Bunim of Psische**, asks this question. He answers that Moshe Rabbeinu was trying to prove another point. The whole purpose of the plagues was to demonstrate that there is a *Ribono shel Olam* that rules the world, and that He is the Master of the universe. He controls the world.

However, Moshe wanted to demonstrate here that there is another "Power" in the world as well, and that is the Power of Prayer (*Koach haTefillah*). Moshe Rabbeinu wanted to show that despite the fact that the Almighty wanted Pharaoh to suffer, there is something that – as it were – could stop the Will of the *Ribono shel Olam*. This is as much a fundamental of our faith as the fact that there is a *Ribono shel Olam* and that He runs the world and cares about what

happens in the world. Another fundamental belief of our faith is the idea that prayer helps.

By employing the most intense form of *Tefila* – "***Va'Yitz'ak,***"Moshe wanted to show the amazing power of prayer. I can stop a steaming locomotive in its tracks. Let the plague of Frogs end immediately!



A Novel Interpretation of an Ambiguous Pasuk

By the plague of Arov (Mixed Animals), the *pasuk* says "Behold if you do not send out My people I will incite against you, your servants, your people, and your houses the mixture of wild beasts; and the houses of Egypt will be filled with the mixture of wild animals and even the ground upon which they are" [Shemos 8:17]. Egypt was invaded by an army of wild animals. But what is the *pashut pshat*(simple reading) of the above cited *pasuk*?

The Vilna Gaon offers an incredible explanation. The Bartenura on the Mishneh in Kilayim [8:5] mentions that there is a type of animal (referred to as Adnei haSadeh in the Mishna), which obviously no longer exist today, that had an umbilical cord which was attached to the ground. If someone cut the umbilical cord of this animal, the animal would die. The *pasuk* reads as follows: All the wild animals that existed in the world at that time attacked Egypt, including this unique animal. But how would this animal come – since it is attached to the ground in some far away location? The *pasuk* therefore states that this animal came – together with the land upon which it resided! This is a fantastic interpretation.

However, I would like to share an interpretation which is a little closer to the simple reading of the *pasuk*! Those who have an appreciation of Hebrew grammar should enjoy this interpretation immensely.

The *sefer HaKesav v'Ha'Kabbalah* – like the Malbim and Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch – analyzes the linguistics of a *pasuk*. He asks – what is the simple interpretation of this *pasuk*? He says that the phrase "the ground upon which they are" refers to the land upon which the houses that will be inundated with wild animals stand. - But he then adds that it could refer to something else entirely. He says the word "*v'Gam*" (which literally means 'and also') could be a form of the word *Gamam*. (There are certain words in Hebrew that have double letters in the second and third position of the *shoresh* (root) of the word. For instance, the word *Balal* (*Beis Lamed Lamed*) can also be written with the last letter dropped – as *Bal* (*Beis Lamed*). Such words are called "*kefulim*" (doubled words). There is a word in the Hebrew language called *Gamam* (*Gimel Mem Mem*), which means to cut up or to dissect. He cites places in *Mishnayos* and in the Book of Doniel where we have such a usage.

The *HaKesav v'Ha'Kabbalah* explains the expression "*v'Gam ha'Adamah asher ale-ha*" (and also the land upon which it was), not as "and also" (*v'Gam*) but as *Gamam* – meaning these wild animals would rip up the land of Egypt to the extent that it would no longer be possible to plant there. According to this explanation, the word *v'Gam* is not a conjunction – and also – but rather it is a verb. *V'Gam* – as if to say *v'Gamam es ha'Adamah asher ale-ha*.

So, the *HaKesav v'Ha'Kabbalah* writes that part of the plague was that the wild animals would dig up and make holes in the ground to the extent that it would no longer be fit for agriculture.

"Always remember, you don't need to be perfect to be precious; Hashem's love is not earned, it is inherent." ~ Based on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810)

Teshuva

Focusing on Hashem's great kindness is also a means to inspire us to do teshuva. Immediately after the plague of Hail, Paroah admitted his error for the first time. "Pharaoh sent, and called for Moshe and Aharon, and he said to them, **חָטָאתִי הַפָּעַם ה' הַצַּדִּיק וַאֲנִי וְעַמִּי הָרְשָׁעִים** "This time I have sinned. Hashem is the righteous One and I and my people are the sinners." (Shmos 9:27)

Why did Pharoah admit his sin at this time?

Da'as Zekanim explains that Pharoah was inspired by Hashem's kindness. Besides warning Pharoah about the upcoming plague, Hashem added the warning that Pharoah should save his animals by bringing them inside. This extra kindness showed by Hashem inspired Pharoah to momentarily do teshuva.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt – The Power of music



We know that music plays an integral part of Judaism as we sing Zemiros on Shabbos as well as at Simchos, the **לוים** sang Shira, Dovid Hamelech is known as **נעים זמירות ישראל**; sweet composer of songs of the Jewish people (Shmuel 2, 23:1), and so on.

Let us cite the incredible words of the **מעבר יבק חלק שפתי צדק**, chapter 31. Minhag Yisrael Torah, volume 3, 619:5.): There is a **היכל**; sanctuary above in heaven which is hidden that can only be opened through **ניגון**; song…

One's soul receives pleasure from **ניגון** since it was accustomed in this from the song of Malachim… While the soul is in the body and hears a **ניגון**, it gets pleasure just like it was accustomed to when it was **ביסודה דבוקה**. From the tremendous sweetness it is fitting that the spirit of Hashem rests there…

Music can stir one up and awaken him. This is hinted to in the word **ניגון** as it is related to the word **גן**; a place of moisture as in **להשקות את הגן**; to water the garden (Breishis 2:10). Indeed, the Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzva 384) writes **אין דבר יעוררהו כמו קולות הנגון** - nothing stirs a person like sounds of melody. We see the power of music from **והיה כנגן המנגן ותהי עליו יד ה'**; when the musician played for Elisha, the hand of Hashem came upon him [he received the Divine presence] (Melachim 2, 3:15).



Music can lift one's spirits. When Shaul suffered from melancholy, Dovid would play the harp. Then **ורוח לשאול וטוב וסרה מעליו רוח הרעה לו**; Shaul would be relieved, it would be well with him and the spirit of melancholy would depart from him (Shmuel 1, 16:23). Parenthetically, the term **זמירות** means to cut off as in **וכרמך לא תזמר**; you shall not prune your vineyard (Vayikra 25:4). That is to say, the holy songs we sing have the ability to cut off the shells of impurity. It has been advised that when one is in a bad mood, feeling low or having negative thoughts, he should listen to music.

This advice is alluded to in **נתן זמרות בלילה** (Iyov 35:10. Zemer on Motzoei Shabbos, **המבדיל**), as when one feels sad and depressed (**לילה**), he should lift himself up with music- **נותן זמירות** . In fact, the Shevet Halevi writes that one who listens to music to get rid of his

depression, it can be considered a Mitzva (Shevet Halevi, Orach Chaim, 6:69, s.v. **ולמעשה** See the 2:155 , **מהרש"ג**). We find an allusion to this in **רחם תזכור ברגז** (Chavakuk 3:2) as its end letters spell **זמר**. That is to say, at times we may be in a negative mood- **ברגז**. Through singing **זמר** we can get to **רחם תזכור**, being nicer and in a better mood. If we take the letters above **נחש**; snake, what do we get? The letter before **נ** is **מ**, prior to **ח** is **ז** and before **ש** is **ר** (This is called the letters above **נחש**. See also **פנינים משלחן הגר"א** , Shemos 21:24). That spells **זמר**; song! This hints to that **זמר** can be dominant over the force of the **נחש** thereby removing its influence (depression, negativity and the like).



Music has the power to bring one to happiness. What does the Pasuk say about this? **כי בשמחה תצאו**; you shall go out with joy (Yeshaya 55:12). That is to say, with happiness we can leave depression. The Mishna says **ונמשכין בשיר כל בעלי השיר יוצאין בשיר**; all animals that normally wear a collar may go out with a collar and be pulled by a collar (Shabbos 51b). Another interpretation is that one can rise above and out of himself through song and music (See the Baal Hatanya in Likutai Torah)!

In his older years, the **Modzitzer Rebbe** needed surgery. Since his state of health was fragile, the doctors were concerned about anaesthetizing him for the operation. As the situation was dire, the doctors asked the Rebbe what to do. He suggested that he could compose a new **ניגון**. When the surgeon determined that the Rebbe was fully engrossed in the new melody, he would begin the surgery.

So it was. When the Rebbe hummed the song, the surgeon performed the operation without the Rebbe feeling any pain. We must not

confuse authentic music with that which is inappropriate music that can lead one astray.



The first letters of **זמה מתורתך רחקו** (Tehillim 119:150. The simple meaning of the Pasuk is the pursuers of sinful counsel draw near, they are far from your Torah.) spell **זמר**; song. It can therefore be understood that there is a type of song that is considered; **זמה** sinful, as it is far from the ways of Torah **מתורתך רחקו**.

Another allusion to this is found in **מי בקש זאת מידכם רמס חצרי** - who sought this from your hand, to trample my courtyards (Yeshaya 1:12), where the first letters spell **זמר**.

Just Croaking



The Sifsei Chachomim asks why is it specifically at the Makka of **צפרדע** that Moshe's reaction was **ויצעק** - to scream? What was it about this Makka that caused him to scream?

The Halacha is that when we daven **צריך להשמיע לאזניו**; one must be able to hear what he is saying. Hence the Pasuk continues **על דבר הצפרדעים** meaning he had to hear himself over (**על**) the sounds of the frogs. He therefore had to scream.

It's All Good

Why was Moshe punished for saying **למה הרעתה לעם הזה** - ***why did you do bad to this nation?***

Everything Hashem does is for the good as it says **טוב ה' לכל**; *Hashem is good to all*, and **מפי עליון לא תצא הרעות**; *bad doesn't come forth from Hashem*. Likewise, it states **גמלתהו טוב ולא רע**; *Hashem bestows good, never evil*. In the words of the Gemara: **גם זו לטובה** and **כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד**; *everything Hashem does is for the best*.





R' Mordechai Shwab once visited **the Chofetz Chaim**. During the visit the Chofetz Chaim fell asleep for 45 minutes. This caused him to miss his train ride. We can only imagine how grateful he was that he missed it when he found out that that train got into an accident in which everyone on it died.

אלה-ים - represents Din, Gevura. **The Shela** points out that if we rearrange these letters, it forms **מלא י-ה** . Spelling out these letters fully (**מלא**), we get **יוד, הא** . Adding this up, we come to a sum of 26, the same as **י- ה- ו- ה** the name of Hashem that represents **רחמים**;

mercy. Another hint to this is if we spell out the letters **כ, ו** (which has a Gematria of 26, symbolizing Hashem's mercy)- **כַּף וָו** -we get a **ו** and **פ**. This equals 86- **אלה-ים** Din.

A Talmid Chacham in Kiryat Sefer had a daughter of marriageable age yet didn't get one date. Bringing her to tears, she demanded an explanation. Her father went to **R' Chaim Kanievsky** who said this is because Hashem loves her and doesn't want her to meet any guy before marriage other than her husband. Later when the first boy said yes to go out with her (before actually dating), her father said start buying the cakes because this will be the right one. That is exactly how it turned out to be.

Moshe was punished because he said **למה הרעתה - רע** and nothing Hashem does is bad. In light of this we can now understand the first Pasuk in our Parsha deeper: **וידבר אלה-ים** the attribute of Din but **ויאמר אליו אני ה'** - the trait of mercy. In other words, Din is in essence **רחמים**.

Make It Tangible



After the plague of **דם**, it states **ויפן פרעה ויבא אל ביתו ולא שת לבו** 7:23- Paroh turned away and came to his palace, he didn't take this to heart the wonder that the stick turned into a snake or to the plague of **דם**. It seems out of order as first it should say that he didn't take it to heart and then he turned away… since he didn't pay attention to the Makka and then he turned towards his house?

When we have a moment of inspiration, we must not let it fade. How do we do this? By putting that inspiration into that which is tangible. An example of this is if we hear an inspiring talk on Lashon Hara, we can make it tangible by learning Shmiras Halashon daily or designating an amount of time daily where we are careful with our speech.

The Ramban interprets **ואם תעוררו את האהבה עד שתחפץ** that when one has an awakening of Ahavas Hashem, it is not anything until he makes it concrete. One must concretize the experience otherwise that experience fades away.

This concept is alluded to in **קחו עמכם דברים ושובו אל ה'** as **דברים** can also mean things- that which is tangible. Take something real upon yourself and then you can return to Hashem. Take the moment of inspiration and make it concrete.

Is it any wonder that we have **אסרו חג** after Yom Tov? It is because **אסרו חג בעבתים עד קרנות המזבח** - *bind the Yom Tov with cords*- make it real. The purpose of **אסרו חג** to bind up the Yom Tov and take it with us.

With this we can understand why after the Yomim Noraim many revert back to the way they were although they thought they would change. The question is stronger, as the Alter of Navardok is bothered based on the Midrash **פתחו לי פתח של מחט** - open your heart to do Teshuva even just the size of the eye of a needle and then Hashem will make it a lot bigger, that we all opened our heart to Teshuva as the size of the eye of a needle?



We all have had some kind of awakening- **התעוררות** - whether on Rosh Hashana or during Neila? If so, how is it possible that a few days

later we revert back to our old selves? Does the Midrash not state that Hashem will help us?

The Alter explains there are two types of holes. One is like that of a child who pokes a hole in his sandbox. That is temporary as it quickly reverts back to the way it was. Then there is a hole that is permanent such as that of a needle. This is what the Midrash speaks of. When we have an awakening, we must make it last. Then Hashem's guarantee stands: **ואני אפתח פתח של אולם**.

We must make inspiration real. After experiencing the wonders of the stick turning into a snake as well as the Makka of **דם**, Paroh had an awakening. However, he didn't want it to make an impression on him. He therefore turned to his house immediately afterwards, diverting his mind. As a result, he didn't take it to heart- **ולא שת לבו**. Consequently, the Pasuk is in the proper order- **ויפן פרעה ויבא אל ביתו ולא שת לבו**.

We need to make sure that the Paroh found inside of us doesn't convince us to do the same.



R' Yechiel Mordechai Gordon ZT"L would say:

"A sour face is comparable to a **בור ברשות הרבים** - an (open) pit in a public domain. One's negative demeanour can be contagious, causing others to be infected with his germ of depression."

"A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on. "

400, 210, 201

If we were supposed to be in Mitzrayim for 400 years, why were we there for only 210?

One of the answers given is that the embitterment was so hard that the 210 were like 400. **The Gra** points out that the trop on **וימררו את חייהם** - ***they embittered their lives*** is a **קדמא ואזלא**. This can be understood that we went out early from Mitzrayim as this is the translation of **קדמא ואזלא** in Aramaic.

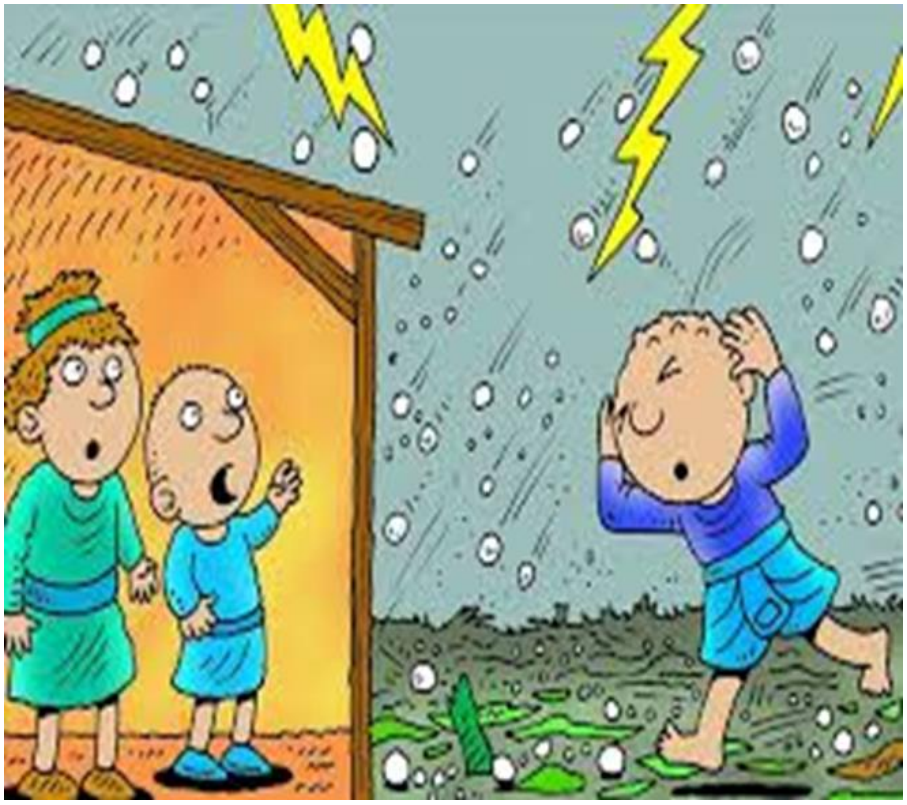


In fact, the sum of **קדמא ואזלא** is 190 as is also the word **קץ** - *end*. In the order of the Seder Matzah comes before Marror although chronologically it was first Maror and then Matzah. This is because Maror is part of the Geula since we were so embittered in Mitzrayim that the 210 years were like 400.

There is a concept called **רובו ככולו**; *the majority is equivalent to all of it*. Since 201 is a majority of 400 let it be 201 years and not 210? The Midrash says Moshe saw that the Yidden didn't have any rest so he went to Paroh and said one who has a slave- if he doesn't rest one day a week he will die, the same will happen to your servants. Paroh then told him to go and do as you say. Moshe then gave them Shabbos as a rest day. This is how we can explain **ישמח משה במתנת חלקו** - Moshe was happy as he was the one who got the day off.

Moshe was 17 when he gave the Jews Shabbos as a day off. The enslavement came to an end when Moshe was 80. This gives us a total of 63 years off for Shabbos. 63 years of Shabbos is 9 years.

Subtracting 9 from 210 our result is indeed 201. Consequently, it is **רובו ככולו**. This is alluded to in **וארא** which is the beginning of the redemption from the enslavement. **ו** equals 6, referring to the six days of the week they worked. **א** refers to Shabbos, the day they had off. **ר,א** has a Gematria of 201.



All Inclusive

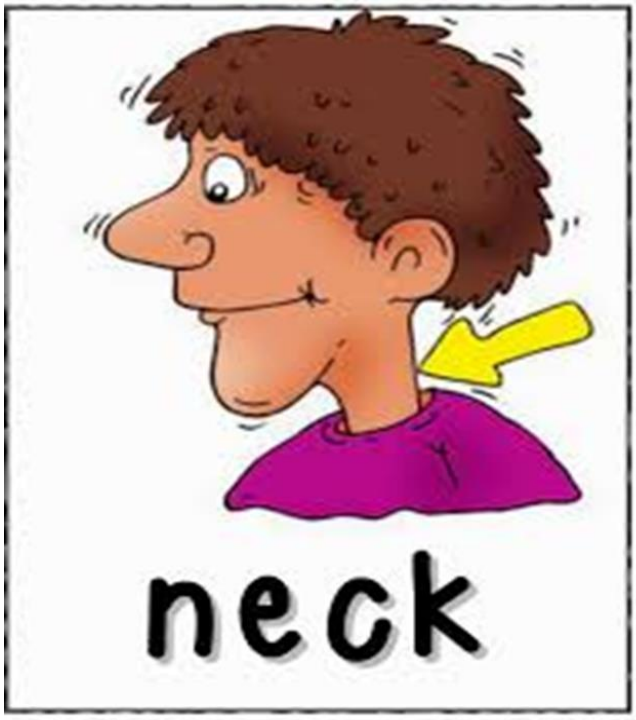
The Gra asks on the phraseology of **את כל מגפתי** - *all my plagues,* why is this only in said with regards to the Makka of **ברד** ?

Hashem punishes in three ways- through **אש** - fire, **מים** - water and **רוח** - wind. This is in accordance with **מחרב ולמחסה ולמסתור מזרם וממטר**, from heat (fire) in the daytime as a protection and refuge from the storm (wind) and rain (water).

We see this in the beginning of creation as the **דור הפלגה** was punished with wind as this is how they were scattered. **סדום** was punished with fire and the **דור המבול** with water. The Makkos were not all carried out in the same way- **דם** and **צפרדע** were with water, **שחין** was with fire and so on. However, **ברד** had all three as fire and water were mixed together whereas **קולות** refers to the wind. Hence, it says **כל מגפתי** . This is alluded to in **אמר** (9:13) which it says by the hail as it stands for **אש מים רוח**.

Moshe and Paroh

Contrasting our leader, Moshe, and the leader of the Mitzriyim, Paroh, we see the greatness of Moshe and the wickedness of Paroh. Moshe is referred to as the front of the neck contrary to Paroh who is called **הערף** - the back of the neck.



The back signifies **טומאה** - impurity. The following are some illustrations of this:

(1) Avoda Zara is called **אלהים אחרים**.

(2) We excrete from the back.

(3) One is unrecognizable from the back.

(4) Elisha Ben Avuya, the Talmid who veered off the path is called **אחר**. Is it any coincidence that **פרעה** is composed of the same letters as **הערף**. In the story of Rus, the one who forsook Hashem was **ערפה**. Rearranging the letters of **ערפה** we get **הערף** !

One difference between Moshe and Paroh was that Moshe had **הכרת הטוב** as he didn't hit the water by **דם** and **צפרדע** or hit the ground by **כנים** . This is in contrast to Paroh by whom it says **אשר לא ידע את יוסף** - he made himself as if he didn't know Yosef.

Moshe was an **עניו מאד מכל האדם** - *the humblest man*. Paroh was the opposite as it says **מי ה' אשר אשמע בקלו** - *who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice*. Paroh says **לי יארי ואני עשיתני** - *mine is my river and I have made myself powerful*. Moshe, who is from Levi, is the one who counters Paroh. What are the first 3 letters of **לי יארי ואני עשיתני** ? - **לוי**!

Now, if we add the sum of the end letters, we get a sum of 40. How long was Moshe on Har Sinai for to get the Torah? 40 days! Throughout history we have seen that our leaders were the ones who tried to stay out of the limelight, who feel they aren't worthy and the like. This is contrary to other leaders who are filled with haughtiness and the like.



Spiritual Satiation

There are those that are on a level where they can actually get quenched and satiated from spirituality. Without it they can be in pain. **R' Moshe Leib Sassover** was once fasting when he passed a meat store that had an incredible smell. This created a tremendous craving in him. Thinking to himself what he should do now, he decided to satiate this desire with saying the Tefila of **נשמת**.

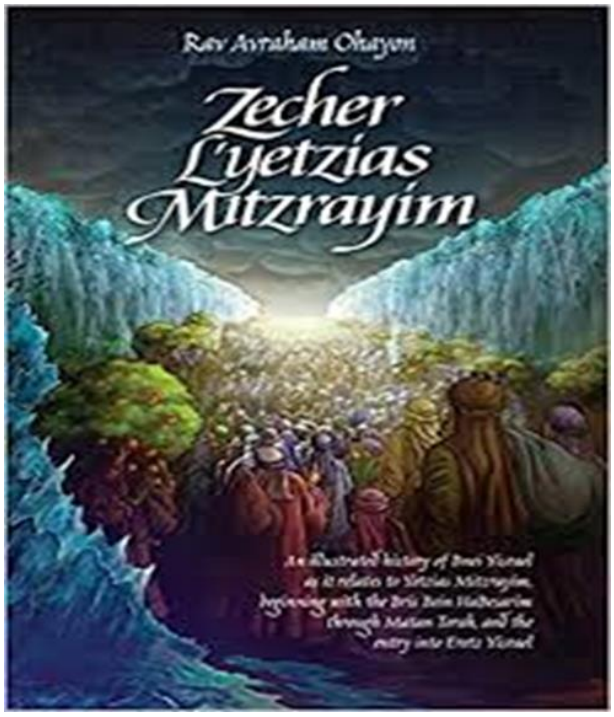
R' Alexander Ziskind (lived in the 1700's), author of **יסוד ושורש העבודה**, would daven a long Shemona Esrei causing him to miss Kedusha, and **אמן יהא שמה רבא** by Maariv and the like. This caused him tremendous pain. When he was able to answer Kedusha or **אמן יהא שמה רבא** with the Tzibur. he immediately thanked Hashem that he merited to do so.

On Purim 5702, (March 3, 1942) during the holocaust, the Jews were given a few moments to eat toward nightfall and wanted to fulfil the Mitzva of eating the Purim meal. However, the only food was black horse-bone soup, without any bread. **R' Ephraim Oshry** ruled that they can fulfil the Mitzvah of the Purim Seuda with this soup since

even according to those who say one should have bread at the Purim Seuda- that is only where bread is available. When the Jews present there heard this, their eyes lit up at this opportunity.

In regard to the enslavement in Mitzrayim it says **ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה ויזעקו** - *they groaned because of the work and they cried out*. **R' Shmelki of Nikolsburg** interprets this that they groaned and cried out because of their inability to serve Hashem! That is, despite the crushing labour they went through!

From Mitzrayim to Mitzvos



The Pasuk states **מתחת סבלת מצרים...** , I will take you out from under the burdens of Mitzrayim. Taking this literally, let us go under (**מתחת**) the letters of **סבלת** . The letter under… **ס** is **ע** (70), **ב** is **ג** (3) , **ל**is **מ** (40). Below **ת** (400), would be the number 500 since it is the last letter. Adding these together—70, 3, 40, 500—we get a total of 613! This alludes to that we were taken out of Mitzrayim in order to receive the 613 Mitzvos of the Torah.

It is because we left Mitzrayim that we have the Torah and the Mitzvos. This is why we say **זכר ליציאת מצרים** concerning many Mitzvos since if we didn't leave Mitzrayim, we wouldn't have the Mitzvos. It comes as no surprise that **ועשיתם את כל מצותי** , perform all my Mitzvos, is juxtaposed to Yetzias Mitzrayim—

אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים... , Hashem removed us from Mitzrayim to be our G-d.

What is the Yom Tov of Yetzias Mitzrayim called? **חג המצות** , the festival of Matzos. This can also be read as, *the festival of Mitzvos.*

Let us see what we discover when we spell out the word **פסח** fully— **פה, סמך, חת** - 85, 120, 408. If we add this up, we get 613!

A Bloody plague



Among the many reasons for the first **דם - מכה**, is the following. **The Peer Ahron** says **דם** is rooted in **דמים** - money, since we became wealthy from it as the Midrash teaches that the Egyptians would purchase water from the Jews to drink. This was also measure for measure as they appointed tax collectors.



When R' Ahron Kotler (1892-1962) was hospitalized with a critical illness, he was firmly instructed by his doctors not to eat or drink anything while undergoing treatment. This made him very thirsty in addition to causing his mouth to be excessively dry. On Wednesday of that week, a physician making his rounds permitted R' Ahron to suck on a candy in order to bring some moisture to his parched mouth. Excitedly, the student assisting R' Ahron quickly readied the sweet. R' Ahron looked at it and paused for a moment. He then uttered I will set it aside for Shabbos.

The Names Appearing In Moshe

We are told that Hashem appeared to the Avos with the name **ש-די** whereas to Moshe, He appeared with this name as well as **י- ה- ו- ה** .



The Megale Amukos shows a hint to this in the name **משה** . Breaking up the letter **מ**, we see it consists of a **כ** and **ו**. This has a Gematria of 26, identical to that of **י- ה- ו- ה** . The letter **ה** is comprised of a **ד** and **י**. Combining the **ד** and **י** with the **ש**, we get the name **ש-די** - . So, both of these names of Hashem are hinted to in **משה** .

More Can Be Less

When in a difficult situation we may try to strengthen ourselves with Emuna and daven to Hashem but the circumstances get worse. How can we draw strength at such a time? How much pain one must endure is given with precision from Hashem. Hashem wants to take away our pain, as He doesn't want us to suffer. As a result, at times He can make the situation worse in order that we should just have to suffer for a shorter period of time and thereby spare ourselves pain for a longer period of time.

This is just as in Mitzrayim where we were destined to be there for 400 years. Yet Hashem made the Egyptians intensify the workload

in order to shorten the time span. Consequently, we were redeemed after 210 years.



The Pasuk states **המכסה שמים בעבים המכין לארץ מטר** - Hashem covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth.

The Noda Biyehuda explains that this alludes to the clouds in our lives that come occasionally and make our life foggy for a period of time. During a challenging time, we need to remember that Hashem is now preparing our rains of Bracha. Every cloud contains hidden rain. The darker the cloud is, the more rain it contains.

Dr. Zev Ballen - The Racing Car Driver



Generally speaking, Formula 500 Race Car drivers travel around the racetrack anywhere up to 145 mph. Yet what happens during the unfortunate event of an oil slip? The car immediately goes into a tailspin. Now just imagine that the car is moving in the direction of a wall. As can be expected, the driver is potentially away from meeting a sorrowful end.

When moving that fast, chances are that the driver does not have the reflexes and strategies to avoid a head-on collision. Quite likely, he will not make it out alive.

Psychologists in fact have studied this phenomenon of the race car driver. Simulating the scenario of a driver moving at extremely high velocities, it was discovered that when a person faces sudden death, they tend to look straight ahead and face the direction of their course of travel.

When that is done, however, the chances of survival are slim because, in principle, where the focus goes, the energy flows. Precisely because they keep their focus in the direction of their travel and look straight ahead at what will happen in just moments, their ability to react and mitigate the adverse effects of the crash are impaired.

What psychologists thus did was simulate drivers to do something which requires a paradigm shift in perspective and goes against one's natural tendencies. Having them look away from the wall they were about to crash into, the results proved to be positive. Those who turned away were actually found to have higher survival rates than those who didn't. By not directly focusing on what was imminently about to occur, they were able to gain a moment's composure and avoid fatal injury.

The same concept applies both in the realm of *emunah* and *mitzvah* observance. As it relates to *emunah*, through realizing that we ought to look towards Hashem and away from ourselves and place our faith in Him instead of single-handedly placing our entire trust in our own successes and capabilities, we will discover the keys to life.

And with our performance of *mitzvos*, we are taught the correct approach from Dovid Hamelech, who writes, "*Sur mei'rah v'aseh tov* – Turn away from bad and do good" (*Tehillim* 34:15). With these

words, Dovid Hamelech tells us that through focusing and busying ourselves with good deeds, we will be led to live a positive life full of goodness.

The overabundance of good will protect us from harm and from "colliding into the wall" by redirecting us away from that which we ought to avoid. And that, just like the race car driver, is what will ensure us a happy and healthy life.

Stay Separated

The Maharal tells us we are compared to fire while non-Jews are compared to water as it says **מים רבים** . Does this mean that the non-Jews will extinguish us since water extinguishes fire?

We are referred to as a **עם קדוש** - holy people. Through being detached from the nations, our sanctity is preserved. In fact, the word **קדוש** means to be holy and separate. We have various reminders of this throughout our day.

1) In **עלינו** we say **שלא עשנו כגויי הארצות** - He has not made us like the nations. We say this at the end of Davening since we are now going out into the world.

2) The Kitzur Shelah tells us that at the end of Shemoneh Esrei we should say a Pasuk that connects to our name, our essence. This is in order that we not assimilate into the world in any way, as after davening we go back into the world.

3) As we exit our home the Mezuza serves as a reminder to accept **עול מלכות שמים** , not to get assimilated into secular society. The Mezuza reminds us of this since it contains **שמע** which represents **עול מלכות שמים**; accepting Hashem's yoke.

We can answer our original question answer in the following way: water extinguishes fire only when the two are mixed. However, if

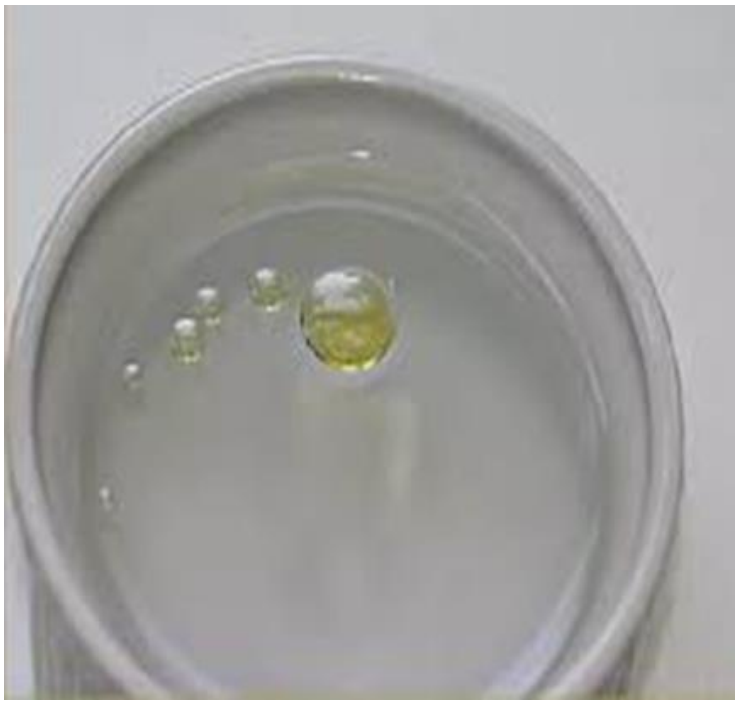
there is a separation (when the water is on top and it is heated by a fire below) then the fire causes the water to evaporate.



Likewise, if we mix with the non-Jews then they have the upper hand. Conversely, if we keep our distance, then we have the upper hand.

R' Chaim Volozhin commented that if we sanctify ourselves, Hashem will separate us to be His. When we haven't done this, the nations have separated us with persecutions and expulsions **ל"ע** . If we don't make Kiddush (sanctify ourselves) then the non-Jews will make Havdala (separate us).

With this, we can comprehend why we are likened to oil as oil doesn't



mix with other liquids, just as we must not mix with the nations.

We need to be different than the nations in all that we do as it says **ולא תלכו בחקת הגוי** - don't follow the traditions of the nations. Included in this is the way we talk, walk and act. We can learn this from those in Mitzrayim as they didn't change their name, clothing and language.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn - Packing Your Parachute



For U.S. Navy jet pilot Captain Charlie Plumb, seventy-four combat missions had been successfully executed in the war of Vietnam. Having flown jet fighters from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk, Captain Plumb had one more mission, his seventy-fifth, to complete, after which he would return home to America. But, unfortunately, during this last mission, he was shot down by a surface-to-air missile. With his life endangered, Plumb ejected from the plane and parachuted down. Not to safety, however; but into enemy hands, where he remained a prisoner of war for the next six years.

Following these long and tortuous years, he went on to become a celebrated speaker and travel the world, sharing his story of trial and triumph with audiences far and wide.

One night, Captain Plumb related, he found himself in a restaurant in Kansas City, Missouri, eating alone. Looking into the distance, he noticed another man staring back at him, something which made him somewhat uncomfortable and uneasy. A few minutes later, the man came over. "You are Captain Plumb, aren't you?" he said. "Yes, sir; how do you know that?" "You were on the Kitty Hawk and flew seventy-four missions; is that not correct?" "That is correct." "I know that on your seventy-fifth mission, your parachute opened and saved your life." Captain Plumb was taken aback by how accurate this man was with his information. But then the gentleman revealed his relationship to Captain Plumb.

"I was a sailor on the Kitty Hawk, and I packed your parachute." Captain Plumb could not believe it. "I prayed for you and your family

after you had saved my life," Captain Plumb just barely got out between breaths. Yet, shortly after leaving the restaurant, Captain Plumb felt awful. "I'm sure that I saw that sailor countless times on the Kitty Hawk," he thought to himself, "but didn't say hello because I was a fighter pilot and he was only a sailor. But he packed my parachute! I ought to have said good morning, thank him and be courteous to him."

There are many people who pack our parachutes in life – our parents, our teachers, our family – and we ought to say thank you and express our appreciation. These individuals who have helped get us to where we are today are due our acknowledgment and gratitude.

There are many people who have contributed to making us who we are today. Let us never forget to thank them, call them and give them the recognition they so truly deserve. For those who have packed our parachutes, let us humbly and respectfully say to them, "Thank you."

A Short Message From - Rabbi Nosson Sherman



At times throughout the Torah, Moshe Rabbeinu's name appears before his brother, Aharon; yet at other times, Aharon's name precedes that of Moshe. This is so, explain Chazal, to demonstrate that Moshe and Aharon were of equal stature. But it is odd. Was that really so? Moshe Rabbeinu is known to be the greatest leader to ever exist and share a relationship with Hashem that no other human being ever experienced. What is even more strange are the words of the Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva

5:2) who writes that everyone can be as righteous as Moshe Rabbeinu. How can that be?

The matter of fact, though, is that these words of Chazal are very true. What it means that Moshe and Aharon were equal and that we can be as great as Moshe Rabbeinu is in relation to living up to our potential. Just as Moshe lived up to his full talent and potential given to him by Hashem, so did Aharon, and so can all of us. In that respect, even us many, many years later can develop into towering personalities with unlimited greatness.



Moshav Olesh is a small farming community in the plains of Sharon.

Yitzchak Hadad is a religious farmer from Olesh, who stringently keeps Shemita every seven years. In 5775 (2015), Yitzchak let his fields remain fallow and although his non-religious neighbours were planting crops throughout the summer/fall planting season, he refused to do so. In particular, the cucumber crop needs to be planted in early September, so that it yields the best quality vegetable, but as it was right before Rosh Hashana, Yitzchak could not plant his crop. He waited until after the Shemita year had concluded, and he hurriedly planted what he could. He did his best to plant the crop but even he wasn't sure if he had missed the optimal planting season.

A few months later, in the winter of 5776, a terrible hailstorm struck the farming community and many of the fields in the Sharon plains were decimated. All of Yitzchak Hadad's neighbours lost their crops and the cucumbers they had so carefully planted were ruined. The day after the unusual hailstorm hit, Yitzchak took his tractor out to check on his crops, quite sure that he would find them destroyed. To his utter amazement, he found that all the fields surrounding him were destroyed while his cucumber crop, the same

crop he waited to plant after the Shemita year had concluded, was growing and in perfect condition! Even his non-religious neighbours had to admit that Hashem watched over his specific crop.



The hail that fell in Mitzrayim was selective. It fell on the wicked Egyptians and decimated their fields, animals and servants. On the other hand, those Egyptians who "feared the word of Hashem," and believed Moshe when he warned them that a new and terrible plague of hail was coming, made sure to bring their possessions inside so as not to lose them. Simple Fear of Heaven made all the difference to the Egyptians, and even in modern times, a little Yiras Shamayim goes a long way toward prosperity.



In Tehillim it states, בשפתותיך חן הוצק - *Your lips are poured with chein" (45:3)*.

The Sfas Emes asks: Speech comes from five parts of the mouth (tongue, throat, palate, teeth, and lips). Why does the passuk single out the **חן** of the lips?

The Sfas Emes answers that the lips are special because one is able to close his mouth with his lips. This is a great quality, deserving of **חן**.

R' Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter zt"l (Sefas Emes) would say: **ויצום אל בני ישראל ואל פרעה מלך מצרים להוציא את בני ישראל מארץ מצרים** - Despite the fact that the Jewish people hadn't listened to Moshe's words earlier *'because of their anguished spirit and the cruel slavery,'* Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon to keep on talking. For the word of Hashem always makes an impression and has a lasting effect: if not immediately, then eventually sometime later. Holy words are never wasted and are always ultimately heard.





Pharaoh asked Moshe to pray to G-d to remove the frogs. Moshe Rabbeinu prayed and the frogs went away. The same thing happened with the plague of wild animals. Pharaoh suffered and begged Moshe and Aharon. They davened to Hashem and the wild animals left. Likewise, with the hail and the locust. Pharaoh begs Moshe to daven for him, Moshe davens, the hail stops, and the locust leave. Why was it necessary that every single time, Pharaoh would ask him to pray, Moshe would daven, and only then the plagues would cease?

The answer says **R' Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l** (Mir Mashgiach) is that this narration teaches us something very fundamental about life: The way to obtain things in this world is to pray for them. This is

the ONLY way to achieve things in this world. Without prayer, not even Moshe could have prevailed.

A powerful story told about the holy Rebbe, **R' Yisroel Baal Shem Tov zt"l** illustrates this idea. The avodas Hashem of the Baal Shem Tov is legendary, and any mitzvah he did was on the highest possible spiritual level. On one occasion, he asked for special wine that was made only in the far-away province of Bessarabia. This wine had special deep and latent potency and he felt it was necessary for a specific and unique tikkun. The Baal Shem Tov sent his student, **R' Dovid of Michaleyov zt"l**, on the journey, and instructed him to oversee the production of the wine himself so that it would be kosher according to the highest standards. He was not to allow anyone else to handle this special wine. R' Dovid travelled to the city of Tilnesht in Bessarabia, and stayed there during the months of Elul and Tishrei. He supervised every stage of the wine-making process with great care and vigilance. He purchased the highest quality grapes, watched as they were pressed, and guarded the vats as the wine fermented.

He remained in Tilnesht throughout the holy days of Tishrei, forgoing spending them with his Rebbe and mentor, and safeguarded the fermenting wine with his life. The wine could not have been more kosher.

After Sukkos, when the wine was in barrels, he finally decided that it was the precise time to leave for home. He began the journey, but heavy rains turned the roads into rivers of mud, and every mile required immense effort. To make it even more difficult, there were always gentiles around, and he didn't want to take his eyes off the wine, even for a moment. Day and night, in pouring rain and howling winds, R' Dovid trudged beside the wagon, guarding its precious cargo. Finally, in a state of weary exhilaration,he arrived in Mezhibuz and parked the wagon in front of the Baal Shem Tov's house.

With great excitement, he ran in to tell the Rebbe that he had succeeded in bringing the wine. Just at that exact moment, a Russian Cossack rode by on horseback. He was an officer of the local land baron, and had been ordered to put an end to the illegal importation of vodka. He was a pompous, bombastic and pretentious man, with a huge self-inflated ego.

When he saw the large barrels on the back of the wagon, he began to shout indignantly. Invoking the full measure of his legal authority, he insisted on opening all the barrels and tasting their contents. Although it would have been reasonable to stop after finding that the first barrel was wine and not vodka, the Russian was not in a reasonable mood. Whether it was the obvious dismay of the Jews or the exotic taste of the wine, the Russian was enjoying himself.



Whatever the reason, the man conducted his investigation with dogged thoroughness and refused to leave until he had tasted from every single barrel. By that time, of course, the wine was entirely forbidden to Jews according to halacha. One can imagine the tremendous frustration that R' Dovid felt as he saw months of work being ruined at the last minute.

With tears of dismay and confusion, R' Dovid approached his Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov, and pleaded for an explanation. "Rebbe, what did I do to deserve this punishment? I did everything in my power to guarantee the kashrus of the wine. I had no ulterior motivation and I did it all at my master's bidding. Why should such a thing happen?"

The Baal Shem Tov saw the pain his student's heart. "No," he said softly, "there is one thing you did not do. You forgot to daven. You

did not ask the Aibishter to help you guard the wine. And because you forgot the true Source of all protection, you were punished. As the posuk says, 'If Hashem does not protect a city, the watchman's guarding is in vain.'" (Tehillim 127:1)



Concepts In Avodas Halev - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman

וְשָׁרַץ הַיְאֹר צְפַרְדְּעִים וְעָלוּ וּבָאוּ בְּבֵיתֶךָ וּבַחֲדַר מִשְׁכָּבְךָ וְעַל־מִטָּתֶךָ וּבְבֵית עֲבָדֶיךָ וּבְעַמֶּךָ וּבְתַנּוּרֶיךָ וּבְמִשְׁאֲרֹתֶיךָ ***And the Nile will swarm with frogs, and they will go up and come into your house and into your bedroom and upon your bed and into the house of your servants and into your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading troughs.***

The Gemara (**פסחים נג:**) comments on the aforementioned posuk: What did Chananya, Mishoel and Azarya see to allow themselves to be thrown alive into a fiery furnace and almost be killed? They learned a **קל וחומר** from the **צפרדע** (frogs), saying, "If the frogs in Egypt, who were not commanded to die Al Kiddush Hashem, and nonetheless, they willingly jumped into the ovens of the Egyptians, then we, who are commanded Al Kiddush Hashem, should surely be willing to sacrifice our lives for that purpose!" This reasoning is quite difficult to understand since the posuk explicitly states that the frogs were commanded by Hashem to enter the houses, beds and ovens of the Egyptians! However, Chananya, Mishoel and Azarya had no such command to jump into the furnace.

My machshava here is that indeed, Hashem commanded the frogs to spread out all over Mitzrayim and yet, no individual frog was ordered to forfeit its life by jumping into the fiery furnace. The frogs that chose to jump into the ovens and be burned acted on their own, so to speak, but had no command to do so.



It is from these frogs that Chananya, Mishoel and Azarya deduced their **קל וחומר** and decided to jump into the furnace Al Kiddush Hashem, saying, that if a frog who has no deep understanding of its purpose in life for which it was created, can defy its natural instincts to live, then shouldn't we human beings who were created with a Tzelem Elokim, be willing to give up our lives if need be?

The Torah is the blueprint of our lives and the mitzvos are the keys with which we serve Hashem. While very few people today are literally asked to give up their lives for Hashem, we all face our own personal situations that entail great mesiras nefesh to perform a mitzvah or, conversely, to avoid doing an aveira. Shouldn't these frogs be a constant inspiration for us throughout our lives?

Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon of Shpitovka would say:

וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלֹת מִצְרַיִם ***And I will take you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians*** (6:6)

'It is far easier to physically take the Jews out of galus (exile) than it is to remove the inner galus from within every Jew!'

Torah Tavlin



Once there was a king who raised ten wild, rabid dogs. He used them to torture and kill any of his ministers whom he wished to punish. One of the ministers once gave an opinion which the king didn't like, so he ordered that the minister be thrown to the dogs. The minister pleaded, "Your Majesty, please give me ten days to prepare myself before you throw me to the dogs." The king agreed to this final request.

During those ten days, the minister went to the handler who was in charge of the dogs and asked if he can watch them for the next week or so. The guard was baffled, but he agreed. The minister started feeding the dogs, cleaning for them, washing them, providing all sorts of comfort for them.

When the ten days were up, the king ordered that the minister be thrown to the dogs for his punishment. But when he was thrown in, everyone was amazed to see that the dogs were licking the minister's hands, instead of tearing him apart The king, too, was baffled at what he saw. Indignantly, he screamed out, "What is this? What happened to my dogs?" The minister replied, "Your Majesty, I served the dogs for ten days and they didn't forget my service. Yet, I served you for ten years and you forgot it all after one small mistake?"

Time after time, Hashem punished Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Plague after plague was cast upon the wicked ones and even though it was apparent that all he needed to do was release his Jewish slaves from

bondage and the pain and suffering of his people would go away, Pharaoh continued to harden his heart and refused to relent.

A wicked person can see the truth right before his very eyes but rather than give in to what he knows to be correct, he will change his mind and continue in his wicked ways. Such masochistic behaviour can only lead to one final result: total self-destruction. The fall and ruin of the great Egyptian empire was due to the denial of Pharaoh to recognize and embrace the truth of Hashem.



Chacham Rabbeinu Chayim Yosef Dovid Azulai zt"l (Chid'a) would say: **ויעשו גם הם חרטמי מצרים בלהטיהם כן** - If the Egyptian magicians were, indeed, capable of performing miracles, then why did they change staffs to snakes, turn water into blood and produce more frogs? They should have eliminated Aharon's staff, reverse the plague of blood and kill all the frogs which devastated their country. This would have clearly proven that they possess true, magical powers. The answer is: 'They are wise to perform evil but do good they do not know.' They could add one plague after another, bring even more snakes, produce more blood and generate more destructive frogs.

All this wisdom of the gentiles works for the sake of evil, to add more weapons of destruction and to instil fear. Ultimately, however, 'Aharon's staff devoured their staffs,' the power of sanctity wins, and the work of evil is quickly overturned."

DrushV'Chiddush וּמָלְאוּ בָּתֵּי מִצְרַיִם אֶת־הֶעָרֹב וְגַם הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־הֵם עָלֶיהָ



The plague of **ערוב** (wild beasts) was unique. The Medrash tells us that all the wild beasts came together with the natural environments from which they came and felt most comfortable, as the posuk states: *"Egypt will be filled with the mixture of creatures, as well as the land upon which they are."*



R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin zt"l writes that this idea is based on the Gemara in Sotah **מז.** which tells us that when the Prophet Elisha brought forth bears to attack those who mocked him, a miracle occurred and forests - which were not native to that particular geographical area - sprung up along with the bears, who were also not native to that place. The Gemara asks: what was the purpose of suddenly creating a forest where none existed before, and the Gemara answers that had the bears not felt secure, knowing instinctively that there was a natural forest habitat to which they could flee, they would have never attacked, for an animal can only be an animal in its natural state. Similarly, says the **Maharil Diskin**, the wild beasts that came to Mitzrayim for the purpose of sowing fear and destruction in the land and amongst the Egyptians, needed to feel secure, each in its own natural habitat, in order for them to be able to attack the

Egyptians and carry out the plague that was commanded by their Creator. If this is true of the requirements for the potential for destruction, how much more so must it be for the ability to be productive?

We can apply this most appropriately to the case of our own children. Just like the animals, a human child must feel secure in order to produce and accomplish his or her G-d-given talents. It is our responsibility as parents and teachers to create a proper environment in which a child will feel secure and not threatened in any way, so that the child can reach his or her fullest potential - whether spiritual, intellectual or emotional. *(Rabbi Yitzchok Sender shlit'a)*

From The Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר אָמַר ה' לָהֶם הוֹצִיאוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם 6:26

The Torah points out: "He is THE AHARON and HE is THE MOSHE" that Hashem told to go to Pharaoh! Well, isn't this obvious? Do you know any other Aharon and Moshe that the Torah could be speaking about?



R' Simcha Sheps zt"l has a beautiful explanation. He says that the Torah says, **ויעש כן אהרן [במדבר ח.ג]** and Rashi says that Aharon was appreciated for his enthusiasm! He lit the menorah the first time and the thousandth time with the same excitement and joy! He was praised for not changing and losing his passion and love for this mitzvah. So too with Aharon and Moshe here. Ten times they went to Pharaoh to carry out their sacred mission to free the

Jews from Egypt. Each time Pharaoh changed his mind and refused to let them go. Under normal circumstances, when you do something over and over and it doesn't work, you become disheartened. You lose your cheshek to keep trying. From here we see how one must view every mitzvah that he does. This is a shlichus from Hashem! This is MY mission!

We should imagine Hashem Himself telling us to give tzedaka or keep Shabbos or eat kosher! We must live our lives with a passion, because that is the only way to be a true servant of Hashem.



R' Avraham Chaim Feuer shlit'a says that the numerical value of the word **ישראל** is 541. The numerical value of **אש** which is fire is 301. If you take the fire out of a Jew, which means you deduct 301 from 541, you are left with 240. 240 is the gematria of **עמלק**!

In fact, this was exactly what Amalek did to us – **אשר קרך בדרך** - means that he cooled us off! He made us cold! He took out the fire that was burning inside us after we experienced the extraordinary miracles of Kriyas Yam Suf and Yetzias Mitzrayim! The root of **התלהבות** which means excitement is **להב** - a flame! If the flame of Torah is not ignited within us then we can live as frum Jews, but totally miss the point! We must always be filled with a fire of excitement and passion to do the will of Hashem.

Only With Faith Can You Experience True Freedom.

Pharaoh

The Torah tells us that Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to see the significance of the wonders that Moshe and Aharon did in the Name of Hashem. Rashi quotes the interpretation of the Medrash and the Gemara that Pharaoh and his chief sorcerers mocked Moshe and accused him of being nothing more than a simple trickster: "Are you bringing straw to sell in Efrayim, the city of straw? You are bringing sorcery to Egypt, the capital of sorcery!" In other words, Pharaoh claimed that Moshe's signs were no better than home-grown Egyptian sorcery and were unimpressive - thereby dismissing the signs with the wave of a hand. It was Pharaoh's stubborn irrationality that blinded him to the truth.

The city of Tzefas (Safed) was a centre of learning in the 16th century. Among the great men in Tzefas was **R' Yosef Caro zt"l**, author of the Shulchan Aruch, **R' Moshe Alshich zt"l**, the renowned darshan (preacher), the famous paytan **R' Shlomo Alkabetz zt"l**, and the saintly Kabbalist **R' Moshe Cordovero zt"l**. Later, in 5330 (1570), **the Ariza'l, R' Yitzchok Luria Ashkenazi zt"l**, arrived from Egypt. These great men were the outstanding Talmudic scholars of their age, as well as the leading Kabbalists, who studied the Zohar and revealed the secrets of the Torah.



A young man by the name of **R' Chayim Vital zt"l** grew up this holy atmosphere of learning and prayer, studying under the Alshich Hakadosh, and later, becoming the foremost talmid of the Ariza'l. It was he who wrote down his mentor's teachings and brought them to the world.

When he was just a boy of twelve, a palm-reader foretold that young Chayim would find himself at the crossroads of life. He was gifted with an inordinate amount of potential. However, said the soothsayer, the path forward was unclear: if Chayim chose the wrong path, he could become the most wicked man on earth, but if he chose the correct one, and continued along the path of Torah and mysticism, he would become the greatest Kabbalist of his generation.

Other diviners, who had the power of foreseeing future events, also told him that he was an unusual person and warned him to take great care of himself. Rabbeinu Chayim Vital grew to be the greatest Kabbalist of his day, after the death of the Ariza'l, and he records an unusual occurrence that happened to him.

At one point, R' Chayim became deathly ill and he prayed for his recovery. Suddenly, he was shown a vision of two pillars of fire, and as he stared at them, his body began to heal. However, the sight of the fire damaged his eyes, blinding him and singing his vision. All he saw was bright light going up and down, causing him great pain.



He was told about an Arab Sheikh nearby who had the power to heal people with herbs. However, this man was also a renowned fortune teller, who dabbled in the black arts and hidden knowledge of sorcery. R' Chayim was unsure if he should ask this man for help, but eventually, he did go to him to receive medication and treatment for his eyes. The moment he arrived; he encountered a waiting room that was overflowing with people waiting for their turn to receive salvation from the Arab.

No sooner had R' Chayim walked into the man's tent, when the Sheikh himself came rushing out. He ran over to the great Chacham and said: "Come, enter, wise man of the Jews! It is not proper for a great man like you to bother himself by coming to me. You could have sent for me and I would have come to you!" R' Chayim was surprised, as were the others present. He had never met the Sheikh; how did he know that he had come? Perhaps this man really did have an ability to see what others could not.

R' Chayim entered his room and the Sheikh said to the others waiting, "Return to your homes, for as long as the rabbi is here, I cannot help you in any way." The people grumbled and left the waiting tent. Then, R' Chayim told the Sheikh why he had come. He was experiencing pain in his eyes and he could not see at all. He asked if the Sheikh had any medicine. "I heard you have an ability to heal people. Not through sorcery," said the Chacham, "but through medicinal herbs and the like."

The Sheikh was quiet for a few moments. Then, he whispered, "Master, I know nothing!" The Chacham was surprised. "How can you say that you do not know? Did you not come out to greet me!" He said to him, "That is the point! All my power is derived from the forces of impurity. Suddenly, I was told: 'The wise man of the Jews, righteous and pure, has arrived - and it is not in our power to remain in his presence!' They left and all my power has been taken from me!"

"We should put no faith in our efforts, because our efforts are not the direct cause of our blessings, rather we should put a lot of effort into our faith- because faith and closeness to Hashem are the true source of all the blessings we recieve in life."

~ R' Matisyahu Salomon Z'tl.

Magic?

At first glance, it seems inexplicable that Hashem would command Moshe and Aharon to perform feats which the Egyptians were capable of duplicating, such as turning the Nile into blood and the swarming of the frogs. How would this demonstrate His omnipotent power?

Sefer Shemen Hamaor writes that in order that future generations would be aware of the competence of Egypt's magicians, Hashem first chose to perform wonders that they had the ability to duplicate - transform a staff into a serpent, water into blood, to fill Egypt with frogs - feats which even experts are unable to perform. Having thereby established the credentials of these magicians, He then brought the plague of lice. When the magicians were unable to duplicate it, they were then forced to concede, *'It is the finger of Hashem.'* They did not duplicate the remaining plagues either, proof that the plagues in Egypt were supernatural - the work of Hashem.



One may compare this with a scholar who announces that he has discovered a new theory. The scholar asserts that he explained the theory to a group of unknown, simple people in a small town, and that they were astounded by the profundity of the theory. Such a proclamation would be met with little fanfare, as the acceptance by ignorant people of a scholarly presentation is not evidence of its soundness. If, on the other hand, the theorist was to propound his thoughts before learned men of renown, and they accepted his thesis admitting that they were incapable of producing work of a similar calibre, this would certainly lend credence and repute to the

scholar and acclaim to his work. Hashem specifically chose Egypt as His proving ground, a country recognized as a bastion of sorcery and magic.

Butterfly



A man found a chrysalis (cocoon) of a butterfly, that he brought home. One day a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours. It struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no farther. So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily, but it had a swollen body and small, shrivelled wings. He continued to watch the butterfly. He expected that at any moment, the wings would enlarge, and the body would contract.

Neither happened. In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shrivelled wings. It was never able to fly. The man acted with well-intentioned kindness, but he didn't understand the consequences. The restrictive nature of the chrysalis and the struggle required to get through the tiny opening, were Hashem's way of forcing fluid from the body of the

butterfly into the wings, so that once it achieved its freedom from the chrysalis it would be able to fly.

The beginning of the Geulah is the knowledge that the burdens of bondage were for the purpose of preparing the people for redemption. **R' Asher Balanson shlit'a** says that struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If we were to go through life without any obstacles, it would cripple us, just like the little butterfly in the cocoon. We would not be as strong as we could have been, and we would never be able to fly. So, the next time you are faced with an obstacle, a challenge, or a problem, remember the butterfly. ***Struggle a little, keep working at it - and then fly!***



From The Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

6:13 וַיְדַבֵּר ה׳ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן וַיְצַוֵּם אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

In this posuk, Hashem commands Moshe and Aharon to lead the people gently, with patience and kindness. (Rashi)

The Shlah HaKadosh sees from this a crucial message to anyone in a leadership position. An authority figure must be careful not to scream or get angry at his constituents. There is great reward for a leader who shepherds his flock with patience and love. Moshe

Rabbeinu learned this in last week's parsha, when he was being initiated into his future role as Manhig Yisroel. My son, Yitzchok Guttman pointed out the following:



Hashem said to Moshe, "What is that in your hand?" Moshe answered, "A stick," as if to say, "I plan to rule with force, to run a tight ship! This stick will keep the people in line and they will be forced to follow my orders." To this, Hashem responded and said, "Throw down the stick" - throw away this mentality for this is not the way to teach a nation! You must guide My people with patience, love and kindness - not force and strength.

This lesson applies to every person, for we are all leaders in one way or another. Some have influence over multitudes, while others have over their friends, neighbours or their own kids. And yet, the message that Hashem gave to the very first leaders of the Jewish people apply to each and every one of us. A leader must be there for the good of his people and not for his own personal power or pleasure. Even if the nation complains, a leader knows that his people need extra amounts of tolerance and love.

A person once came to the **Chazon Ish** with an unreasonable request and prefaced his words with, "Rebbi, please, don't be angry with me!" The Chazon Ish, a true leader and teacher of Klal Yisroel replied, "In my store this product does not exist!"

"Who answers Amen with all his might, to him the gates of Paradise are open." ~~ Talmud, Shabbos

Rockefeller

A business executive was deep in debt and could see no way out. Creditors were closing in on him. Suppliers were demanding payment. He sat on a park bench, head in hands, wondering how to save his company from bankruptcy. Suddenly an old man appeared before him. "I can see that something is troubling you," he said. After listening to the executive's woes, the old man said, "Here. Take this and in one year's time, meet me here and you can pay me back."



The man wrote out a check and pushed it into his hand. The executive looked at the check in his hand for $500,000 signed by John D. Rockefeller, then one of the richest men in the world! He looked up but the old man was gone! "I can erase my money worries in an instant!" he realized. But instead, the executive decided to put the uncashed check in his safe. Just knowing it was there might give him the strength to work out a way to save his business, he thought.

With renewed optimism, he negotiated and closed several big deals. Soon he was out of debt and making money again. Exactly one year later, he returned to the park with the uncashed check. Right on time, the old man appeared. But just as the executive was about to hand back the check and share his success story, a nurse came running up and grabbed the old man. "I'm so glad I caught him!" she cried. "He's always escaping from the nursing home, telling people he's a Rockefeller." And she led the old man away by the arm.

Self-confidence is the best motivator. A person might be unable to accomplish a task unless he is given the confidence to see it through. Moshe Rabbeinu did not feel up to the task Hashem was assigning him. Time and again, he used excuses such as, "the people will not listen," or "I have sealed lips." He felt unworthy of being the redeemer the Nation needed. But Hashem wouldn't hear of it. He urged him to go forward, he included Aharon in the mission, making him the spokesman, to give Moshe the confidence to get the job done. Moral: Confidence comes from one's own commitment and dedication. You have it within, unleash your personal power!

Drush V'Chiddush



When Pharaoh demanded that Moshe Rabbeinu make the plague of hail stop, Moshe left the city in order to pray to Hashem to bring it to a halt. Rashi, quoting the Medrash, explains that he did not pray inside the city because it was full of idols. If so, why doesn't the Torah tell us that he went out of the city when he prayed for the other plagues - the frogs and the wild beasts - to stop?

The Netziv, R' Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin ZT"L, answers that obviously, during the other plagues, Moshe prayed indoors, and the idols did not pose a problem. Only during the plague of hail did he pray outdoors, so that the miracle should be clear for all to see, and those hail stones that were still in the air when the plague came to a halt, did not fall to the ground.

Several years ago, there was a shul that was situated next to a church, and members of both congregations were having difficulty finding ample parking. So they decided to make an agreement whereby synagogue members could leave their cars in the church parking lot over Shabbos, and church members could park their cars in the shul parking lot on Sunday.



The Jews consulted **R' Dovid Feinstein Zt'l** as to whether this was permitted. He said that indeed they were allowed to let the gentiles park in their parking lot since this does not constitute, "helping someone commit a sin," as they were going to church anyway. However, a Jew may not park in the church parking lot, because of a different problem.

The Gemara teaches *"If a person gets a splinter while walking past an idol, he may not bend down and remove it, for it would appear that he is bowing to the idol. If it does not appear so, it is permitted."* Concluded R' Dovid, since a Jew would have to duck down while getting into his car, he would be giving the impression that he was bowing to the large צלם (crucifix) on the front of the church building, which has the halachic status of an idol. Thus, it is forbidden.

"A scholar should always don modest garb, not too costly or ornate, so that people should not stare at him, and not too shabby, lest he be mocked." ~~ Menoras Hamaor



R' Shimshon Sherer Shlit'a related that when he was yet a young boy, he longed to cross the big avenue next to his house all by himself. His parents adamantly refused, and lovingly, yet firmly, explained to him that until he reaches a certain age, it was out of the question. Until finally, the big day arrived, and nine-year-old Shimshi could now be trusted to cross the street alone. Proudly, head held high, the young boy crossed the street and truly felt like a "big boy."



Years later, **R' Moshe Sherer ZT"L** asked his son if he still recalled that "big day." Nodding, his son smiled from the mem memory. "I want to tell you something," said R' Moshe, holding R' Shimshon's gaze in his. "On that day when you crossed the avenue, I was watching you even more than had I been holding your hand. Many times, when we walked home from shul hand in hand, my concentration was elsewhere. Either I was conversing with a colleague or a community activist - but the focus of my thoughts was not with you! "But the day you crossed that street alone, I stood by the window and never took my gaze off of you! I held my breath until you safely reached the other side of the street. Only then, did I release my constant watch on you!"

Although they may have suffered in Egypt, Hashem was always watching, listening to the Jewish people from afar. Our relationship with our Father in Heaven is such that when He is "holding our hand" he is so close to us and we feel His Presence constantly. However, when He is "far" from us, how much more of a closer watch does He have on us when we are walking the streets of Golus all alone? How much more so does our caring Father in Heaven worry and protect us from afar - albeit "unbeknownst" to us?!

R' Elimelech of Lizhensk ZT"L (Noam Elimelech) would say: כִּי יְדַבֵּר אֲלֵכֶם פַּרְעֹה לֵאמֹר תְּנוּ לָכֶם מוֹפֵת 7:9- '*When Pharaoh will speak to you and say provide for yourselves a miracle.*' Why would Pharaoh tell Moshe and Aharon to provide a miracle 'for yourselves'? Shouldn't the miracle be a wonder in the eyes of Pharaoh and the rest of the Egyptians?



However, this is the true test of a miracle. When a magician does a magic trick, he knows it is not real - it is an allusion, a trick, and so when he sees the outcome, he is not surprised. Not so with a true miracle from Heaven. In that case, everyone is amazed - even the person through whom the miracle is being done. Thus, Pharaoh was challenging Moshe and Aharon, saying if your miracles are really G-d-sent, then do them 'for yourselves' - so that not only will we be surprised but you will be in awe of them as well."

8:22 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לֹא נָכוֹן לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן



Close to sixty years ago, a petition was circulated that seeked to end the current format of the Daf HaYomi. Certain people felt that learning both sides of the daf in one day was unrealistic and too difficult for the masses to maintain. They felt the whole idea would soon fail if it wasn't adjusted.

Someone came to the Lakewood Rosh Yeshivah, **R' Aharon Kotler ZT"L** to ask if he would sign the petition that he believes there should be just one side to the Daf HaYomi, instead of a front and back page. R' Aharon said to the man, "You should know that I was in attendance by the first Agudah gathering in Vienna, when the Lubliner Rav, **R' Meir Shapiro ZT"L**, announced the idea of Daf Hayomi. At the time, I was sitting next to the holy **Chofetz Chaim ZT"L** and I will never forget how he kept whispering to himself, 'Yisroel Meir, how come you couldn't think of this?' He was so taken by the idea."

R' Aharon concluded, "After hearing those words from the Chofetz Chaim, you want me to go now and cut it down to only one side of a page? If this was correct in the eyes of the Chofetz Chaim, do you think its correct for me to change it?"

A young lady, fresh out of seminary, was traveling to Eretz Yisroel



to visit friends and relatives in Jerusalem. She needed a break after the past few hectic and unsettling weeks. After her year in Israel, she had gone "into shidduchim" with a positive outlook and a quiet confidence that Hashem would find her just the right Torah-minded boy, with marriage, a family and a fulfilling life all ahead of her in the near future. Unfortunately, it didn't seem to be working out this way. None of the proposals that her parent's were receiving came even remotely close to what she was looking for and those boys she had gone out with fell far short of her expectations.

At first, she took it all in stride, but soon her resolve began to crumble. Her parents were positively in panic mode! They needed a shidduch for their daughter and they needed it fast! Many proposals came and went but the last incident was devastating.

A yeshivah bochur from out of town was proposed to her and it all seemed so promising. He was kind, learned and serious. She heard great things about him. She actually began to get excited about it and she davened with all her might that this should be the one. However, after a few weeks, a negative response came back from the boy's side - with no clear-cut explanation. Why? What was wrong with her? She cried and hurt so bad inside. Her friends told her she needed a break, and she decided to take a short vacation to Israel.

Sitting on the plane, absorbed in her thoughts, a stewardess came over and served her a pre-ordered kosher meal. She wasn't very hungry and the meal just sat in front of her.

A few minutes later, she overheard a conversation between the same flight attendant and a yeshivah bochur who was sitting a few rows behind her. Apparently, he had ordered a kosher meal but for some unexplained - but all-too-common - reason, his name was not on the list. Sorry, the stewardess told him, we do not have any extra special meals for you, and seemingly, that was that.

Minutes later, as the stewardess made her way past the girl's seat, she motioned to her. "Hi. I have a meal here that I am not eating. Perhaps you can give it to the person who didn't get a kosher meal?" The flight attendant was happy to bring the portion over to the boy and he gratefully asked who had given away their portion. The stewardess pointed to the girl's seat. Feeling a bit uncomfortable, the boy waited a bit until all the meals were eaten and cleaned away before he got out of his seat and headed in the direction of the lavatory. Of course, he had to walk past the girl's seat and as he did so, he said to her, "Excuse me. I just wanted to thank you for giving me your kosher portion. It was really kind of you." The young lady smiled and said, "You're very welcome. It was my pleasure. I'm glad you enjoyed it." The boy nodded again pleasantly. "Enjoy your flight," he said, and then with a wave and a smile he added, "The Levinson family thanks you." He began to move away but she suddenly stopped him. "Is your name Levinson?" she asked quickly. He halted in mid-step and nodded yes. She asked him his first name and where he was from. She knew who he was. He was the last shidduch proposal that ended inexplicably in a NO.

She swallowed hard. She just had to know what happened, why this most promising proposal ended badly. "I believe I was recently 'red' to you," she began very hesitantly. The boy blushed and when she told him her name, his face flushed entirely. "Can I ask you why you said no to me?" How much more of a direct question can one possibly ask? After a few uncomfortably long moments, he answered almost in a whisper, "We were told that you went to a seminary that was

very career-oriented and that chessed was not a high priority. We were looking for someone with a bigger focus on chessed."

And then, recognizing the irony of the situation and pointing at the trays being cleaned away by the flight attendants, he mumbled in an embarrassed voice, "I guess we were wrong!" A short impromptu "first date" took place on the plane, and now, happily married eighteen years later, they're still amazed at the **אצבע אלקים** - the glorious finger of G-d!

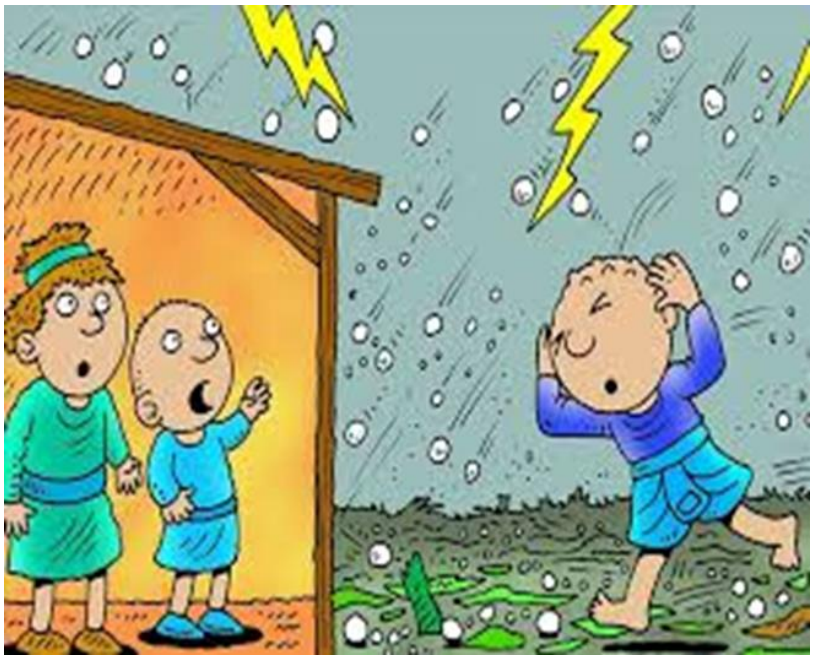
Chacham Rabbeinu Chayim ben Attar ZT"L (Ohr HaChayim Hakadosh) would say: **וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה עַל־דְּבַר הַצְפַרְדְּעִים אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם לְפַרְעֹה**:- ***'Moshe cried out to Hashem concerning the frogs which He had brought on Pharaoh.'***



Why does the posuk remind us that Moshe cried to Hashem, 'concerning the frogs' when this fact seems clear from the entire context of the posuk? It just seems repetitive.

The answer is to teach us a fundamental lesson about prayer. When a Jew prays, he should not say, 'Well, since Hashem knows my needs and the anguish in my heart, a general prayer for health and well-being will be enough.' Just as Moshe spelled out his prayer in detail, even to the point of being repetitive, so must we define and articulate our prayerful requests specifically."

R' Yaakov Loiberbaum of Lissa ZT"L (Nesivos Hamishpat, Chavos Daas) says: וַיַּחְדְּלוּ הַקֹּלֹת וְהַבָּרָד וּמָטָר לֹא־נִתַּךְ אָרְצָה 9:33



The thunder and hail ceased, and rain stopped falling to the ground.

Pharaoh asked that the thunder and hail cease. He did not desire that the rain also stop. The rain would have been beneficial for the ground, since Egypt does not receive much rainfall and is reliant upon the Nile for irrigation. But Pharaoh's wish was not honoured. Not only was there a halt to the thunder and hail, but the 'rain stopped falling to the ground.' as well."



The Dubno Maggid (Ohel Yaakov) would say: "The first and foremost obligation of a Jew is to serve Hashem in every way possible. Thus, we find that Hakadosh Boruch Hu told Moshe, 'When you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve Hashem.' After that, the Torah provides the details that are necessary to go about serving Hashem properly. It cannot be the other way around, for when a person performs the mitzvos but lacks the proper intentions, he is compared to a contractor who prepares all the necessary materials for construction - but fails to construct the house at all!"

R' Avraham Mordechai Alter ZT"L of Ger (Imrei Emes) would say:



"When Aharon threw down his stick and it swallowed up all the sticks of Pharaoh's magicians, there was no change in the stick's appearance and it did not become thicker, as would naturally occur when one object is absorbed into another. Similarly, Bnei Yisroel did not allow the putrid contamination of Egyptian society to consume and defile them, never allowing this impurity to be absorbed into them. They went out of Egypt as pure and clean as when they came in."



R' Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov (Igra D'Kallah) would say: "The first letters of the words **וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם** - '***And I will take you to Me for a nation,***' spell out the month of **אלול** - the very same month that we become close to Hashem through our prayers and repentance. This alludes to the promise that Hashem makes that if we do a real Teshuvah - He will indeed take us to Him as His Chosen Nation."



From The Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וַיֵּ֣ט אַהֲרֹ֗ן אֶת־יָדוֹ֙ עַ֣ל מֵימֵ֣י מִצְרָ֔יִם וַתַּ֥עַל הַצְפַרְדֵּ֖עַ וַתְּכַ֣ס אֶת־אֶ֥רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם

What is anger? Anger is a middah which blinds a person so severely that he cannot see the havoc he is wreaking. Chazal teach us: - When a person becomes angry, he is not in control - in fact "all types of Gehinnom" - negative and harmful forces grab hold of a person and do not let go. Case in point:



When Aharon was told to stretch his stick out over the water to bring on the Plague of Frogs, the Medrash tells us that one giant frog emerged from the swamp and headed toward Pharaoh's palace. The terrified Egyptian guards tried to halt its progress with stones and arrows, but this did not help. Finally, one guard stepped forward and dealt the huge creature a mighty blow. Instead of being mortally wounded, little frogs began jumping out of its mouth! The Egyptians continued to pound on the frog and more frogs came forth until they swamped the land. Why didn't the guard just stop hitting it? ANGER!

Now anger isn't always bad. The Torah says: **ויחר אף ה'** - even Hashem gets angry. This is a strange expression. **אף** means nose. These words can be understood as: "Hashem's Nose flared." In other words, the anger of Hashem was shown on His face.

This is a lesson for every parent, teacher - for everyone. Sometimes, rather than actually becoming mad and losing control, we must

"show" anger, as a deterrent to doing wrong. One is forbidden to hit a child out of anger. Chinuch is about controlling one's temper and instructing a child properly. We must work on ourselves to follow the example set by Hashem Himself, by only "showing an angry face" (external anger) as a necessary tool of instruction.



Not Home

On one of his fundraising trips to the United States, **R' Yankel Galinsky Zt'l** came to the home of a wealthy man who was known to give money to yeshivos and tzedakah organizations. When he rang the man's doorbell, he was told, "The Baal Habayis (owner) is not home now."



R' Yankel decided to try a few other addresses and come back later. However, when he returned a few hours later, he was again told that the man of the house was not home.

When he asked when he will be returning, the only response was a vague, "I don't know," from inside the house. R' Yankel had a sneaking suspicion and located a nearby payphone where he dialed the man's home phone number. Lo and behold, when he asked to speak to the owner, the man got on the phone and said, "Hello?"

Without any preamble, R' Yankel said, "Excuse me sir, but I must ask your forgiveness. You see, when I was told earlier that the Baal Habayis is not home, I thought it was a lie. But now I see that it was

really the truth. You are not the Baal Habayis in your home because you are not in control - your yetzer hara is clearly running the show! ***It*** is the true Baal Habayis - so therefore I wish to ask your forgiveness!"

Pharaoh was haughty and thought he was in control when he said, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to Him?" It wasn't much later that Pharaoh found out first-hand that he not only had no control over his country and his people to prevent the severe plagues that afflicted them, but he had absolutely no control over himself and the will of his own heart. At first, he hardened his heart and refused to let the people go. But soon after, he lost control of this as well - and Hashem forced him to suffer like the rest of the Egyptians.

Before Moshe even began his epic mission to warn Pharaoh of the impending plagues, Hashem tells him that Pharaoh's heart is heavy and he refuses to send out the people. Chazal teach us *"The wicked are controlled by their hearts; the righteous control their hearts."* The evil within Pharoah's heart would not allow him to do the right thing.

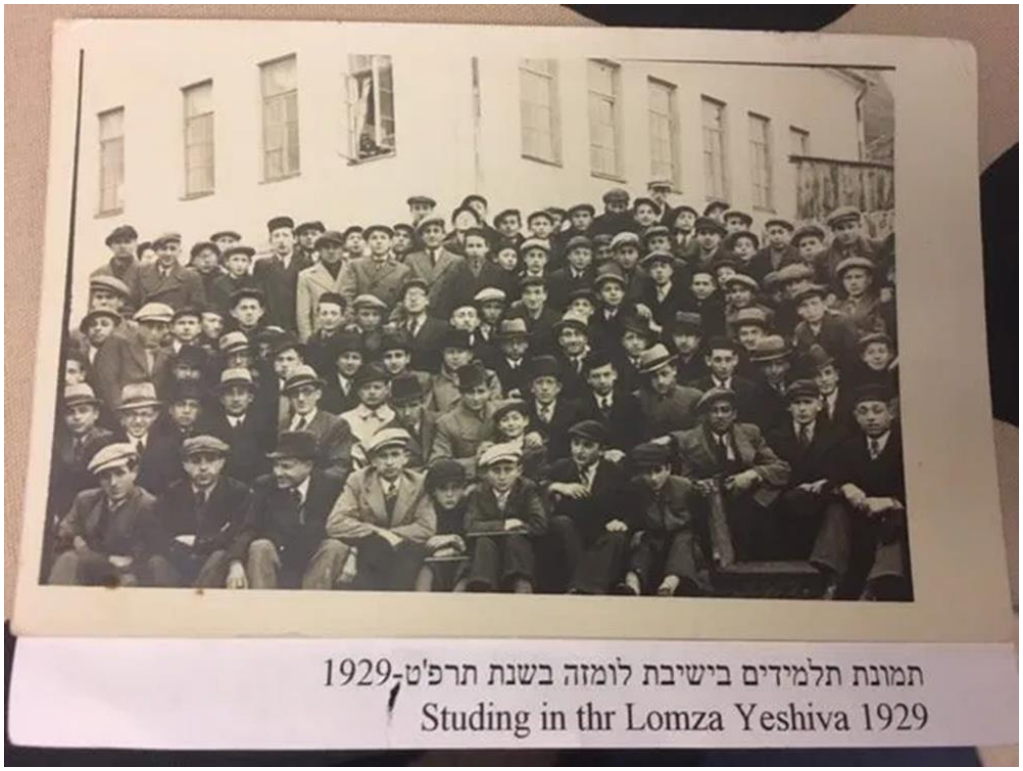


In 5690 (1929), a cataclysmic event occurred which sent shockwaves all throughout the world.

On October 29, a day known infamously as "Black Tuesday," the U.S. stock market suddenly and totally collapsed, resulting in the onset of the Great Depression. It had devastating effects in virtually every country, rich and poor.

Personal income dropped, international trade plunged, and unemployment rose - in some countries as high as 33%. Cities all around the world were hit hard, especially those dependent on heavy industry. It wasn't until the mid-1930's that most countries began to recover although in many areas, the negative effects of the Great Depression lasted until the start of World War II. Not surprisingly, the financial situation of the great European Yeshivos became very strained. American Jews no longer had money to donate as they used to, and among the first expenses they eliminated was the donations they had been sending to the European Torah centres.

In the renowned Lomza Yeshivah, under the aegis of **R' Yechiel Mordechai Gordon ZT"L**, the financial situation became so severe that one day the hanhala and members of the faculty reluctantly arrived at the decision that they could not keep the yeshivah open any longer.



It was decided that after Shachris the following day, an announcement would be made that there was no money left in the yeshivah's coffers and henceforth they would be forced to close their doors. The bochurim would be instructed to go to the dining room where they would each receive a small amount of food. Then they were to gather their belongings and leave. All four hundred bochurim would have to go home.

That was the plan. The next day, however, after Shachris, no announcement was made and nothing seemed out of the ordinary. The Rosh Yeshivah went over to the mashgiach and spoke to him for a few minutes. Then they both returned to their places. The bochurim went about their learning as usual. The other members of the faculty were puzzled and asked R' Yechiel Mordechai why he had not made the announcement. He explained that when the yeshivah's financial difficulties had begun, he had sent letters to various people asking them for donations. Even as they planned to close the yeshivah, he kept up his hopes. Perhaps they would receive enough money to keep the yeshivah open for another day or two.

Amazingly, on that very day, a letter came addressed to the Rosh Yeshivah. He opened it and stared at the contents incredulously. It was from **R' Yaakov Yosef Herman ZT"L**, of New York city, and enclosed was a cheque for one thousand dollars! A thousand dollars was a great deal of money and R' Yechiel Mordechai assured the hanhala that this money would enable the yeshivah to remain open until the financial situation improved. It was truly a godsend. The only question remaining was how R' Yaakov Yosef could afford to give the Lomza Yeshivah a thousand dollars at a time when he had just lost virtually all of his money in the Depression?

When he checked the bank, he found that all he had left was $1,250. Immediately, he sent one thousand dollars to the Lomza Yeshivah, and two hundred dollars to Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim in New York to pay the rebbeim, who had threatened to stop teaching if they did not receive their salaries.

He used the remaining fifty dollars to print up a thousand calendars which listed Shabbos candle-lighting times. He rationalized it this way: "When the yetzer hara takes everything, you have to grab the little that remains and use it for matters of kedushah !"

From The Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

9:12 וַיְחַזֵּק ה׳ אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵהֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה׳ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה



Let's face it - no matter what the politicians, pundits, NASA and the media tell us, in truth there is only one reality in this world. That is Hashem! Ain Od Milvado! Hashem is the source of everything. He made, makes and will make everything in this world - and in all the worlds! If so, what is the purpose of man's existence? What can a puny human hope to achieve if he really doesn't DO anything?

The answer is that we all have one thing that we can control and that is **בחירה** - free choice. This is not necessarily the freedom to carry out OUR choices (for how often do we plan to do one thing and wind up doing something else!!), but rather the freedom to make choices in our minds. Towards the end of Parshas Vaera, we see that Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart. This seems to be unfair; seemingly an interference with the only aspect of Pharaoh that he still retained control over. His heart. How could Hashem punish Pharaoh for something that was not in his control?

But, you see, that is exactly the point! Hashem will always make sure a person truly has free will, and in this case, it meant "hardening Pharaoh's heart!" According to the **Ramban** and others, the plagues

that decimated Egypt were so horrific and devastating in nature, that it was impossible for Pharaoh to retain his sanity under the circumstances. Hashem therefore hardened his heart so that Pharaoh could retain a clear perception of what was happening and not succumb to the suffering. In this way Pharaoh truly exercised his own free will and was punished for his very own choices!

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter



"When Paroah speaks to you, saying, 'Provide a wonder for yourselves,' you shall say to Aharon, 'Take your staff and cast it down before Paroah – it will become a snake." Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon to go to Paroah and tell him to free Klal Yisroel. Hakodosh Boruch Hu told Moshe and Aharon to take a staff and turn it into a snake. It would seem that this was to be done to show Paroah that Hashem is the One sending them. Mitzrayim was the magic center of the world. They had magic makers, necromancers, astrologers….. As we see clearly, the Mitzriyim were easily able to replicate what Aharon had done – to turn a staff into a snake. Aharon's staff (snake) later consumed all of the staffs (snakes) of the Mitzriyim, which showed Aharon's superiority. Why did Hakodosh Boruch Hu have this seemingly easy feat of turning a staff into a snake be the one proof that Hakodosh Boruch Hu sent Aharon? Why not perform a miracle that could not be replicated – perhaps like the third Makah, the Makah of Kinim?

The following Divrei Torah will expound on this topic and perhaps support the P'shat offered in the closing paragraph.

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והשלך לפני פרעה יהי לתנין – מושב זקינים מבעלי תוספות 7:8

The Posuk does not say "**ויהי**" – "And it will become", instead Hakodosh Boruch Hu told Moshe that after he throws down his staff, he should say, "Let it become a snake". This was to be done so that Paroah would realize that it was Moshe's words that caused it to turn into a snake.

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והשלך לפני פרעה יהי לתנין - בעל הטורים . Why did Hakodosh Boruch Hu choose to have the staff turn into a snake? Paroah described himself as "the great serpent that crouches within its rivers" (Yechezkel 29:3"). Moshe was hinting to Paroah that just as this was a serpent and then reverted to dry wood, so too, Paroah would ultimately revert to dust, maggots, and worms.

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וישליכו איש מטהו ויהיו לתנינים, ויבלע מטה אהרן את מטתם- ספורנו 7:12– "Each man cast down his staff and they became snakes; and the staff of Aharon swallowed their staffs." They had the appearance of serpents, but without the movement. Aharon's staff swallowed up their staffs to demonstrate that only the Ribbono Shel Olam can grant living spirit. The sorcerers were only able to create a façade, but not to imbue it with life and create movement.

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ויבלע מטה אהרן - "Hakodosh Boruch Hu had Aharon's serpent revert back into a stick before swallowing the Mitzriyim's so that it would be a clear miracle. A serpent may swallow things, but staffs do not.

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ויקרא גם פרעה לחכמים ולמכשפים– שמות רב 9:6

Pharaoh too summoned his wise men and sorcerers." At that time, Pharaoh began making fun of Moshe and Aharon, and cackling at them in a derisive manner like a hen. Pharaoh said to them, "Such are the signs of your G-d?

It is the universal custom that people transport their wares to a place where the inhabitants need them. Do they bring fish oil to Spain, or fish to Acco? Don't you know that all forms of sorcery are in my domain?" At that point Paroah had children brought from their school and had them replicate the magic that had been performed. Then Paroah even had his wife do so as well **גם . ויקרא גם פרעה** refers to Paroah's wife.– 7:11 **גם – ויעשו גם הם חרטמי מצרים** refers to children of four and five years of age. They performed the same feat as Aharon, of turning a staff into a serpent.

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מלבים - The Mitzriyim each threw their staffs, – "as soon as they did, the Mitzriyim themselves turned into serpents.



The Mitzriyim donned serpent skins, and made it appear as if the staffs turned into serpents. The Medrash says that Paroah feared that just as the staff of Aharon swallowed up the staffs of the Mitzriyim, so too, he and his kingdom could be swallowed up. The reason that Paroah was afraid was because it was the actual Mitzriyim who were swallowed alive.

The Mitzriyim and the staffs hidden inside the serpent skins were all swallowed by the staff of Aharon. Despite this, Paroah hardened his heart and did not allow Klal Yisroel to leave Mitzrayim.

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ויקרא גם פרעה לחכמים ולמכשפים – Shemos Rabbah -- "Spain and Acco are near the sea. These places are well supplied with fish and fish oil, and no merchant would bring these commodities to sell there. Paroah was telling Moshe and Aharon that they were being silly for performing their miracles in the land of Mitzrayim. Mitzrayim was the world capital for sorcery, and they would not be impressed by what they would see. It would have no meaning to them.

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7:12 ויבלע מטה אהרן – העמק דבר

The general way in which sorcery works is that after the sorcery is complete, everything reverts back to its original state. What happened with Aharon's staff was not sorcery. Even after his staff reverted back from a serpent to a staff, the serpents / staffs of the Mitzriyim remained inside Aharon's staff.

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ויבלע מטה אהרן את מטתם – Shemos Rabbah



Aharon's staff was the same thickness as before it swallowed the Mitzriyims' staffs. The Medrash is telling us that people who saw Aharon's staff after the miracle would still recognize it from before as Aharon's staff because it did not change. This miracle represented the great Midah of Aharon Hakohen. Seemingly, Aharon had performed an

astonishing miracle. Although Aharon knew it was from the Ribbono Shel Olam, perhaps he may have become arrogant. A miracle occurred and the thickness of his staff remained the same. This is to make known that Aharon did not become arrogant after this occurred. He remained the same humble Tzaddik as he was before the miracle occurred.

We can understand why Hakodosh Boruch Hu chose for Aharon to change a staff into a serpent to demonstrate to the Mitzriyim. Hakodosh Boruch Hu knew that the Mitzriyim, including the four and five years old, could replicate changing a staff into a serpent.

Whether it was the Mitzriyim themselves hidden in serpent skins, or through sleight of hand, it appeared that they did what Aharon had done. Hakodosh Boruch Hu was sending a message to Paroah that he was nothing more than a staff. Paroah could have enslaved Klal Yisroel properly but did not. He was going to be punished for his actions. Greater than Aharon's staff swallowing up that of the Mitzriyims', was that Aharon's staff remained the same. It was a powerful message to Paroah, all of Mitzrayim, as well as to Aharon and Moshe.

The Ribbono Shel Olam is Omnipotent. The thickness of the staff remaining the same was a message that it was effortless for the Ribbono Shel Olam. The staffs of the Mitzriyim were gone, with no remnant of them. There is nothing that man can do to cause Hakodosh Boruch Hu to do that which He does not want.

Additionally, we can learn from the staff remains the same thickness that we must always know that we will not become one with the other nations of the world. ***We are the chosen nation*** and must remain exclusive. We must always remember that we are all to be a "staff". May we be Zoche to be a true "staff" of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and always follow His will.

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן וַיֵּט אַהֲרֹן אֶת־יָדוֹ בְּמַטֵּהוּ וַיַּךְ אֶת־עֲפַר הָאָרֶץ וַתְּהִי הַכִּנָּם בָּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה כָּל־עֲפַר הָאָרֶץ הָיָה כִנִּים בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: 8:13

The wording of the posuk seems unusual. Hashem instructed Aharon to strike the ground and the dust of the entire Land of Egypt will turn to lice. The lice will then infest every man, beast and entity in Egypt. However, the posuk indicates that after Aharon hit the ground, **וַתְּהִי הַכִּנָּם בָּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה** - "The lice infested man and beast"; only after that, the posuk states, **כָּל־עֲפַר הָאָרֶץ הָיָה כִנִּים בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם** - "All the dust of the land became lice throughout the Land of Egypt." Why is the human infestation mentioned even before the dust on the ground turned to lice?



R' Chaim of Chernowitz ZT"L (Be'er Mayim Chaim) draws a parallel between **מכת כנים** and **מכת דם** - plague of blood. Chazal tell us that every drop of water in Egypt (belonging to non-Jews) turned into blood, even water that had already been poured into cups or jugs earlier.

The reason is because Hashem orchestrated a change in the physical properties of water, whereby the existing elements turned from water into blood. It was not only the water from the Nile, and anything drawn from it, that was subject to the plague. Every drop of water in Egypt was miraculously displaced by the properties of blood. In much the same manner, Hashem warned that "all the dust of the land will turn to lice." The dust will change its form, and anything composed of dust will immediately be infested with lice.

The human body is made up of dust particles, as it says, "For you are dust and will return to dust." Thus, as soon as Aharon hit the ground, the dust within every Egyptian person turned to lice and every man and beast became infested even before the ground, on which the dust lays, could be become fully infested.

Torah Gems

הִנְנִי מַמְטִיר כָּעֵת מָחָר בָּרָד כָּבֵד מְאֹד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הָיָה כָמֹהוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם לְמִן־הַיּוֹם הָוָסְדָה וְעַד־עָתָּה 9:18

The Medrash recounts that when Hashem forecast the coming plague of **ברד** - Hail, Moshe told Pharaoh, "Behold, (Hashem) will make it rain this time tomorrow," and he marked an indentation in the wall to indicate that when the sun's shadow would reach the mark, the plague would begin. Of course, Pharaoh and the Egyptians were looking for any way to disprove Moshe and this was a way for them to demand that if the hail would come a moment earlier or later, then they would reject Moshe's credibility. Why would Moshe do this? Why place his - and ultimately the Almighty's - words in doubt?



R' Meir Leibish Malbim ZT"L provides a remarkable answer based on a known scientific fact. The plague of **ברד**, the combination of fire and ice, came crashing to the ground through a contrivance of three elements: Hail, thunder and lightning. The hail was the harmful, physical manifestation; the thunder provided the ear-splitting sound effects, while the lightning displayed the terrifying visual aspect. Due to their

varying properties, though, they all travel to earth at different speeds.

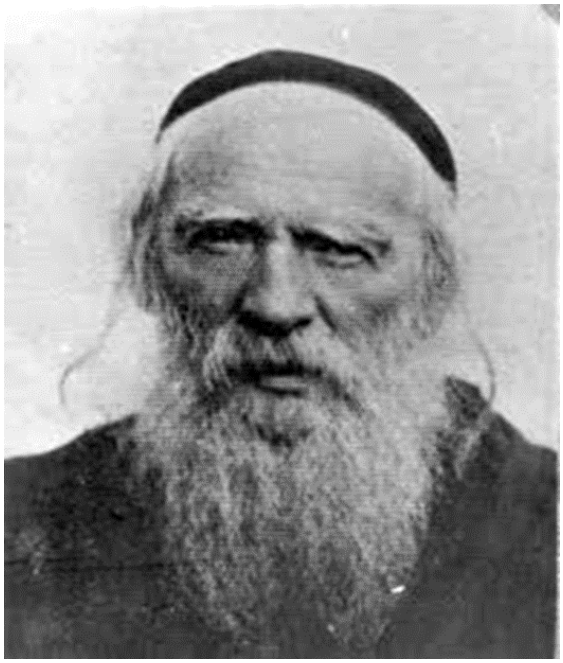


Although they all may originate simultaneously, the lightning would reach the ground before the thunder, since it travels at the speed of light, and both would arrive much more quickly than the actual hail. As a result, the sign that Moshe cut into the wall would allow the Egyptians to argue that Moshe was a false prophet since all three elements were part of the plague.

Thus, Hashem made the thunder, lightning and hail all arrive on earth at exactly the same moment that the sunlight reached the mark on the wall. The miracle of the Barad, was that Hashem deliberately orchestrated events, even changing the properties of the elements, so that the Egyptians could not possibly deny the truth of Moshe's prophecy.

R' Sholom Mordechai Hakohen Schwadron ZT"L (Maharsham of Brezhen) would say: "Normally, when one person vanquishes another and 'swallows him up,' it is common for the victor to 'swell' with pride amidst the arrogance of victory. When Aharon's staff swallowed up those of Pharaoh's magicians, however, it did not grow thicker nor show any increase in size at all. It remained 'humble.' This was a reminder that just as Aharon's staff did not thicken, so too, Aharon never did swell with pride or change his humble nature after the great miracle that was performed through him."

Living Jewish - Pre-Prepared Portion



As a young man, Reb Yaakov Yitzchak, later to become **the Chozeh of Lublin**, arrived in Mezritch on a Friday afternoon. He went into the kitchen and told those who were cooking the Shabbos food: "If you don't mind, I am accustomed to personally taking some part in the preparation of the fish that I am to eat on Shabbos."

He then took up a piece of fish, salted it, and put it down. The talmidim of the Maggid who saw this were somewhat surprised, and asked each other: "What makes this young man think that precisely this piece of fish is going to be served to him? They are all being cooked together, and it will all be served by the waiters!" And so they laughed off the newcomer's action. One of those talmidim, the Alter Rebbe, decided to quietly tie a short piece of thread to that piece of fish, in order to be able to track it.



At the Shabbos table, he watched the waiters closely, and sure enough, the marked piece was being served to some stranger who was seated next to the Chozeh. But no sooner did he take it up than he was overcome by a feverish trembling and was unable to eat. He pushed his plate aside, right in front of the Chozeh, who duly ate it.

And that is how the Alter Rebbe removed all doubts as to the stature of his new colleague.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

כְּצֵאתִי אֶת־הָעִיר אֶפְרֹשׂ אֶת־כַּפַּי אֶל־ה׳ הַקֹּלוֹת יֶחְדָּלוּן וְהַבָּרָד לֹא יִהְיֶה־עוֹד

"When I leave the city I shall spread out my hands to Hashem; the thunder will cease and the hail will no longer be" *(9:29)*



Rashi explains: When I leave the city – from the city. But he did not pray inside the city because it was full of idols. Why by all the plagues until now did Moshe pray inside the city? The 'Chanukas HaTorah' explains that the Egyptians worshiped the lamb and the lamb was always outside the city in the pasture, therefore, there was no problem praying inside the city. But now, with the plague of hail, "Whoever feared the word of Hashem brought his livestock into the houses" (9:20). If so, then the entire city was filled with idols and Moshe Rabbeinu was no longer able to pray there.



R' Michel of Zlotchov ZT"L would say: "When I am about to start davening, I am overcome by a terrible sense of embarrassment. How can I approach Hashem in prayer when my life is so riddled with sin? On second thought, however, I realize that this must be my yetzer hara talking, trying to dissuade me from davening. How do I know it's him? Because this never happens when I'm ready to eat!"

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן הַחַרְטֻמִּים בְּלָטֵיהֶם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת־הַכִּנִּים וְלֹא יָכֹלוּ וַתְּהִי הַכִּנָּם בָּאָדָם: וּבַבְּהֵמָה : וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַחַרְטֻמִּם אֶל־פַּרְעֹה אֶצְבַּע אֱלֹקִים הִוא 8:14-15

The gemara relates the following incident: After the wicked Roman general (later emperor) Titus burned the second Beis Hamikdosh, he mockingly sneered, "Where is their G-d?"



On his way back to Rome, a whirlpool threatened to overturn and sink his ship. He again mocked Hashem claiming that He only has the power to punish people through water. "If Hashem is truly strong, let Him come onto dry land and fight me there!"



A Heavenly voice rang out. "You wicked son of a wicked man! I have a tiny creature in this world called a mosquito. It will fight you on dry land." When Titus' ship landed in Rome, Hashem caused a mosquito to fly into his nose. It flew around inside of him and drove him to the brink of madness. Then, it penetrated his brain and finally killed him.

Pharaoh also mocked Hashem by asking, "Who is Hashem that I should heed His voice?" Hashem gave him the same answer he gave Titus: "I have small creatures on dry land called lice. Go and fight with them!" Hashem first struck Egypt with plagues of blood and frogs but when Pharaoh continued to mock and say that Hashem is only powerful with water, He sent the lice - tiny creatures whose origin is totally on land. It was then that the Egyptian sorcerers said, **אֶצְבַּע אֱלֹקִים הִוא**

וַיַּעַשׂ ה׳ כֵּן וַיָּבֹא עָרֹב כָּבֵד בֵּיתָה פַרְעֹה וּבֵית עֲבָדָיו וּבְכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם תִּשָּׁחֵת הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵי הֶעָרֹב 8:20



When an animal finds itself outside of its natural habitat, it tends to become scared, disoriented, and docile. One exception is the elephant, who has shown to be able to adapt to a foreign environment. In fact, the elephant is considered quite an intelligent animal. **Rashi** writes that two animals - monkeys and elephants - are considered - wise and scholarly!

The Meiri goes even further and says that it would be possible for an elephant to understand as many as 70 languages!

In Sefer Otzar Hayedios, an unusual tale is recorded. In one of the ancient marketplaces, an elephant was once walking past a cluster of shops that sold flour and other baking goods. The storeowners saw the big lumbering animal and began shouting at it, using all sorts of derogatory words and laughing derisively at it and their cleverness.



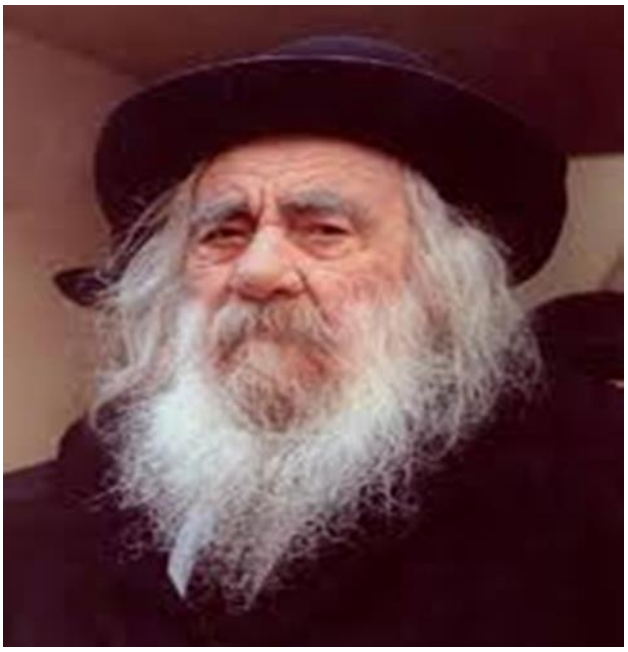
The elephant just kept on walking by and headed straight down to the river. There, it filled up its long trunk with water and turned back to the stalls. When it reached the flour shops, it lifted its trunk and sprayed water in all the shops, ruining the flour and the shopkeepers' business!

During the plague of עָרֹב the wild beasts were given unusual intelligence from their Creator, to fulfil their important mission. The Egyptians had locked themselves in their homes and hid inside. Hashem sent long-limbed beasts to climb up on the roof, break a hole in the beams and then reach down and unlock the front door so the rest of the animals could get inside! Rather than attack each other, the wild beasts wisely teamed up to perform the will of Hashem.

Parshah Thoughts - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Rav Yitzchak Isbee, zt"l, a beloved Rav in Brooklyn N.Y. and a Rebbe to countless Talmidim, passed away at a very young age from an illness. In his last message to his class, he said over this Dvar Torah from this week's Parshah.

The Parshah begins with Hashem speaking to Moshe (6:2), and the Pasuk uses both the Name Elokim, which is a reference to the Attribute of Hashem's Judgment, and also Hashem, which is an implication of Hashem's Attributes of Mercy. Why are both Names used in the same Pasuk?



The Steipler Gaon, zt"l, explains that even when we seem to see our relationship with Hashem as a relationship of Din, Judgment, Hashem in reality is acting with mercy and for our best interests. We just may not realize it at the time, but everything Hashem does is good and full of mercy.





מר יצחק מאיר בינים
IRVING M. BUNIM

On their many trips to Washington, R' Aharon Kotler ZT"L, Mike Tress, Irving Bunim and other leaders of the Vaad Hatzalah organization that worked tirelessly all throughout WWII to save as many Jewish lives as they were able, forged alliances with important government officials. Using determination, devotion and unflagging respect for those they visited, they succeeded despite their lack of political clout.

As the war raged on and the Vaad was forced to attempt ever more daring missions, no one was a more valuable contact than U.S. Treasury Secretary, Henry Morgenthau Jr.

Direct action was required in the matter of Vittel, a detention camp in France that held 240 Jews who possessed invalid Salvadoran visas and passports. George Mandel-Mantello, a Hungarian Jew, had become the Swiss-based Secretary General of El Salvador. On the suggestion of the renowned Sternbuch family from Switzerland, he issued thousands of Salvadoran papers, sending them without charge to any Jew requesting them.

It was a good idea, for between 1941 and 1944 many used these papers to flee Europe. Suddenly, in April 1944, this Salvadoran escape route was closed. An informer had told the German authorities that the papers were false, and the Nazis were sending anyone holding them to Vittel. The Vaad got word that unless El Salvador or some other Latin American government would recognize the papers, these inmates would be sent to Auschwitz.

The day after the news was confirmed, R' Aharon, **R' Avrohom Kalmanowitz ZT"L**, the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva in America, and Irving Bunim were in Morgenthau's office. As Bunim began to speak, Morgenthau politely shook his head: He had a medical appointment and then a 5:00 flight to catch. There was little he could do, he said, and he really had no time.

"Please," Bunim begged, "you must intercede with the State Department, with the President! Someone must ensure South American acceptance of the papers." Henry Morgenthau, distant and reserved as always, said he thought it was politically unwise to intervene at that time.

As Bunim countered and Morgenthau remained resistant, R' Avrohom Kalmanowitz became agitated. He began to pace back and forth, muttering frantically about the lives being lost. Finally, lips quivering and skin ashen, he toppled over on Morgenthau's carpet in a dead faint.

Shocked and white-faced, his heart racing and eyes wide with fright, Morgenthau quickly knelt by the side of the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva. "Rabbi," he said, patting R' Avrohom's hand, "Rabbi, don't die. Don't die! I'll do anything you want." - A moment later, R' Avrohom's eyes fluttered open and he tried to speak. "No, don't talk," Morgenthau said quickly. "Let me get you some water."

Morgenthau was so moved by the reaction of this Jewish leader to his people's predicament, that he cancelled his appointment,

postponed his flight, and for four uninterrupted hours worked successfully with the State Department and other agencies to ensure South American acceptance of the papers.



R' Itzeleh Blazer (Peterburger) ZT"L -

"Do not make the same mistake I did, telling myself there is still time, I'll repent and correct my character when I'm older. That's what I did! And now look at me! I'm old and I don't have the strength anymore to change my ways! Don't wait! Do it now!"

Ma'ayana Shel Torah

וַיִּקַּח עַמְרָם אֶת־יוֹכֶבֶד דֹּדָתוֹ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד לוֹ אֶת־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶת־מֹשֶׁה *And she bore him Aaron and Moshe* *(6:20)* .

The Torah specifically tells us that Moshe and Aaron were born like any other mortals, to "regular" human parents; the fact that they became prophets and leaders of the Jewish nation was due to their own actions and choices, not because they descended from on high like celestial angels. From this we learn that every individual, through his own efforts and free will, can reach even the highest spiritual levels - even as lofty as Moses and Aaron.



Be'er Mayim Chaim

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן הַחַרְטֻמִּים בְּלָטֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת־הַצְפַרְדְּעִים עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם ***And the magicians did likewise with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt*** *(Ex. 8:3)*

Unlike the frogs brought forth by Moses and Aaron that jumped into the Egyptians' homes, beds, kneading troughs and even ovens, the frogs produced by the magicians merely dispersed throughout the country. For without a specific G-dly command, there was no need for them to sacrifice their lives.

Shabbos Treasures



Why do we have salt on the table when we have a Seudah? The Rama says (Orach Chaim 167:5) that the reason we have salt on the table when we eat is because today, when we don't have a Beis HaMikdash, our tables are like a Mizbei'ach and our food is like a Korban.

Since all Korbanos were offered with salt, we eat our bread with salt instead. The Mishnah Brurah explains (167:30,31) that when the Beis HaMikdash stood, the Mizbei'ach helped us attain forgiveness for our Aveiros.

Nowadays though, our good deeds and eating help bring us this forgiveness. The reason eating brings forgiveness for Aveiros is because it gives us strength and more energy to serve Hashem better. The Mishnah Brurah also says (Mishnah Brurah 167:27) that

salt also makes the food taste better. Having good tasting food gives honour to the Brachah that is said over it.

The Rama adds (167:5) that having salt at the table provides protection from troubles and bad times!

Middos



Rabban Gamliel had a wise servant named Tevi. One day Rabban Gamliel asked him to go to the marketplace and purchase for him some 'very good food'. When Tevi got to the market he saw all types of food of varying colours and prices, and he finally decided to buy the tongue of a cow for Rabban Gamliel.

When Rabban Gamliel saw the tongue, he said, "You have chosen well. Now, please go back to the market and buy for me a 'very bad food'." Tevi left again for the marketplace and returned to Rabban Gamliel. He again presented him with the tongue of a cow. Rabban Gamliel questioned him, "Why have you brought the same type of food when I had asked you for a good food and a bad food?"

Tevi explained, "The tongue can be the best of things or the worst of things. If a person uses his tongue for learning Torah and doing Mitzvos, then the tongue is a very good thing. But if he uses his tongue for Aveiros and Lashon Hara, then the tongue is a terrible thing!" (*Vayikra Rabbah 33:1, Chiddushei HaRashash)*

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Yishuv HaDaas – Tranquility

When one acquires emunah (especially the emunah that is in the heart) he will simultaneously have tranquillity. The world is filled with hardships and worries, and it is very hard to maintain one's equanimity. But when one remembers that everything is from Hashem, and everything is for the good, one can always be happy, calm, and serene.

When one remembers that there is a tomorrow, he knows that the problems of today may turn around and not be there tomorrow. He knows that there is a future world, when we will see how everything that happened to him was for a purpose. These are among the thoughts which help us maintain an optimistic and calm attitude in life.

People asked the **Chofetz Chaim's** son-in-law, "What were you most impressed by, from your illustrious father-in-law?" He answered, "I was impressed by his yishuv hadaas (serenity). Even during the hardest times - and there were very hard times – the Chofetz Chaim never lost his peace-of-mind." In the Hoshanos we say, "Hoshanah dagan medelekes — save grain from fire… chitah mechagav — wheat from locust… nefesh mibahalah — man from confusion." The Chofetz Chaim showed how each line in this prayer describes the primary problem. Wheat suffers from locust; grain can be consumed in fire. It seems, therefore, the primary destruction of man is bahalah (confusion).

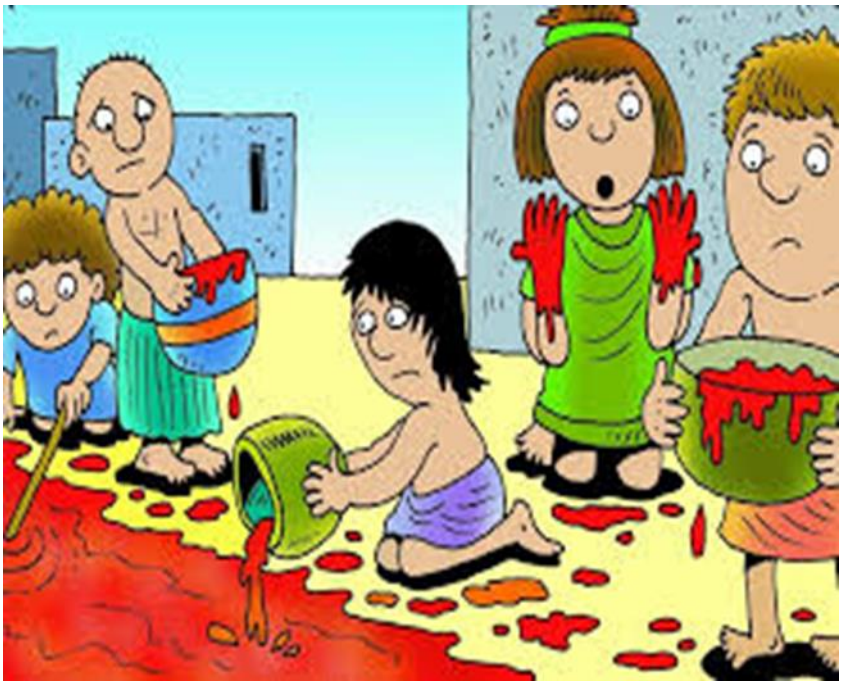
Paroh knew this, and therefore, when the Yidden began speaking about leaving, he said, "nirpim atem nirpim — you are becoming lazy… We [will no longer] give you straw, yet you must fill the same quota of bricks" (5:17-18). Paroh wanted them to work harder, and therefore he decreed that the nation would need to gather the straw for the brick production on their own.

Rebbe Mendel of Vorke zy"a asked, Paroh could have simply said, "You must produce more bricks." Why did he require them to collect straw on their own? The answer is, Paroh wanted to destroy their peace-of-mind. He knew that if he would ask them to make more bricks, they would work harder, and supply it. So Paroh decreed that they must collect straw. Collecting straw isn't an easy job. It means searching after each strand of straw… it is a meticulous, nerve-wracking occupation. Paroh wanted Klal Yisrael to be involved in these matters, because he understood that this would destroy their peace-of-mind and their bitachon in Hashem.

But with emunah, the Jewish nation has the ability to remain calm and tranquil, regardless of the challenge.

Parsha Points to Ponder - Rabbi Oizer Alport

Were any of the Egyptians spared from the plague of blood? *(Meshech Chochmah, Ayeles HaShachar, Matamei Yaakov)*



The Meshech Chochmah quotes the Medrash which teaches that one of the purposes of the plague of blood was to make the Jews wealthy. Since only they had potable water, the Egyptians were forced to purchase it from them. Since Pharaoh had already "paid" the Jews through all of the kindnesses that he did for Moshe while raising him in his palace, he was exempt from the plague.

Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman wonders whether other Egyptians were able to come to the royal palace to receive water, or whether the water was restricted to Pharaoh and his family. **The Matamei Yaakov** questions the Meshech Chochmah's explanation, pointing out that every Egyptian who ever did an act of kindness for a Jew should have been exempt from the plague based on this logic. Instead, he suggests that only money paid by the Egyptians after the plague commenced was sufficient to spare them.

Rebbe Yechezkel Halberstam, zy"a, the Shinover Rav became a rebbe while his father, the **Tzanzer Rav zy"a**, was still living. Someone said to the Tzanzer Rav, "We can see that your son is a true rebbe, since he is always studying Torah. He is simply a genius in Torah." The Tzanzer Rav replied, "When someone knows Torah, we can call him a 'gaon,' but this still doesn't make him a rebbe." The man said, "Your son also davens with great hislahavus [fervour] and he fasts a lot…" The Tzanzer Rav replied, "This still doesn't make him into a rebbe. It means that he is a tzaddik, a kadosh but it still doesn't mean that he is fitting to be a rebbe."



Then the man said, "Once, the Shinover Rav saw someone shivering in the cold, and the Shinover Rav took off his own warm coat, and gave it to him." The Tzanzer Rav said, ***"Now, that makes him a rebbe."***

During WWI, **Reb Mottel Slonimer zy"a** sold almost everything he owned to feed starving people. He only kept his tallis and tefillin and his Shabbos bekitche (Shabbos jacket).

Years later, he said that he greatly regrets that he didn't sell his bekitche as well. With the money, he could have bought bread to feed more hungry people. Many poor people would eat at his home.



One Friday night, one of his guests became angry, and threw his portion of soup into his Reb Mottel Slonimer's face, and then quickly ran out of the house. Reb Mottel Slonimer got another portion and said, "Call him back. Tell him to finish the soup." He wasn't upset that someone threw hot soup into his face. He was only sorry that the poor person wasn't able to enjoy his meal properly.

Caring about a fellow man, and doing whatever one can to help him out, is very great indeed. It was in this merit that we were redeemed from Mitzrayim, and in this merit, we will be redeemed from the present galus as well.



וּמֹשֶׁה בֶּן־שְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וְאַהֲרֹן בֶּן־שָׁלֹשׁ וּשְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה בְּדַבְּרָם אֶל־פַּרְעֹה And Moshe was 80 years old, and Aaron 83 years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh *(Ex. 7:7)*

Why does the Torah need to tell us the ages of Moshe and Aaron? To refute the common misconception that only young people can carry the banner of liberation and redemption. Older people, too, can be "revolutionaries," if G-d determines it is necessary and the proper time.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



A story is told about the **Chofetz Chaim**, that early one morning, on a cold winter day, the Chofetz Chaim was still in bed and felt tired. His Yetzer Hara said to him, "Why don't you take the day off today? You are an old man and you work so hard. Rest a little longer!" The Chofetz Chaim countered the Yetzer Hara and said, "Why don't you take the day off? You have been around much longer than me, which means that you are much older than I am, and yet, you never take a day off! You are out every day without stop, trying to get people to stumble. Therefore, I won't take the day off either!"

Rabbi Sender Haber – Frogs



The frogs seem to be an odd part of the story of the Exodus. Water turning to blood, wild animals, blackouts, death and disease seem pretty standard, but frogs are cute. One year my wife ordered one hundred frogs from oriental trading had my kids throw them at me throughout the seder. That was annoying. Still, it is hard to relate to frogs as real punishment for the Egyptians. The Medrash tells us that more than the presence of the frogs, people were annoyed by their croaking. They would grate on everyone's nerves; The Egyptians couldn't deal with this. The Medrash tell us that first there was one big frog, but when they hit it turned into two, then

four then eight then sixteen, then thirty-two and so on and so forth. They lost their self-control. They kept on hitting the frog. I think that this plague was directed specifically at Pharaoh. The frogs went to his house first before branching out to other homes. Pharaoh had a very shallow idea of God. He thought he was G-d.

The Noam Elimelech writes that he was so shallow in his thoughts that Moshe had to actually represent G-d to Pharaoh. He really couldn't conceive of a G-d that was beyond his understanding. The frogs brought out the humanity in Pharaoh. He simply couldn't deal with them. They annoyed him and he snapped. When the waters turned to blood, Pharaoh stayed strong. He made no official recorded statements. When it came to the frogs he was in frenzy. Get rid of these frogs. He didn't complain about another plague until all the way at the end of the Parsha. Pharaoh was learning a lesson about humanity and a lesson about G-d. G-d doesn't get annoyed, his doesn't lose His temper, and he doesn't act irrationally.

Hashem is called a Kadosh because he is above all that. This is a lesson for us as well. We need to do our best to act G-dly and rise above the fray. At the same time, we need to remember that only G-d is truly above it all and making the most rational decisions. The rest of us are just human.

Rabbi Ben-Zion Rand - The Acronym of Rabbi Yehuda

דצ"ך עד"ש באח"ב "And the Egyptians shall know that I am G-d, when I stretch forth My hand upon Egypt and bring out Bnei Yisrael from among them." *Shemos 7:5* **וְיָדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־אֲנִי ה' בִּנְטֹתִי אֶת־יָדִי עַל־מִצְרַיִם וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם**

We know that the Torah is not intended to be a story book that merely relates to us events that took place in history. The Torah is the word of G-d and every story, word and letter has eternal relevance. Why then does the Torah spend so much time elaborating

on the details of the plagues, when it seems that they were simply a series of isolated events which occurred at that specific time period?

We are familiar with the statement of Rabbi Yehuda, quoted in the Midrash (Sifrei: Ki Savo Piska 5), where he categorizes the plagues into three groups - **דצ'ך עד'ש באח'ב**. What is Rabbi Yehuda trying to teach us? In effect, all he did was take the first letter of each plague and form a simple acronym. Did we really need Rabbi Yehuda to do that for us?

In Sefer Nesivos Shalom, **the Slonimer Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Noach Brazovski,** explains that these are not merely acronyms, but in fact it groups together the plagues by area. The first three plagues - **דצ'ך** - all took place on or below the ground. The second three plagues - **עד'ש** - all took place above ground. The last four plagues - **באח'ב** - came from the sky.

Pharaoh said numerous times that he doesn't know who G-d is. G-d, therefore, came to prove not only His existence but to show His dominion over all areas of Creation as well. The eternal message of the plagues is now clear. As we read and meditate upon the ten plagues, we should focus our thoughts on the idea that the plagues were intended to prove G-d's existence and His authority over the entire universe.

Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin

The Torah states: "And Pharaoh sent word and summoned Moses and Aaron. He said to them, 'I have sinned this time. The Almighty is righteous. I and my people are wicked! ... I will let you leave. You will not be delayed again.' " Shortly thereafter, Pharaoh refused to let them leave. Why did Pharaoh change his mind once the pressure of the plague was removed?



Rabbi Noson Tzvi Finkel of the Mir Yeshiva explained that Pharaoh viewed suffering as a punishment. That is why he said, "The Almighty is a righteous judge and His punishment is fair because I have done evil." The reality is that there is a strong element of kindness in the suffering that the Almighty sends to us. In part, it is a divine message that we have something to improve. The goal of suffering is to motivate a person to improve his behaviour.

Pharaoh viewed suffering only as a punishment. Therefore, as soon as the punishment was over, he changed his mind and refused to let them leave. Our lesson: View suffering as a means to elevate yourself and you will find meaning in your suffering. Try to accept it with love and appreciation. Even though there is still pain involved, it is much easier to cope. Whenever you find yourself suffering, ask yourself, "How can I use this as a tool for self-improvement?"

The 80 Bochurim Who Stayed in the Yeshivah From Aleinu L'Shabeach by Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein.

During World War II, when the Nazis were conquering country after country, many people opted to escape to Russia, where they hoped the situation would be better. Many of the yeshivah bochurim in Poland escaped to Russia as well.

Approximately 400 bochurim were learning in the Novhardok Yeshivah in the town of Bialystok at the time. Eighty of these bochurim decided, inexplicably, to remain in Bialystok rather than escape to Russia.



R' Yaakov Galinsky, who was one of those 80 bochurim, explained the reason for their refusal to go to Russia. "Russia was the world centre of heresy and atheism at the time, and we decided that because one who causes another to sin is worse than one who kills him, it was better for us to stay there, in Poland, rather than relocate to Russia." Essentially, this decision meant that the bochurim preferred to give up their lives rather than expose themselves to spiritual peril. Where else but in Klal Yisrael can you find people like these? Hashem did not forsake these noble bochurim.

Throughout the war, this group of bochurim experienced miracles every step of the way. One of these miracles happened when the Russians invaded Bialystok and announced that all of the yeshiva students in the town should gather in a certain place.

Once they were gathered, the Russians loaded them onto trains and sent them far away. The Russians did not bother the other people in the town. The bochurim were sure that they were being sent to their deaths. For three days and nights they travelled, subjected to horrible conditions. But when they finally stopped at a train station,

they heard on the radio that the Nazis had conquered Bialystok and had dispatched all of the local Jews to the death camps. Had the bochurim remained in Bialystok, they would undoubtedly have been murdered at the hands of the Nazis, like the rest of the Jews in the town.



The trains that the bochurim thought were leading them to their demise actually saved them from certain death.

It often happens that a person thinks he knows how he can be saved, but Hashem shows him that only He knows the future. At a gathering of Holocaust survivors that took place in the year 5706/1946, each participant told the story of his personal rescue. The common denominator among all the stories was that each person thought that he could be saved by a certain plan, but in the end every one of them was saved in a totally different way.

The knowledge that Someone is watching over us and directing our steps, and He alone knows what is best for each of us, should bring us boundless joy and comfort. No matter what situation we find ourselves in, we know that Hashem is with us.

A Wise Man would say: ***"Get outside every single day. Miracles are waiting everywhere."***

Rabbi Yissocher Frand – Why Did The Famous Rosh Yeshiva Water His Neighbour's Flowers?

I would like to share an insight on the parsha which I have mentioned in the past, but this time I would like to buttress it with a story. By the third plague, the Torah relates, "Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the land, and the lice-infestations was on man and beast; all the dust of the land became lice, throughout the land of Egypt." [Shmos 8:13]

Chazal explain why it was appropriate that Aaron rather than Moshe bring about the plague of Lice. As Rashi quotes, "The soil did not deserve to be stricken by Moshe because the soil protected Moshe when he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand."

Out of a sense of gratitude, Moshe Rabbeinu did not want to hit the ground and make the dirt turn into lice. Similarly, Moshe did not want to hit the Nile by the plagues of Blood and Frogs because the Nile saved his life when he was hidden there in a basket as an infant to escape the decree that male children be drowned. Moshe felt indebted to these objects – the Nile River and the dirt of Egypt.

This raises an obvious issue: Does it make a difference to the water of the Nile or to the dirt of Egypt - objects which cannot feel and cannot think – whether anyone strikes them or not or whether they are stricken by Aaron instead of by Moshe? How is it possible for inanimate objects to feel a sense of Hakaras HaTov [gratitude] expressed by a grateful human being?

We learn from this that the exercise of expressing gratitude is not for the benefit of the person who gave the favour, but for the benefit of the person who received the favour. When a person is a recipient of any type of gift or favour, it creates an obligation on him to show his appreciation.

Whether the "benefactor" of the favour can appreciate the gratitude being demonstrated or not is in fact secondary. A person must go through life realizing that people and things provide favours for him on many different occasions. The person is obligated to express that Hakaras HaTov because such expression makes him into a more decent human being.



There was a Rosh Yeshiva named **Rav Yisroel Zev Gustman**. He founded a Yeshiva in Brooklyn called Netzach Yisrael, which he moved to Eretz Yisrael, when he made Aliya in the 1960s. As a young man in his twenties, Rav Gustman was appointed to the Beis Din of Rav **Chaim Ozer**. Given what Vilna was like at that time, considering all the great Rabbinic figures who lived there, the appointment of a person who was literally in his twenties as a member of the Beis Din of Rav Chaim Ozer speaks volumes about the person.



Rav Gustman took walks with Rav Chaim Ozer in the woods surrounding Vilna. Rav Chaim Ozer would from time to time stop and point out to him certain vegetation. Rav Chaim Ozer would say, "Pick up this plant. If you eat this plant, it can provide you sustenance for days." They would walk further, and Rav Chaim Ozer would say "See this leaf? I want you to pick up this leaf. If you put this leaf on your tongue, it

can quench your thirst for a long time." Rav Gustman had no idea why Rav Chaim Ozer, the Posek of the Generation, the Leader of the entire Jewish world, would be spending his time giving botany lessons.

It turns out that the knowledge Rav Gustman acquired on these walks with Rav Chaim Ozer saved his life. During the war, to escape the Nazi holocaust, Rav Gustman fought alongside partisan soldiers in the forests. He lived in the woods for several years. The plants that Rav Chaim Ozer had shown to Rav Gustman kept Rav Gustman alive – at least for part of the time that he was hiding from the Nazis. This of course, says something about Rav Chaim Ozer as well. He clearly had Ruach HaKodesh.

I always heard from our Rosh Yeshiva (**Rav Yakov Ruderman, zt"l**) that Ruach HaKodesh is the ability to say something at the right time because it will be needed at some time in the future.

Rav Chaim Ozer started telling Rav Gustman something that was so out of character and seemed so trivial at the time, yet it literally saved his life. When Rav Gustman moved to Eretz Yisrael, he apparently lived next to a person who had a nice garden. Rav Dovid Mishkovsky writes that he used to see Rav Gustman watering the plants in his neighbour's garden. I don't know many Rosh Yeshivas who water plants.



When he asked Rav Gustman why he was watering those plants, he replied "It was such plants that kept me alive during the Holocaust. Out of Hakaras HaTov, I feel an obligation to water these plants." It did not make a difference to the plants. Even if it did, they were not the same plants. Those were

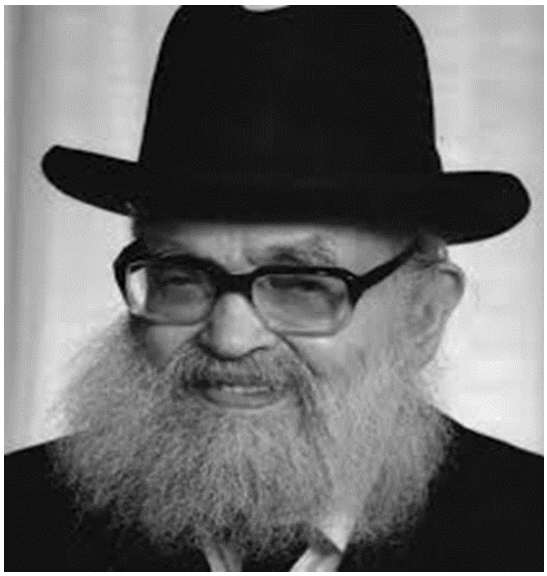
plants in Lithuania and these are plants in Yerushalayim. However, it does not make a difference.

The obligation to express gratitude is not for the benefit of the person (or object) that provides the favour. It is for the benefit of the person who receives the favour. It is to make a person aware of all the things that he has been provided with in life – all the things that people provide to him and all the things that the Ribono shel Olam provides to him.

The more a person becomes hypersensitive to the concept of showing appreciation and paying back favours and recognizing past favours, the more the person will be receptive to appreciate present and future favours that are done for us by people – parents, friends, neighbours – and certainly for favours the Almighty does for all of us.

Torah U'Tefilah - Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg

Why Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky Didn't Gebrokt on Pesach



Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky was meticulous with only speaking the truth, and he was always careful to fulfill every word he spoke. Once, when he was a Yeshivah Bachur in Lithuania, he was invited to the home of a local family for the Pesach Seder. However, Rav Yaakov was not comfortable with the level of Kashrus in this particular home, but he was afraid he might offend the family if he declined their invitation. He therefore thanked them for inviting him, but he said that he was careful not to eat Gebrokts on Pesach, and this family, along with a majority of others, did eat Gebrokts.

The family certainly understood why Rav Yaakov was not accepting their invitation, and Rav Yaakov was able to avoid eating in a house where he felt the Kashrus was questionable, but not upset anyone at the same time.

The truth was, though, that Rav Yaakov and his family did eat Gebrokts, but once he said that this was his Minhag, he completely undertook the Minhag of not eating Gebrokts on Pesach, and he kept his word for the rest of his life!

Rebbetzin Chana - By Rabbi Shmuel M. Butman



Rebbetzin Chana Schneerson was the mother of the [Lubavitcher] Rebbe [**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, zt"l**.]

There is a famous story told about Rebbetzin Chana's selfless dedication for the dissemination of Torah. Rebbetzin Chana followed her husband, **Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, zt"l**, when sent into internal exile by the Stalinist government. Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was deterred from recording the unique expositions on the mystical, kabalistic parts of the Torah because of the lack of such simple provisions as paper and ink. Instead of paper, he wrote in the margins of books. But ink? He could hardly reuse old ink.

Rebbetzin Chana used to go out into the woods and gather wild plants. From these she managed to make her own ink so that her illustrious husband could continue writing.

After Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's passing, Rebbetzin Chana was finally allowed to leave Russia. With total devotion and complete disregard

for her own personal safety, Rebbetzin Chana smuggled out her husband's manuscripts. These manuscripts were later edited and published by her son, the Rebbe.

As the Rebbe himself explained at a gathering commemorating his mother's yartzeit, a great lesson can be learned from her courage and self-sacrifice. And surely this is an important lesson that we can meditate upon.

When faced with an obstacle, one must not be concerned or overwhelmed by the fact that it seems insurmountable. One cannot become weighted down by the difficulties. Rather, we must work to overcome the obstacle without pre-conceived notions or calculations of the impossibility of the situation. We must do our part-what must be done. Ultimately, because we are doing what G-d expects of us, we will be successful.

L'Chaim Weekly - Nobody Can Do Everything



Each time I walk into the Glick's shop on Carlisle St, I wonder if Mr Mendel Glick is around. He is. Dressed in a white shirt and a white yarmulke, he is always busy - shaping another challah loaf or removing bones from herring - like a jeweler faceting a diamond.

The iconic Melbourne baker and the founder of the Glick's Cakes & Bagels chain recently celebrated his 91st birthday. He left behind six concentration camps including Auschwitz and Buchenwald. He lost both parents and 9 siblings. He barely survived. Yet, despite

these unbearable personal tragedies, Mr Glick managed to start a new life in Australia and recreate his own dynasty with his wife Sara.

A proud father of nine and a grandfather of over 120 grandchildren, he continues to bake the best bagels in town, while inspiring everyone around him.

We sit inside Carlisle St Glick's cafe on a warm autumn afternoon. Mr Glick looks out the window for a minute. He looks at passers-by and trams, Yeshivah students and young mothers with prams... He concentrates. And then he starts his story.

"The very fact that we are able to talk in this café today is a pure miracle," Mr Glick says. "I wasn't meant to survive in Buchenwald. There, we slept in barracks on the floor, 300 people or more, without any pillows or blankets... Once, I woke up from terrible pain caused by a strange insect bite. My leg got very swollen, so I decided to see a doctor, whose office was located just a few doors away from the double crematorium, which never stopped working. It didn't scare me. In fact, it didn't scare anyone at that stage.

"There were quite a few people before me in line to be checked. I begged G-d to make time go quicker. The pain was getting worse. Suddenly, when just one patient was in front of me, two German security soldiers entered the building to pick up the doctor - it was time for lunch. Before leaving his office, the doctor said that he was going to come back in half an hour, and therefore, we should wait.

"I decided to stay. The other patient asked me what my issue was. I showed him my swollen leg. Then he said that there was no point in wasting my time and I should rather go back and walk more since walking helps reduce swelling.

"I nodded without the intention to go back. Instead, I decided to walk around the building while waiting for the doctor to return. I walked and walked, when suddenly I saw a twenty-centimetre gap in the fence revealing the doctor's office backyard. A trolley full of

corpses stood next to the backdoor, metres away from the crematorium. "I quickly understood what was going on and hobbled back into the barracks. Later on, I found out that very doctor used one treatment against all illnesses - a deadly needle killing a person within seconds. Then I realised how much G-d loves me.

"When the Americans liberated Buchenwald in 1945, I was a living skeleton, just like everyone else. I still remember an American soldier picking me up and taking me outside. I couldn't walk on my own.

"While in the hospital, I wasn't allowed food to avoid sudden death from overeating. Just a tablespoon of warm water every half hour and a lump of sugar was all I could eat. I still remember its taste in my mouth. Slowly, as I began to recover, my doctor said that in order to speed up the process I had to start walking, since the human body requires motion in order to survive. I listened to him and adapted this attitude to this day."

Where did you go after the war ended?

"I started to work at the American military base not far away from Buchenwald. I cleaned their bedrooms, polished their shoes, and then I was "promoted" to work in the kitchen, which I liked most. In a way, it reminded me of our home in Poland, where my parents had their own dairy business and made cheese... (Mr. Glick sighs as he remembers) Memories, memories... Working at the military kitchen helped me to learn the basics of the catering business I applied in future. It was a useful experience."

Why did you decide to move to Australia? "After the end of the war, every survivor was obliged to publish his contact details in local newspapers, and I did so, too. Later on, these details were published worldwide. I had an aunt in Australia, who moved here before the war and she managed to find me and sent me the entrance papers. Then I bought the ticket and set out on the journey."

Did you open your bakery straight away?

"Not at all; it was a dream I cherished but I had no money to make it happen. So, I became a cleaner setting money aside to start my business. And a few years later I finally opened my first Glick's shop on Carlisle Street, where we are sitting right now. Other shops followed... My kids are managing those today. I prefer this shop."

You've been so kind to support Jewish Care's Annual Appeal by overprinting your brown paper challah bags with the Appeal message and a quote from you, "Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something." Why do you think it's important to assist those less fortunate?

"I guess, it's in the blood. Back in Poland, my mother always gave her dairy products to the poor free of charge. I was a baby but I clearly remember that it was the right thing to do. It stayed with me for the rest of my life. And today, no matter how advanced the world is, there are still many people who need assistance, be it money, a piece of bread, or a kind word. Even if it's impossible to answer every person's need, we can all still do something to improve someone's life. And this is the message I wanted to pass on, hence, it's written on Glick's bags."

Some people say that you never go on holidays (vacation). Is that true? "Yes, it is," answers Mr Glick with a smile. "Why would I? I have the job I love. And I have regular time to rest on Shabbos and Yom Tov. What can I say, I am a happy man!"

The key to attaining peace of mind, is to have emunah that everything is from Hashem and for our good – R' Elimelech Biderman.

The Burial Place of the Rambam

Rabbi Moses Maimonides, known also as the **Rambam**, was one of the greatest Jews of all times. During his life, he wrote numerous books in which he explained the laws and philosophy of the Torah. He was not only esteemed in the Jewish world, though. He was also known and well respected as a physician, philosopher and scientist. The Rambam was born in Cordova, Spain, and moved as a young man with his family to Egypt. Because he did not believe in accepting monetary remuneration for his work as a Jewish scholar, he devoted himself to medicine in order to support himself and his family.

The Rambam reached the peak of his professional reputation as a doctor when he was appointed to the staff of the court of Saladin as royal physician. His reputation spread to such an extent that King Richard the Lionhearted offered him the position of his personal physician.



When the Rambam felt his end approaching, he instructed his family to bury him in the Holy Land. On 20 Tevet, at the age of 69, the Rambam passed away. In Egypt, where he had been the chief rabbi, the Rambam was mourned by Jew and Moslem alike. In the Holy Land and the rest of the world, where the Rambam had acted as guide and mentor to world Jewry, he was memorialized with special services and fasts. The following story is told about how it was "decided" where the Rambam's final resting place should be:

People from all over gathered in Egypt to attend the Rambam's funeral. When the procession was over, a discussion erupted as to

where to bury him. The Rambam's request had only been to bury him in the Holy Land; no mention was made as to which city or site.



The Tomb of the Rambam in Tiberias

Representatives of different cities in the Holy Land came forward. From Jerusalem came the request that he be buried on the Mount of Olives. Representatives from Hebron said that the Rambam should be buried in the same city as the Patriarches and Matriarches.

A representative from Meron claimed that since the mystic Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai was buried in their city, it was a fitting place for the Rambam. Representatives from other cities in the Holy Land brought their claims forward, too. Because no solution to the problem at hand was in sight, everyone agreed to begin taking the coffin toward the borders of Israel, hoping that along the way they might come upon a solution for this problem.

The coffin was perched atop a sturdy camel and made its way toward the Holy Land. One of the most difficult and dangerous parts of desert travel was not necessarily the lack of water, nor sand storms. It was the constant fear of being overtaken by one of the many bands of highway robbers who attacked the innocent travelers, taking away all of their belongings.

As it began to get dark, the pace of the caravan quickened. Everyone hoped that they would be able to find a relatively safe place to camp for the evening. Their fears were well founded though, for within a short while, the sound of hoof beats could be heard, coming closer and closer.

"We're being attacked," cried out the leader of the caravan. Many of the people panicked and scattered in different directions. A few of braver people remained with the coffin to guard it. But, they, too, were frightened away as the gang of vicious bandits came charging toward them.

The bandits approached the camel with the large box enthusiastically. It was obvious to them that this box must contain a huge treasure if so many people were guarding it. As much as they tried, though, the box could not be taken down from the camel."Grab the camel's reins," shouted the leader of the bandits. "We'll take it with us."

Their efforts met with no success, though. They tried as much as possible to get the huge animal to move, but it would not budge."Open the box," commanded the leader to his underlings. One of the gangsters began to pry off the lid. "There's a body in this box," he shrieked, as he ran away. The other bandits, too, became frightened at the thought of a dead body and quickly made their exit.

Upon seeing that the bandits had left, the people from the caravan who had been accompanying the coffin slowly made their way back toward the camel. But, to their surprise, the camel began moving determinedly, as if it had a specific destination in mind. The caravan leader cautioned the other people not to go near the camel. "Let us see what direction it takes." After a little while, it was obvious that the camel was heading for Israel.

No one dared to go close to the camel. Instead, they followed from a distance behind. The people were amazed to observe how the camel kept on its course heading straight for Israel. Now, everyone was certain that there would no longer be a problem of where to bury the Rambam. After reaching the border of Israel, the camel continued to travel steadily. It came to Tiberias in the northern part

of the country. It continued on through the narrow streets of the city until it suddenly stopped and began to kneel down on the ground.

The people understood that this was the place where they should bury the Rambam. They removed the coffin from the camel's back and placed it on the ground. Immediately, the people began digging the grave. All who witnessed this strange event were amazed to see the wonderful miracle take place right before their own eyes.

The people of Tiberias built a beautiful structure over the spot where the Rambam was buried. Every year, on the anniversary of his passing, thousands of people from all parts of the world visit his grave. People cherish praying at the tomb of Maimonides for the Talmud tell us that "He who prays at the grave of a righteous person is equal to one who has prayed in the Holy Temple."

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



The renowned rosh yeshiva, **Reb Chaim Brim zt'l**, was very against expelling any bachur from his yeshiva. Once, the staff of the yeshiva gathered to discuss a certain bachur. This bachur learned well but he spoke with chutzpah to the teachers and the staff was contemplating expelling him. Reb Chaim Brim was present by the meeting and said, "If he goes, I go." This wasn't the first time they had this conversation. The yeshiva always refrained from taking action out of respect for Reb Chaim Brim's strong stance but this time the staff decided that they had to send the bachur away.

Reb Chaim Brim gathered his belongings and prepared to leave the yeshiva forever. As he said, "If he goes, I go." Just as Reb Chaim Brim walked out of the yeshiva building he was greeted by a middle-aged man. "Do you know a bachur who learns here called So-and-so?" "Of course I know him." The man was asking about that bachur who was just sent away from the yeshiva. "I need information about him, because I'm considering him for a shidduch for my daughter."

"We just had a meeting, and all the heads of the yeshiva agreed that we never had a bachur like him! We have sixty-eight bachurim in the yeshiva, but this bachur is unique."

The father was very pleased with what he heard. (He didn't consider asking what was unique about the bachur.) Reb Chaim Brim feared that should the father go into the yeshiva and speak to others, he will get an entirely different picture of the boy, so he told the father, "There is no reason to ask further. I'm telling you, there is no one like him." The father was satisfied. That night was the vort. The next day, the bachur was invited back to the yeshiva, together with Reb Chaim Brim.



Rav Avigdor Miller on Shatnez And The Co-worker's Coat

QUESTION: What is the reason for shatnez?

ANSWER: You want to hear? I'll tell you, but don't laugh. If you're working in an office, sometimes there's a goy who works there in the office with you. Now you have to run out to buy something, but you left your coat in the other room.

So the goy tells you, "Here, take my coat. Take my coat. Use my coat for two minutes just to run out into the street to get what you have to get."

No, you can't take it. You can't take his coat. It might be shatnez. Do you know what that means?! Let me explain. If you use his coat, then you're fraternizing with him.



Hakodosh Boruch Hu wants it that we shouldn't wear the begadim of a goy. We shouldn't be friendly enough with goyim to the point of being able to use his beged. Just like you can't eat together with a goy, you shouldn't be able to clothe the same clothing as a goy.

Now, of course, that's not the only reason. That's only one of the reasons. But it's certainly one of the reasons intended by Hakodosh Boruch Hu. You should not be able to put on a goy's beged. To fraternize like that is not the derech ha'Torah. And that's a very important lesson.

The Bathroom - Written by Tal Segal

Before the first plague, Hashem speaks to Moshe and tells him to go and tell Pharaoh that unless he frees the Jewish people He will turn the Nile into blood. But Hashem doesn't tell Moshe to go and see Pharaoh at the palace, He tells him **לֵךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה בַּבֹּקֶר הִנֵּה֙ יֹצֵ֣א הַמַּ֔יְמָה**
"Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes out to the water…" *(Shmot 7:15)* **הנה יצא המימה: לנקביו, שהיה עושה עצמו אלוה ואומר שאינו צריך לנקביו ומשכים ויוצא לנילוס ועושה שם צרכיו**



Rashi explains why he was going out to the water in the morning. He was going to the bathroom to relieve himself.

Why so far away from his five-star on suite bathroom? Because he had declared to his nation that he was a god and had told them that he didn't need to go to the bathroom at all, ever. So, to maintain this image he would get up every morning at the crack of dawn and sneak out to the Nile to do his business.



This is mind blowing. If Pharaoh declared himself a god, you could bet that he believed it himself. This wasn't some charade. And yet he knew that he needed to go to the bathroom every morning. To imagine that a nation could believe a human to be a god is mind boggling enough. But think of those humans, not just Pharaoh by the way (E.g. many Roman emperors declared themselves to be gods), who declared themselves to be gods. Imagine the false pride and self-deceit necessary to believe in something so false and clearly untrue…. And yet they did.

Rav Soloveitchik wrote that everyone believes in G-d. Just for some people that god is money, for some it is a car, and for some it is themselves. What Hashem is trying to teach Pharaoh with all these plagues is that of his gods, money can't buy happiness, a car can get smashed up in a second, and everyone needs to go to the bathroom.

The only real G-d is Hashem.

Parsha Pages

שמות פרק ז,יד כָּבֵד לֵב פַּרְעֹה



The use of the word **כבד** which also means liver is meant to imply the concept of difficult and hard. The cooking of this bodily organ is different from cooking all the other organs of the body. All the other bodily parts become increasingly tender as one cooks them. The liver becomes harder as one cooks it. This is the allusion to the continuing hardening of Paroh's heart that occurred.

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וּמָלְאוּ בָּתֵּי מִצְרַיִם אֶת־הֶעָרֹב וְגַם הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־הֵם עָלֶיהָ 8:17 ***and also the land*** – what does this come to add?



One explanation is that this plague also included an animal that is attached to the earth (Talmud says such an animal existed). Another explanation is the wild animals also went into the houses and the houses became very crowded, forcing many people outside. Thus, in addition to the crowding in the houses due to the plague, the land outside the houses also became full.
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The 70-Year-Old Baal Teshuvah



An irreligious, seventy-year-old man came to a baal teshuvah yeshiva in Yerushalayim and said he wants to join the yeshiva. **Reb Eliyahu Feivelson Shlita**, the rosh yeshivah, asked him why he chose to do teshuvah at this old age. The seventy-year-old man explained, "When I was a young child, my father of blessed memory perished by the hands of the cursed Germans. My mother also suffered the horrors of the war. She came with me to Eretz Yisrael, leaving behind her all vestiges of religion. "We settled in Tel Aviv. My mother sent me to an orphanage, run under the auspices of **the Ponevezher Rav [Rabbi Yosef Kahaneman**, 1886-1969) zt'l. She didn't realize that it was a religious orphanage. When she came to visit me, she discovered that the orphanage is run according to halachah, and that they raise the children in the path of Torah and yiras shamayim. She immediately took me out of the orphanage, and I was raised in her apartment in Tel Aviv. That was the end of my religious career.

"From time to time, the Ponovezher Rav would visit the children of his orphanage. When he saw that I wasn't there, he asked about me, and was told that I was living with my mother in Tel Aviv. He took a taxi to our house and introduced himself as the head of the orphanage. My mother told him the story of her life, what she went through in the war, and the reasons she decided to abandon Yiddishkeit.

"When the Ponovezher Rav saw that he couldn't convince my mother to let me return to the orphanage, he just sat there and cried for ten minutes. Then he said goodbye and returned to Bnei Brak. This

happened in 1956. Now its sixty-one years later, yet the tears of Rav Kahanmen didn't give me respite all these years. The time has finally come when I am ready to do teshuvah…"

Every mother and father should pray and cry for their children – and for themselves as well – because no tear is in vain. Every cry is heard by our Father in heaven. And even if someone cried and prayed for many years, to no avail, he shouldn't give up, because in the end, the tefillos and the tears will bear fruit. *(Torah Wellsprings: Collected Thoughts from Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.)*

Rabbi Yosef Richtman - Noisy Frogs



When Pharoh reaches his breaking point with the frogs, he calls in Moshe and Aharon. When they leave to ask Ha-shem to remove the plague the Torah says (8:8) **וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה עַל־דְּבַר הַצְפַרְדְּעִים אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם לְפַרְעֹה**. Why is the form of teffilah, **וַיִּצְעַק** (to cry out) while in the other ma-kos the word used is **וַיֶּעְתַּר** (to pray)? Also what does the Torah mean with the words **עַל־דְּבַר הַצְפַרְדְּעִים** ?

The Halacha requires that while davening one should be able to hear himself. Rashi explains that one of the difficulties of this plague was the loud croaking noises of the frogs. The frogs loud croaking made it difficult for Moshe to hear himself. The change of the tefilah to **וַיִּצְעַק** was because of the **דְּבַר** (the voice) of the frogs.

Rebbetzin Miller would tell people who asked her husband **Rabbi Avigdor Miller** to Daven for them, to please call back with good news, because Rabbi Miller would keep Davening for them, unless they told him otherwise. Someone once called on Erev Yom Kippur for a Beracha for his daughter who needed a Refuah.



About six months later, on Shushan Purim the child was in Boston for surgery and the father called Rabbi Miller. The Rebbetzin answered the phone and said that he called too late, the Rav had already left. But she asked to describe the reason for the call.

The man told her his child's name and the Rebbetzin said, "Oh! Don't worry. Rabbi Miller has been Davening for your daughter since Erev Yom Kippur." A grandson once asked Rabbi Avigdor Miller how he could tolerate living on Ocean Parkway with emergency vehicles always driving by, their sirens blasting and their lights flashing. Rabbi Miller answered, "To the contrary, these disturbances are actually a great opportunity. Each time an ambulance drives by, I say a small prayer for the ill person inside it. I trained myself to do so even in the middle of my sleep."

Reb Yeruchem of Mir *zt'l* once jumped onto a train just as the train was shutting its doors. One of his shoes got caught in the door, and it fell to the ground below. Reb Yeruchem quickly took off his other shoe and threw it out the window.

He explained, "What can I do with one shoe? Let the person who finds the shoe have a pair." This story is an example of having your fellow man's needs in mind.

Everything is for the Good



The Zera Shimshon teaches that the story of **מכת דם**, the plague of blood, demonstrates the concept of "everything is for the good."

It states (7:20-21), **כל המים אשר ביאור לדם ויהפכו הדגה אשר ביאור מתה** ***"All the waters of the Nile turned to blood, and the fish of the Nile died."***

The lack of fish seemed like a severe problem for the Jewish nation. As the Yidden said (*Bamidbar* 11:5) **זכרנו את הדגה אשר נאכל במצרים חנם**



"We remember the free fish that we used to eat in Mitzrayim." Fish was their staple in Mitzrayim. When the Nile turned to blood, and all the fish died, this seemed to be a significant problem for the Jewish nation. But this problem became their salvation. As the Midrash writes, **ממכת דם העשירו ישראל**, ***"From the plague of blood, the Yidden became wealthy."*** Perhaps they didn't have fish for a week, but instead, they became wealthy.

We can learn from this that when one is in a *tzarah*, it is, in fact, a great favour. At that moment, it looks like a problem, but one day he will look back and realize that this problem was the root of his salvation.

Don't tell lice - Written by Rabbi Daniel Leeman



The third of the ten plagues brought upon the Egyptians was the plague of lice. Pharoah once again summoned his necromancers to remove the plague, but this time they were unsuccessful. The reason given is that the lice, being smaller than the size of a barley cornel, were too small for the powers of necromancy to affect them . But we have been taught that even though there were many types of lice, the smallest was no smaller than a chicken egg! If so, the question returns as to how comes the necromancers did not succeed to get rid of the lice?

R' Yom Tov hakohen Kahan was well known for his exceptional hospitality. The local custom in Pressburg was that the visitors and poor would wait at the back of the synagogue after the services and the locals would choose who they would host. R' Yom Tov would always be the last to exit, extending his hospitality to anyone who was left, including, as was most often the case, the poor guests, unkempt and lice ridden. But none of this bothered him, related his son Avraham, and he would treat his guests no less than royalty.

But all that changed when the Nazis invaded. Yom Tov was imprisoned in various camps until he was finally liberated from the infamous Matthausen. Throughout his time in the camps everyone suffered from lice, including all of his immediate neighbours… everyone except for him! He believed that this miraculous phenomenon was tit-for-tat in the merit of his hospitality achieved by looking beyond the lice of his poor guests.

Just like our more modern-day anti-Semites, may their names and memories be obliterated, the Egyptians saw the Jews as 'lice'.

But 'kinim' (lice) can also be read 'keinim' indicating truth, positivity and correctness.

The letters making up the word 'emes' each have two 'feet', whereas 'sheker' is made of a letter with only a single 'foot' – and so we have been taught that truth stands, i.e. prevails whereas falsehood does not.

Even temporary credibility of falsehood must be based on some connection to the truth. For example if a person were to claim that he travelled to the moon, being that such a feat is theoretically possible it might be believed until proven otherwise. But if he were to claim that he was a banana his claim would have no credibility whatsoever!
The Egyptians failed to recognise the 'keinim' (truth) of the Jews and instead treated them like kinim (lice). And so they were punished with a plague of lice that they would not be able to get rid of (even the big ones)!

And so ultimately, tit-for-tat, the Egyptians would eventually fall and the Jewish people, so long as we see the good in our fellow Jews, will prevail. ***Have a very lice Shabbos!***

The Rooster That Did Not Crow By Rabbi Nissan Mindel

Shmuel was a religious, G d-fearing Jew. He was a Torah scholar and was much admired and greatly respected by everyone. There was a squire who owned the entire town where Shmuel lived. The squire heard of Shmuel's wisdom and honesty and appointed him as his business manager. The squire had complete trust in his Jewish manager. Shmuel was the only person to whom he gave the keys to his safe, knowing that Shmuel would never touch a thing that belonged to another person. In the squire's court there was another person who worked as Shmuel's assistant, who was extremely jealous

of his Jewish boss. He was looking for some way of making trouble for Shmuel, hoping to take his place.

Once, when the squire returned from a trip, he made a big party, inviting many guests. He related to his guests the virtues of his Jewish business manager, who was also one of the invited guests, though he could not partake of any of the food served at the party.



The squire then asked Shmuel to bring from his safe the famous diamond he had inherited from his parents. The diamond was known to be one of the largest diamonds in the world, and it was priceless. All the guests waited breathlessly to behold this rare, precious gem. A few minutes later Shmuel entered, bearing a golden box decorated with many beautiful gems. The guests moved forward to get close to the squire and to get the best possible view of this remarkable diamond. But the squire seemed in no special hurry to open the box. First, he gave a lengthy talk on the history of the diamond, and then, finally, he opened the box. To the horror of all present, the box was empty!

The squire was speechless and looked ready to break into tears. Some of the guests began to shout, "Hang the Jew!" But the squire could still not believe that Shmuel was guilty of such an act, especially to steal something so precious belonging to his employer. Yet, if Shmuel was the only person who had the keys to the safe, who else could have been the thief?

Turning to his Jewish business manager, the squire said: "It is true that you have served me honestly and devotedly for many years, but it appears that you were not able to resist temptation this time, when you saw this unique gem. Because of your past loyal service, I promise you I will not punish you if you confess your guilt and give

me back my precious diamond." "Heaven forbid," called out Shmuel. "I would never steal anything, especially anything belonging to you, my kind and generous employer. I can see that, under the present circumstances, you cannot believe otherwise. But please, I beg you, give me an opportunity to clear myself."

Shmuel asked the squire to keep all the guests in the hall, for the real thief was present there. Then he asked for permission to go home and bring something which would reveal the identity of the thief.



A short while later Shmuel returned, and, to everyone's astonishment, he had a black rooster in his hand. "Honoured guests," called out Shmuel. "I have here a remarkable rooster. It will allow any honest person to stroke it, but no sooner would a thief do so, than it would flap its wings and burst out in a cry of cock-a-doodle-doo! And, as the real thief is among us here today, I shall ask all present to come forward, one at a time, and stroke the rooster with their right hand. When the rooster starts to crow— you will know who the thief is."

Breathlessly and eagerly, the assembled participated in this strange procedure. But when the last of the guests had stroked the rooster and it still remained silent, all the guests began to shout: "How dare the Jew make a laughingstock out of us with his crazy suggestion!"

"Patience, dear guests. Don't get excited. I haven't finished yet," said Shmuel calmly. "You will soon know who the real thief is." Thereupon Shmuel asked the guests to lift up their right hands.



They did so, and what the assembled saw, were black hands except for one white hand. The white hand was that of Shmuel's assistant.

"There is the thief," called out Shmuel. "The rooster I brought is a rooster like any other. All I did was smear its back with soot. I knew that the real thief would be afraid to stroke the rooster, in case it would begin to crow. So he just pretended to stroke the rooster's back but didn't really touch it. So you see, the hands of the innocent guests were black, while the hand of the thief remained white and clean, though in truth, it was the dirtiest in the entire hall."

"Bravo!" cried all the guests and made a rush to grab the thief. The culprit had no choice but to confess that he had managed to get copies made of the keys to the squire's safe. He had been quite sure that the Jew would be blamed for the theft. The thief received his just punishment, while Shmuel was reinstated in his important trusted position.

Essential Rabbi Nachman – Don't be too stringent

Don't follow excessive stringencies in your practice of the Torah. "G-d does not rule over His creatures with tyranny" (Avodah Zarah 3a) - "The Torah was not given to ministering angels" (Berachot 25b).

Our rabbis have taught that it is proper for each person to choose for himself one mitzvah to observe with particular care in all its fine details (Shabbat 118b). Yet even with your chosen mitzvah, you should not be excessively strict to the point of folly. Don't let it make you depressed. Simply try to keep the mitzvah carefully in all its finer points, but without excessive punctiliousness. As for the

other mitzvot, simply follow the essential laws without adding extra stringencies. If only we could keep all the mitzvot of the Torah according to the simple interpretation of the law without seeking to go beyond it! There is no need to look for extra stringencies: this is foolish and confusing.

The essence of serving G-d is simplicity and sincerity. Pray much, study much Torah and carry out many good deeds without seeking out or inventing unnecessary restrictions. Simply follow the path of our forefathers. "The Torah was not given to ministering angels." There is nothing that you absolutely must do or else. If you can, you can. But if you cannot: "G-d exempts a person under duress" (Bava Kama 28b) . Sichot Haran #235.



Joy

It is a great mitzvah to always be happy! Make every effort to maintain a happy, positive outlook at all times. It is a natural human tendency to become discouraged and depressed because of the hardships of life: everyone has their full share of suffering. That is why you must force yourself to be happy at all times.

Use every possible way to bring yourself to joy, even by joking or acting a little crazy! Likutey Moharan II, 24. If you are happy, the whole world benefits. Netiv Tzaddik 71. Even if you are upset and unhappy, you can at least put on a happy front. At first you may not feel genuinely happy in your heart. Even so, if you act happy you will eventually attain true happiness and joy. Sichot Haran #74.

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld- *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*

There is a very interesting Pasuk in this weeks sedra at the beginning of perek 7. **וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה רְאֵה נְתַתִּיךָ אֱלֹהִים לְפַרְעֹה** Hashem tells Moishe, I have made you – (so to speak) a lord over Pharaoh. Why does the Torah use the expression- **רְאֵה**- see? At the end of the day, The Riboino shel Olam wasn't showing Moishe rabeinu anything. Additionally, why the unusual use of the word **אֱלֹהִים** to mean master, when it usually means G-d?

Klal Yisrael are working hard in Mitzrayim as slaves. Moishe Rabeinu has been sent by the Riboino shel Olam to redeem the Yidden, and to show all of Klal Yisroel, all of Egypt and the whole world, the wonderful Nisim that Hashem can do to take Klal Yisroel out of Mitzrayim.

I want to tell you an amazing thought from the **Noam Elimelech**. **Reb Elimelech from Lezhensk** brings down this Pasuk and says an amazing idea. He says that any Tzadik or any person who wants to lift up another from their lowly state, and remove them from their foolishness, can only do so with an act that resembles the foolish act itself. The helper must come down from his own level and descend to the similar level of the recipient.



He brings an example: We know that Pharaoh proclaimed himself to be a god. And therefore, Rashi explains (7:15) that he went down to the Nile to use it as a bathroom to relieve himself.

Gods don't go to the toilet! That is why Hashem said that He is appointing Moishe, a master over Pharaoh, using the word **אֱלֹהִים**. Indicating that Moishe should perform incredible signs in front of Hashem- like Hashem, in a G-dly fashion.

And that was the only way to rid Pharaoh of the foolish claim that he was a god, when he would see that Moishe Rabeinu was also some kind of god.



There is a **Meor Einyim** in parshas Toldos that says an unbelievable thing similar to this. If you want to lift something up that is on the ground, then you have to bend down in order to grasp the object that you wish to lift up.

Says the Noam Elimelech, this is an unbelievable thing. So many times, we encounter people that are not like ourselves. Maybe they are not as clean as us, or don't dress like us. Or even act like us. And it takes a big person to bend himself down to reach out to that person.

We all need Chizzuk. And there are people out there that need it tremendously. Sometimes they don't receive it because other people look at them and say, "well you are not like me" and they are not prepared to lower themselves to the same level, to bring you up.

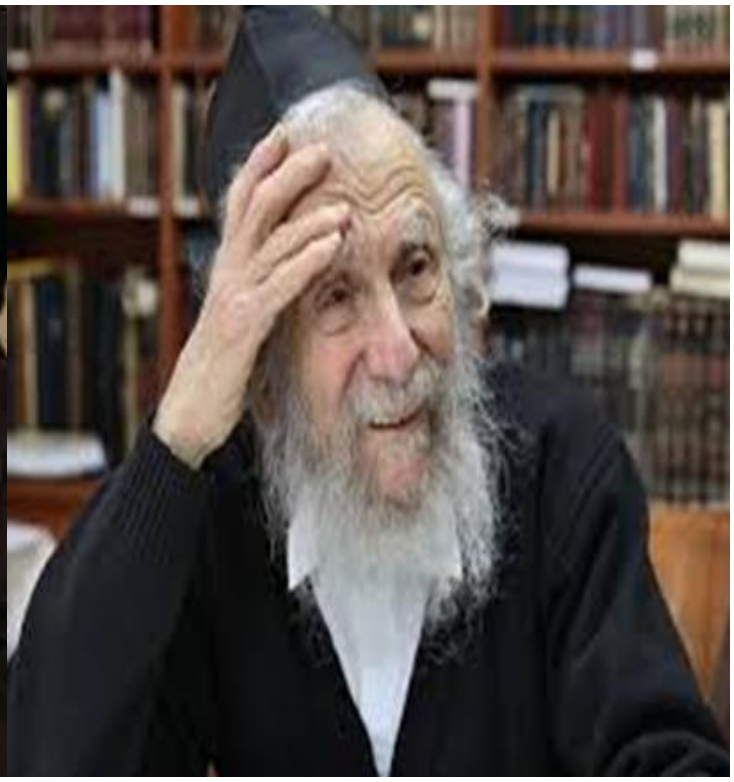
But, The Noam Elimelech is saying in this week's parsha, that that is the Yesod. The Pasuk says וְרֵאֵה – see. This is the way to reach out to other people, even if they are not like us, and might not fit in exactly with the way that we live. Or how we think that they should live.

But reach out to them. Pick them up. You might have to bend down and lower yourself. Reach out to somebody else. You can pick them up and change their life.

Have a great Shabbos!

Reb Yaakov Eidelstein's *zt'l brachos* and *tefillos* were very effective.

Once, **Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l*** asked **Reb Yaakov Eidelstein *zt'l***, " I heard from people that Hashem granted you the ability to give *brachos* and to daven and Hashem does as you say. How did you merit this? "

Reb Yaakov replied, "I don't know that I have this power. Perhaps what people say isn't true? Reb Shmuel Wosner insisted that it is true, and he asked for an explanation.

Reb Yaakov Eidelstein replied, "Many people tell me their troubles, and I patiently listen to them until they are certain that I understand exactly what they are going through. Perhaps Heaven rewarded me *midah kneged midah*. Just as I listen to everything they have to say, Hashem listens to everything I have to say when I turn to Him in *tefillah*."

Vechol Maaminim - It's Important to Detail the Request

וַיֵּצֵא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן מֵעִם פַּרְעֹה וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל־ה' עַל־דְּבַר הַצְפַרְדְּעִים אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם לְפַרְעֹה



The Midrash (Esther Rabbah 7 24) relates that a Jew was walking on his way and hurt his ankle. He raised his eyes Heavenwards and asked for a donkey to please be sent to him. It didn't take long and a Roman passed; his donkey had just given birth to a foal. When he saw the Jew, he commanded him to carry the foal on his shoulders. The Jew sighed and said bitterly: My tefillah was accepted, but because I didn't specify that I needed a donkey to ride on, I got a donkey riding on me…

The Ohr Hachaim says that the source that each person should detail his request in his tefillos is this passuk: It would have seemed enough for Moshe to daven "al devar hatzefarde'im," regarding the matter of the frogs. Why did the Torah then add: "asher sam le'Pharaoh?" It is because "from here we learn that one needs to detail his prayer." And that is what Moshe meant when he said that he was not referring to all the frogs in the world – only those that Pharaoh was afflicted with.

"Our job is to do what's Right. Hashem will do what's Left."

Parsha Pages - The Ten Plagues דצ״ך עד״ש באח״ב

The Russian government once requested that **HaRav Yitzchok of Volozhin and the Rebbe HaRav Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch** come to St. Petersburg, the capital, to answer many questions pertaining to Judaism. With HaShem's help, they succeeded in pleasing the government officials with their answers. One day a Catholic priest approached them. The rabbonim were surrounded by many Russian ministers who had gathered to see whether or not the Jews could refute all the questions about Judaism. The priest brazenly said: "You Jews. You always say that you do not need human blood for Pesach, but I will show you in your own book that you all need blood!"

While speaking he took out from under his coat a Haggadah Shel Pesach and pointed with his finger at the passage stating that R' Yehuda made mnemonic signs of the initials of the ten plagues: **דצ״ך עד״ש באח״ב**. The priest said that the initials stand for: דָּם צַרִיכִים כּוּלָנוּ - We all need blood - עַל דָּבָר שֶׁהָרַגְנוּ - because we killed - **בית א**- ל **חי בשמים** - the 'son' of the living god in heaven.



"Now I want you to admit to me," said the priest, "that the Jews need blood on Pesach." We can, of course, understand it being undesirable to admonish the priest for his warped pshat, nor answer him calmly with an explanation found in the commentaries, such as according to **R' Ovadiah of Bartenura**, R' Yehuda made mnemonic signs of the ten plagues to help him

remember them. The priest would surely not accept that explanation despite it being true, since he was not seeking the truth but only to hurt the rabbonim and disgrace the Jews.

One of the Rabbis immediately devised a true answer that effectively closed the priest's mouth. "I will explain to you what the initials that R' Yehuda gave mean. דֹּוְבְרִים צֹורְרֵינוּ כַּזָּב - Our enemies talk falsehood - עַלִילַת דָּם שַׁקר - false are blood libels- בְּנֵי אַבְרָהָם חֲלִילָה בָּזאֹת - the children of Avraham would never do such a thing.

Upon hearing this explanation HaRav Menachem Mendel expressed his agreement to prove it correct. They both looked at the bewildered priest who neither knew what to answer nor add to what he had previously said. *(Mishel Ovos)*

Reb Efraim Shwartz, a Holocaust survivor



Reb Efraim was standing in line before a concentration camp. He saw that the people who appeared robust and healthy were sent to the right, while those who were thin and scrawny were sent to the left.

When he stood before the Nazi who was making the selection, he threw out his chest and tried to appear healthy, but the Nazi pointed to the left. Reb Efraim was weak and thin, after months of starvation. Reb Efraim pleaded with the Nazi to send him to the right, his feet pounded the earth as a young child might do when he is demanding something, but the Nazi didn't care, and he sent him to the left.

A half-day later, Reb Efraim heard that everyone that was sent to the right was killed. The allied forces were approaching and the Nazis wanted to kill as many Yidden as they could before they arrive, so they killed the healthy people first, assuming that the ill will anyway die on their own within a few days. - He discovered that the problem was for his benefit. His life was saved; he moved to Eretz Yisrael and built a family.



Our two-year-old loves to sit in the window of our apartment, looking out at the world. Like many Israeli homes, there's a wide windowsill he sits on and metal bars protecting it. The bars on this window can be opened, but obviously, we are careful to keep them locked. One night of Chanuka, I went to check on the toddler, and… the metal bar door was open, and the child gone! I can't even begin to describe the avalanche of horrible thoughts and feelings that washed over me during those moments. "I got him!" someone shouted a few moments later. I looked down from the window and spotted our downstairs neighbor's teenaged son holding our precious boy.

What happened? A few months ago, that neighbour had asked if he could install his dud-shemesh (hot water tank) outside the building, so he could have room for the renovations he wanted to do. The tank would be directly under my window. I really hadn't wanted it, knowing that birds would be attracted to it and make a lot of mess and noise. Nevertheless, I was mevater and gave him my permission. Half a year later, my son fell out of the window – and landed on the dud-shemesh! The neighbour's son "just happened" to be there then, and scooped him up. - When you give to others, you're really giving to yourself.

The Jewish Weekly



What's the connection between the Waldorf Astoria and one of the 10 plagues?

In the 1890s there were two hotels right alongside each other in Manhattan. The Waldorf and the Astoria. The Waldorf was owned by William Waldorf and the Astoria by his aunt, Caroline Astor. The two were engaged in a bitter family feud and in fact, the hotels existed alongside each other in order to compete with each other.

But then William Waldorf's manager suggested to him one day "Why don't you make up with your aunt? Can you imagine what kind of a hotel we could have, if we break down the walls in between and join the two together? We could have the best hotel in the world. William was convinced, he then approached his aunt and they made up. Together they created the Waldorf Astoria hotel and the rest, as they say, is history.

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky makes a connection between the historical background of the Waldorf Astoria and the plague of hail as is described in Parshat Va'eira. The hail that fell upon the Egyptians then, was not hail as we know it today. The Torah tells us **ואש מתלקחת בתוך הברד**- there was fire flashing from within the hail" and therefore that hail was a combination of fire and water. Now we know that fire can melt ice, and water can douse flames, however,

when brought together and fused into one, fire and water produced hail which was a mighty, powerful force. Indeed, this is something Pharaoh the king of Egypt noticed, it was after this plague that he called Moshe and he said **ה' הצדיק ואני ועמי הרשעים** – "***this time Hashem is right, I and my people are wrong***".



Pharaoh was obviously deeply impressed with this phenomenon of the hail, to be convinced that actually instead of being pitted against his adversary, the Israelites, he momentarily saw the value of making peace with them. Unfortunately his heart quickly hardened once again, but at that particular moment the hail made an impact.

From the plague of hail, we therefore, learn a hugely important lesson which applies to each and every one of us. Instead of engaging in unnecessary feuds within our families and our communities – nationally and globally – let's combine forces. If the Waldorf and the Astoria can do it, we too can produce a power for good within our lives to the benefit of all of humanity.

So let's join together and let's pray with all our hearts, for the recovery of all the sick from this crazy pandemic, as well as praying for our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual, sweet and happy Shabbos.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

וַיַּרְא פַּרְעֹה כִּי־חָדַל הַמָּטָר וְהַבָּרָד וְהַקֹּלֹת וַיֹּסֶף לַחֲטֹא וַיַּכְבֵּד לִבּוֹ הוּא וַעֲבָדָיו

Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder ceased, and he continued to sin; and he made his heart stubborn, he and his servants. (9:34)

Every person must live with introspection and soul-searching, to see that he does not conduct himself in the same manner as the wicked Pharaoh. When he was in distress, he cried out to the Creator and then he received the desired response. When the bad times turned to good, he reverted back to his true nature of the day before, and he did not see the Creator.

We have to learn from this that we cannot be a student of the wicked Pharaoh, and we should not follow his evil ways. Rather, we must serve our Creator at all times and in every situation, even when things are good and pleasant. (*Tiv HaTorah*)

From Our Sages

וַיָּמֻתוּ הַצְפַרְדְּעִים מִן־הַבָּתִּים מִן־הַחֲצֵרֹת וּמִן־הַשָּׂדֹת ***And the frogs died in the houses, in the villages, and in the fields*** *(Ex. 8:9)*



When the plague of frogs was over, the frogs died. By contrast, after the plague of "various wild beasts" the animals did not die but went back to wherever they had come from. The reason is that no "new" animals were created for the plague of "various wild beasts"; at G-d's

command they left their natural habitat and converged on Egypt. When the plague ended, they were still necessary for the world's ecosystem. The frogs, however, were created especially for the plague; when it was over, there was no need for so many. *(Kehilat Yitzchak)*

Rabbi Chaim Aryeh Ginzberg Rediscovers the Beauty of Life By Daniel Keren



The second speaker in the January 1st Legal Holiday Hakhel Flatbush Yarchei Kallah Event was Rabbi Chaim Aryeh Zev Ginzberg, morah d'asra of the Chofetz Chaim Torah Center in Cedarhurst and internationally renowned Maggid Shiur and educator. He addressed the topic of "After Techias Hameisim Then What…Challenges of Life After (Near) Death" based on his own experiences of miraculously surviving a near fatal corona virus infection last year.

Rabbi Ginzberg began his dramatic presentation by declaring "I am not the same person who was [a featured speaker] in Hakhel events in past years. Now I only talk about the significance of life. I want to speak about what it means to wake up in the morning."

Last year when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, Rabbi Ginzberg became very ill and was in a hospital in Nassau County. This past year before Rosh Hashnah [after he had recovered and been released from the hospital], he asked one of the doctors [a frum gentleman] who had treated him if there was any explanation for his survival.

The doctor answered: "Rabbi in the Intensive Care Unit, there were 12 other people and you were one of the three worst cases. Yet, you were the only one who survived and left the ICU." In other words, his survival had no natural rational explanation.

He told the Hakhel audience that just before Pesach, his condition had so deteriorated that his wife got a phone call from the hospital warning her that she had just a few hours to come and say goodbye to her husband as the hospital planned to pull out all of the plugs as they desperately needed the machine [a ventilator] to use for someone else who had more of a chance to survive.

Rabbi Ginzberg brought up the classic question of why Iyuv (Job) was punished so harshly with yissurim (bodily pains). In the Talmud it is recorded that when Paroh thought of drowning the male Jewish babies, he first asked for the opinions of the three great non-Jewish personalities of his generation – Bilaam, Yisro and Iyuv.

Bilaam urged Pharaoh to kill the Jewish male babies. Yisro demonstrated his disapproval of the plan and had to flee for his life. Iyuv seeing Paroh's reaction to Yisro, merely remained silent.

Yisro was obviously rewarded by Hashem in that he became the father-in-law of Moshe and gave him valuable advice on how to judge the Jewish people, meriting a parsha in the Torah that was named in his honor.

Bilaam was punished by later being quickly killed by the Jews in the Midbar (wilderness) after giving Balak evil advice on how to harm the Jews by enticing the men to acts of immorality. That seems like an easy punishment when compared to the indescribable yissurim that Iyuv suffered for seemingly just remaining silent to Paroh's question.

The answer, Rabbi Ginzberg, explained is that even though Iyuv was in such terrible and unremitting pain, he was still nevertheless still alive and there is still a great benefit and brocha (blessing) for the

precious opportunities that only life can allow a person, especially with regards to serving Hashem.



Rabbi Ginzberg recalled the more recent story of the late **Rabbi Shimon Schwab** who towards the end of his life lost the use of his legs and was confined to a wheelchair. One of his grandsons who hadn't seen in him in three years was shocked and greatly saddened to see his zeidie so constricted. He asked his grandfather how he was able to be so cheerful and accept this new limitation in his life.

Rabbi Schwab explained by way of a moshul (parable.) Imagine that a rich man offers you an interest free loan of a million dollars but with a condition that you repay it when he asks. Many, many years pass and the rich man never calls in his loan. Than one year he calls and say ask if you remember the million dollar loan he gave you. You say yes and ask if he wants the million dollars back. He says, that he just wants you to give him back a thousand dollars and you can keep the rest of loan forever.

Rabbi Schwab explained that everything in life is like an interest free loan from Hashem and if one is blessed with a beautiful family, including children and grandchildren who follow in the derech Hashem and one has been able to lead a productive life, then if towards the end of one's life, a person loses the ability to walk, it is like the rich man forgiving most of his loan to a man.

Rabbi Ginzberg recalled recently reading a magazine article about the Israeli city of Netanya. The story goes back almost 108 years ago to when two Jewish brothers – Nathan and Isidore Straus (owners of Macy's Department Store and Abraham & Straus

Department Store) decided to take a six-month vacation with their wives touring through Europe.



During their trip to all of the classical sites of Europe, someone asked them if they intended to visit Palestine where many Jews were beginning to create new communities. It wasn't on their itinerary, but both brothers thought it would be nice to spend a week in the Holy Land that was rich with Jewish history.

During that week, the brothers and their wives travelled to different communities and generously donated to institutions that would help their Jewish brethren. However at the end of the week, Isidore was anxious to resume his European tour. Nathan wanted to see more of the Jewish settlements and help them with philanthropic donations.

Because of that he missed joining his brother and sister-in-law on travelling on a special ship making her maiden journey towards America. That ship was the RMS Titanic. One of Nathan's donations while in Palestine was helping a fledgling Jewish settlement to be created on the Mediterranean Sea. And they honored his donation by naming their community in his honor – Natanya.

Rabbi Ginzberg noted that was just one small decision resulted in that one brother perished and one survived. Nathan who lived another 19 years spent the rest of his life devoting himself to giving philanthropic donations to Jewish causes on behalf of the memory of his brother and sister-in-law.

Rabbi Ginzberg recalled that after returning home after spending six and a half weeks in the hospital, including three weeks on the ventilator, he heard the sound of raindrops hitting the windows of his bedroom. At that very moment he felt so overwhelmed with the sensation that Hashem was lovingly talking to him.

Rabbi Ginzberg recalled talking to **Rav Shach** towards the end of his long life had difficulty in hearing and seeing and no longer had the sense of taste when eating his food. But despite those physical limitations, the world renowned Ponevezh Rosh Hayeshiva declared that his sense of emunah in Hashem had never been greater.

To go through life, Rabbi Ginzberg said, a person's mission is that despite all the difficulties, grasp every opportunity to come closer and better serve Hakodesh Baruch Hu.

Smelling the Scent of Gan Eden By Rabbi David Sutton



A remarkable story is told of Rav Ovadia Yosef (Maran HaRav Ovadia, that underscores the power of this "scent" of our mitzvot, and how the great tzadikim are capable of "smelling" this unique fragrance.

Mr. Moshe Friedman was born in Poland in 1930, and his family survived the war through a series of miracles that brought them to Siberia. When the war was over, Moshe's father heard that the Nazis ym"sh had made soap out of Jewish bodies, and he decided to return to Poland to buy as many of these bars of soap as he could and give these remains a Jewish burial. Father and son travelled back to their hometown and spent

days combing the streets and offering to purchase the townspeople's Nazi-supplied soap.

This part of Moshe Friedman's life story was known to the family; the rest was not — until it became revealed through Harav Ovadia. Mr. Friedman moved to America, married, and had children. When he was getting on in years, one of his son's in-law, who is of Syrian descent, offered to accompany him to Eretz Yisrael. Mr. Friedman was delighted to visit the Holy Land, and especially to see gedolei Yisrael and receive blessings. One of the stops they made was at Harav Ovadia's home. No sooner had Mr. Friedman walked into the study than Harav Ovadia asked, "Why do I detect the scent of Gan Eden on your clothing?" Mr. Friedman did not know what to answer. "What special deed have you done in your life?" Harav Ovadia asked.

At first Mr. Friedman would not answer, but when Harav Ovadia kept repeating the question, he said, "Well, I have a several children whom I support so they can devote their lives to studying Torah." "That's not it," Harav Ovadia said. "Others do that as well and their clothing doesn't have the scent of Gan Eden. What else did you do?"

Harav Ovadia sensed that Mr. Friedman knew the answer but wasn't willing to say it in front of others. He sent all the people present out of his room, including Mr. Friedman's son-in-law. The only other person who remained was a young man named David, who acted as an interpreter, translating Mr. Friedman's English and Harav Ovadia's Hebrew.

When everyone left, Mr. Friedman told Harav Ovadia a story that had happened on the last day he and his father had attempted to buy and bury human soap in Poland — a tale, he said, he had not shared with anybody. After spending a few weeks in Poland, they had already bought and buried all the soap they could find, and they decided it was time to rejoin their family in Siberia.



The day they were planning to leave, however, a non-Jewish man approached the 15-year-old Moshe Friedman and asked, "Are you the one who is buying the human soap?" Moshe confirmed that he was.

"I have a full box of such soap, and I'm willing to sell it to you." The man named a price, but Moshe did not have enough money on him, and his father was nowhere in sight. "I don't have money here," he said, "but give me the soap, I'll bury it, and I'll bring you money later."
"No, I want the money up-front," insisted the seller.

Moshe thought for a while and then said, "Look, I have this pair of warm, woolen pants, and yours are thin cotton. I'm willing to trade my pants for yours if you'll allow me to buy the soap."

The man quickly agreed to the deal; a pair of warm woolen pants were a premium commodity in the harsh European winters. After the two traded pants, Moshe buried the box of soap, and then rejoined his family in Siberia, undoubtedly shivering his way through the winter in those cotton pants.

When Harav Ovadia heard this story, he said, "This explains why your clothes have the scent of Gan Eden. The neshamot of all the Jews whose remains you buried were all kedoshim, who died 'al Kiddush Hashem' and are therefore in Gan Eden, and these neshamot have been accompanying you throughout your life." The humble Mr. Friedman never told his family of this exchange. When they asked about his visit to Harav Ovadia, he just said, "It was very inspiring." In 2004, Mr. Friedman passed away, and David, the

interpreter who had been in the room and now lived in the same community, came to console the mourners.

"The story with the pants was so inspiring," he remarked. "What story? What pants?" the mourners asked, befuddled. David was shocked that they hadn't heard the story. True, Mr. Friedman had told Harav Ovadia that he hadn't shared the tale with anybody, but David hadn't realized that that included Mr. Friedman's own family. He then retold the entire story, giving the family great comfort as they came to appreciate their father in a new light — all due to the ability of a gadol hador to detect the"scent of Gan Eden" on his clothing.

Even in our times, we have with us the "scent" of Gan Eden, and we have great tzadikim who are capable of smelling it.

A Miracle in Yerushalayim



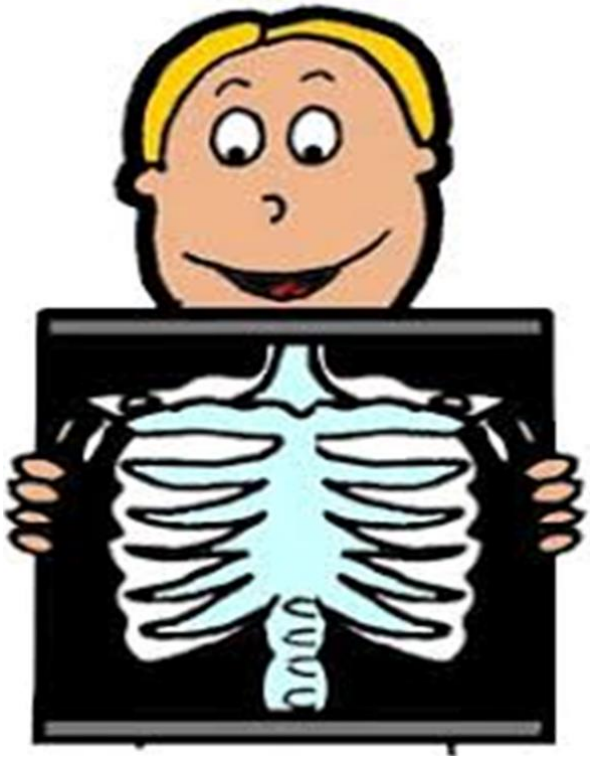
Rabbi Ashear told a fitting story in his book *Living Emunah on the Parasha*. Rabbi Stern was on his way home after praying *arvit* at the *kotel* one night.

Spur of the moment, he decided to stop by his sister's house to visit his mother, who had been living there at the time. The visit lasted much longer than usual. When he finally left his sister's house and realized how late it was, he was anxious to get home to his family.

The streets of the Old City were empty, except for one man who was limping erratically. He immediately recognized the man to be his

close friend, Rabbi David. Rabbi David told Rabbi Stern he's been stabbed in the stomach by an Arab and he needed help.

Rabbi Stern rushed to him, offering his shoulder, and trying to look around for medical assistance. Rabbi David halted abruptly, "I can't take another step. I need an ambulance," he said. By then, blood was pouring from the wound in a steady stream. Rabbi Stern was afraid to stop a car, since it would likely hold more Arabs, further endangering them. He also didn't want to leave Rabbi David alone while he ran into a house to call an ambulance. Every second mattered.



Just then, a police car drove by! Rabbi Stern waved it down, and the police radioed for an ambulance, which arrived in two short minutes! They took Rabbi David to the hospital, where they performed emergency surgery, and he was able to recover.

Rabbi Stern called Rabbi David to check on him the days after his surgery, and they marveled at the hashgacha peratit— that Rabbi Stern was delayed at his sister's house, and that the police showed up when they did!

Rabbi David told Rabbi Stern the best part of all. When the doctor did the surgery, he noticed the knife had entered above Rabbi David's intestines, but that they should have been hit— killing him— but his intestines were out of place. After the surgery, Rabbi David later explained to the surgeon and to Rabbi Stern that for two years, he had experienced pain in his stomach, and X-rays showed his intestines had shifted out of place, causing the pain.

He planned to schedule surgery to correct it, but he had spoken to the Lelover Rebbe, who told Rabbi David to hold off. He even asked the Rebbe again a couple months earlier, and he insisted he hold off once more. The pain he experienced ended up saving his life.



Revach - Kinim

When Mitzrayim became infested with the dreaded Kinim or lice, Paroh's Chartumim could not match this Maka with their own sorcery. They admit defeat and say "Etzba Elokim Hi", it is the work (or finger) of Hashem. Without batting an eye or even asking Moshe to get rid of the lice, Paroh's heart hardened. At this point Hashem did not yet interfere with his free will according to most Meforshim. It seems his reaction was because of what the Chartumim said, not in spite of it.

Rav Shimon Sofer the son of the **Ksav Sofer** in Shir Maon answers that Paroh believed that Moshe made the Kinim through Kishuf, and he was superior to his sorcerers who could not manage this feat. The Chartumim were embarrassed that they were out done by Moshe and claimed to be the best in the world, so they said that it must have been Hashem, but nobody really believed this, including Paroh. When the pasuk says his heart became hard and he did not listen, it means to the sorcerers who claimed that only Hashem could perform this maka.

The Ibn Ezra says that the Chartumin said it was a Makas "Elokim", meaning a punishment from the Heavenly powers ruling over Mitzrayim and not Hashem. Paroh insisted all along he doesn't know any Hashem, only the powers that run the world. That is why he did not let them out.

Pharaoh never felt that his own life was threatened by the plague, and therefore, he was able to shut his eyes to the obvious truth. The thought of his people being infested with lice did not disturb

him so much, since it was quite common for peasants to have lice. Then he rationalized. Why hadn't he been warned about this plague as he had been warned about the first two? Surely, Moshe had not been aware of the coming of this plague, which proved that everything that had happened was caused by natural phenomena controlled by the gods and the stars, not the G-d of the Jews.

Revach - Rav Moshe Feinstein - Moshe, Aharon, and You, Can All Be Equal

הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה (6:26); הוּא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן (6:27) Rashi points out, that there are places where the Torah places Aharon before Moshe and there are places where it places Moshe before Aharon. This is to teach us that they are of equal significance. The obvious question is, how can we say that Aharon was equal to Moshe? Doesn't the Torah say that there never was or will be a Navi as great as Moshe?

The Maskil L'David answers, at this point they were of equal significance. It was only after Mattan Torah where Moshe was alone for 40 days and nights with the Shechina that he elevated himself above Aharon.

R' Moshe Feinstein offers a different answer. Of course Moshe was greater than Aharon even at this point. They were of equal significance in the aspect that each one of them fulfilled his Tafkid (potential) in this world. Hashem does not look how great one is, rather if he was able to "be all that he could be". If one reaches that level, he achieved the highest level. Aharon reached that level; therefore in this sense he was as great as Moshe who also reached the level of fulfilling his total potential.

This is a comforting thought for all of Klal Yisroel. We too have the potential to be as great as Moshe in this sense.

Why After Makas Arov Does Paroh Allow Local Slaughter?

Finally after Makas Arov, Paroh is ready to make a concession. **לְכוּ זִבְחוּ לֵאלֹקֵיכֶם בָּאָרֶץ**, go serve your Hashem in the land (Va'eira 8:21). Why only now does Paroh come up with idea?

The Shnayim Mikra brings from Rav Ezriel Hildesheimer, who says in the name of his grandfather Rav Moshe Galya, that before Makas Arov Paroh knew if he offered Moshe Rabbeinu to sacrifice to Hashem in Mitzrayim he would say that they don't know which animal Hashem prefers. Therefore they need to go to the wilderness where there are many animals and slaughter one of each until they find the one that pleases Hashem. During Makas Arov all kinds of animals came to Mitzrayim. Now, says Paroh, you can do all your slaughtering right here without going anywhere.

Chasam Sofer - Moshe & Aharon, Are They Really Equal?

When the Torah tells us that Moshe and Aharon were sent to Mitzrayim, the pasuk says (Vaeira 6:26), "Hu Aharon U'Moshe," mentioning Aharon first. The next pasuk once again mentions the two of them but this time in the reverse order, naming Moshe first. Rashi explains that the Torah wants to show that they are both equal and, therefore, at times each one is given precedence over the other.

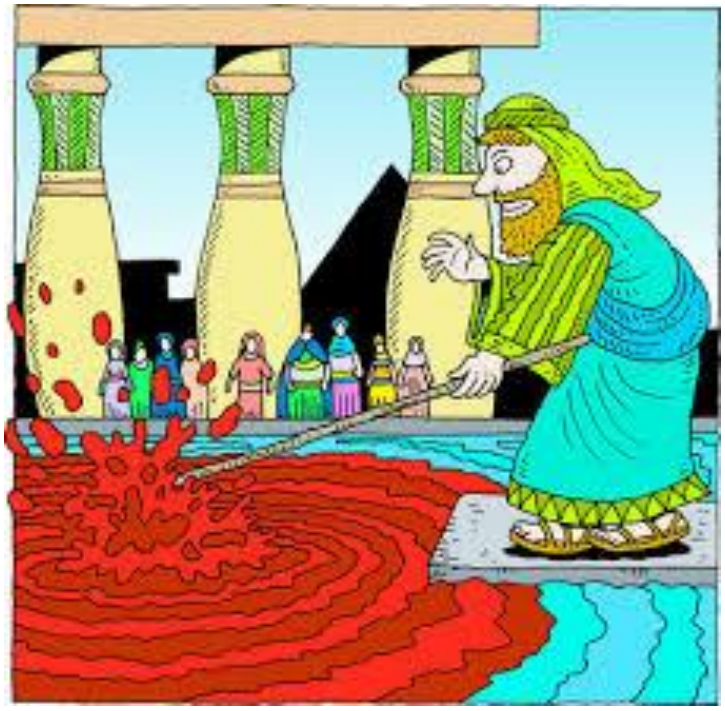
The Chasam Sofer explains that they weren't both equal in the same area. Each one had his strengths. Moshe was a Navi of unparalleled greatness. Aharon's strength lay in his close ties and his love for the people. They were considered equal because they each had a Maala.

When the Torah says they came to speak to the Bnei Yisrael, Aharon is mentioned first because he was beloved by the people and more easily related to them. However, in the next pasuk when they stood before Paroh telling him of Hashem's demands, clearly Moshe was the main force, and in that respect his name is written first.

Jewish Education Program [JEP] - What Do I Owe You?

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֱמֹר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן... וְהָיָה דָם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

"[Hashem said to Moshe] Say to Aharon… [and the waters of Egypt], will become blood." (Shmos 7:19)



A traveller for a big publishing house couldn't wait to get to St. Louis, where his oldest friend owned a prosperous bookstore. "Sam," he said to the owner the moment they were alone, "I want you to lend me $2000." "The answer, Joe," said Sam, "is positively no." "But, Sam," protested the salesman, "In 1929, when Bond and Share broke from 189 to 50, who gave you ten thousand dollars to keep you from being wiped out?" "You did," admitted Sam. "And in 1931, when your daughter Shirley had that tropical disease, who took her down to Florida because you couldn't get away from business, who did, Sam?" "You, my friend, you did." "And in 1933, when we were fishing together, who dove into the rapids and saved you from drowning at the risk of his own life?" "You did, Joe. It was wonderful!" "Well, then, Sam, in Heaven's name, why won't you lend me $2000 now when I need

*it?" **"All the things you say are true," said Sam, nodding his head slowly, "But what have you done for me lately?"…***

This attitude is clearly NOT what the Torah teaches us. The Torah teaches us to show appreciation – the *midah* of *Hakaras HaTov*.

Rashi quotes a Midrash which explains why Aharon, rather than Moshe, initiated the plagues of blood and frogs: The water had protected Moshe when he was thrown into it, as a baby. Therefore, it would have been improper for Moshe to smite the water.

Water is an inanimate object, yet the Torah is teaching us an important lesson. If you benefit from an object, do not cause it any harm. This applies literally and figuratively. If a person showed you kindness you certainly should show your gratitude.

The Midrash explains, whenever you benefit from a place, you must show your gratitude by doing something for that place. When Yaakov went to the city of Shechem, (Bereishis 33:18) he instituted something for the benefit of the city (either establishing markets or minting coins).

The Ibn Ezra (Dvarim 8:14) says, we Jews should never forget we were lowly slaves in Egypt and experienced suffering, hunger, and thirst in the wilderness. Hashem, in his loving kindness, took care of us. **Rav Zelig Pliskin**, quoting **Rav Mordechai Gifter zt"l**, explains that this teaches us the depth of gratitude we must have. We must reflect on our total experience- not just the good. We must remember how desperate and uncomfortable we were before we were saved by Hashem. Then we will be able to recognize the extent of the kindness that we received from Hashem and properly express our appreciation to Him. Rabbi Pliskin adds that we must also show the same type of appreciation when people do good for us.

Our Attitude is Gratitude!

Kli Yakar - The Holy Frogs That Didn't Die



After Makas Arov the animals picked up and left. Rashi says the reason they didn't die was so that the Mitzrayim should not enjoy their furs. The Kli Yakar asks why did the frogs die? Why didn't they leave just like the Arov and Arbeh left?

He answers that Hashem wanted to teach us a lesson in Kiddush Hashem. Although there was a general command for the frogs to go into the ovens, most frogs chose safer roles for themselves like the cozy confines of the bedrooms. The frogs that jumped into the burning ovens did so ready to die Al Kiddush Hashem. After the Maka was over, Hashem made all the frogs die except the ones who jumped into the ovens. Hashem was teaching us that if you choose to be Mikadesh Shem Shamayim you can be saved. However if you think you will save yourself by taking the safer route and not making a Kiddush Hashem, you are wrong. Hashem will catch up to you no matter where you are.

This is seen in the words of the pasuk (8:9) that says all the frogs died from the houses, from the courtyards, and from the fields. It does not say the frogs from the ovens died because they didn't die.

When it comes to relying on others, Hashem is not an "Also" – He's an "Only" – R' Duvy Bensoussan

Seasons come and go, but Hashem's love for us never changes.

Steipler Gaon - How Do Deal With Ugly Frogs

וַתַּ֥עַל הַצְּפַרְדֵּ֖עַ וַתְּכַ֣ס אֶת־אֶ֑רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם (8:2)" - ***"And the frog arose and covered the land of Mitzraim."***



Why is צְּפַרְדֵּ֖עַ (frog) written in the singular?

Rashi quotes from the Medrash that the plague began with one large frog. Whenever the Mitzrim hit it, streams of frogs came pouring out of it. Ultimately, so many frogs came out that the whole land of Mitzraim was covered.

The Steipler asks the obvious question. Once the Mitzrim saw that each hit brought forth more frogs, why didn't they stop hitting it?

The Steipler explains, they became furious when they saw the large frog spewing more frogs... They couldn't control their anger and frustration... They hit it again... It spewed more frogs... They got even angrier... They hit it again... It spewed more... And again... "Va't'chas es Eretz Mitzraim" - The whole land of Mitzraim was covered with frogs.

When we're angry, we act in a counterproductive and self-destructive manner. If someone acts aggressively toward us our automatic response is to respond with anger. Stop! Think. If we'll stay silent, the other person would gradually cool down. Our angry response will simply fuel the fire further. Counterproductive. Self-destructive. Think. Plan out the proper response - if any. Act on impulse - **וַתְּכַ֣ס אֶת־אֶ֑רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם** - and the whole land will be covered with frogs.

Ksav Sofer - Aharon's Non-Growing Staff Represents Annihilation Of Mitzrayim

After all the staffs that turned into snakes turned back into staffs, the pasuk says (Vaeira 7:12), **וַיִּבְלַע מַטֵּה־אַהֲרֹן אֶת־מַטֹּתָם** Aharon's staff swallowed all the other staffs." The Medrash says that a great Nes happened and Aharon's staff did not become any thicker even after swallowing the others. When Paroh saw this, he became very scared and worried he will lose his throne. Why did this make Paroh so scared?

The Ksav Sofer answers that Moshe and Aharon's first appearance before Paroh marked the ascension of Am Yisrael to power. A staff represents ruling power, and the staff of Bnei Yisrael swallowed all the other staffs.

One of two things could happen when Bnei Yisrael reach the top. Either they will rule over all the other nations who will still maintain their own identity. Or, alternatively, the other nations will cease to exist altogether without any trace or remembrance.

Had Aharon's staff become thicker after swallowing the staffs of the Mitzrim, it would have signified that Mitzrayim will remain, albeit subservient to Bnei Yisrael. However, when Paroh saw that Aharon's staff did not get bigger, rather it stayed the same and no trace was left of the other staffs, he became afraid that Mitzrayim will be wiped out, and his throne will be lost forever.

"The struggles we go through in life are not meant to break us, but to lift us up and enable us to lift others up." – Rabbi Uri Lati

Kehilas Yitzchok - Lice & More Lice



The Torah tells us that Kinim, lice, came before Arov. However, in Tehilim (105:31) the pasuk says, **אָמַר וַיָּבֹא עָרֹב כִּנִּים בְּכָל־גְּבוּלָם** Hashem said and the animals came, lice were all over." This implies that the Kinim came after Arov. Which one came first?

The Iturei Torah brings from the Kehilas Yitzchok that Kinim came twice. He explains with a Mashal. "A rich man was marrying off his daughter. The week before the wedding he made a party each night. One night for the Lomdei Torah, one for family, one night for the poor people.

The caterer noticed that one person came two days in a row, and he asked him why. The man explained that yesterday he came with the Lomdei Torah because he is Talmid Chochom. Today he came because he is family."

The Maka of Kinim was a special punishment of lice. The next Maka, as the Torah writes, was Arov, and Mitzrayim was overrun by wild animals. The wild animal were infested with lice and through them the Mitrim once again became lice ridden.

The first time the lice came to the party because they were invited by the Torah. The second time they came as family, as they were Michutanim with the Arov!

Where Did The Magicians Get Water From?

The magicians of Pharaoh did the same with their charms (to make water into blood), and Pharaoh's heart became hard and did not listen to them". Where did the magicians get the water to change in to blood, if all the water in Mitzrayim turned in to blood?

Some Meforshim answer, if an Egyptian purchased the water from a Jew in remained water. The Ibn Ezra answers, since the pasuk says "All the Egyptians dug roundabout the river for water to drink" (7:24) - that water below the ground did not turn in to blood.

I once heard yet another explanation. The Chartumay Mitzrayim were not performing real magic, rather illusions. They therefore took the water that was now blood and made it look like water. When they removed the illusion, it looked again like what it really was....blood.



Rav Chaim Kanievsky - Paroh Suspects Moshe Has Inside Information

By Makas Tfardei'a Moshe asks Paroh, "When shall I daven for the frogs to go away?" Paroh answers, "Tomorrow."

The Ramban asks, "Why did Paroh not want them to go away immediately?" He answers that Paroh suspected that Moshe knew the Maka was about to end and, therefore, Paroh wanted to test Moshe to see if he had any control over the frogs, or he just knew the secret of when the maka would end.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky says that this Ramban is hard to understand, since Paroh summoned Moshe to the palace, this meeting could not have been planned by Moshe to coincide with the end of the Maka.

Rav Chaim suggests a different explantion for Paroh's delay. "Paroh, for the first time, agreed verbally to let Bnei Yisrael leave

Mitzrayim. He then asked Moshe to daven to make the frogs go away. He fully expected Moshe to say that he will do so once the Bnei Yisrael are safely out of Mitzrayim. Yet, he didn't, and he asked Paroh when he wanted the Maka to end.

When Paroh heard this, he suspected that Moshe knew that the time was now, and therefore did not hold it over Paroh's head as a guarantee that he live by his word. Therefore, Paroh asked him to daven only tomorrow to see if indeed the frogs would stick around until then."

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos



It is a mitzvah to taste all the different foods that are being prepared in honour of Shabbos and make sure that they taste right for when they will later be served (*Mishnah Brurah* 250:2).

The *Ba'al HaMeor* (*Shabbos* 16b, *Rif*) says regarding preparing Shabbos food, that whoever cooks food for Shabbos proves that he believes in Hashem and will be *zocheh* to see the *'Keitz HaYamim'*, the *'End of Days'* and greet *Mashiach*!

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

"אלה ראשי בית אבתם" ***"These are the heads of their father's houses."*** **(6:14)**

QUESTION: Since the Torah wants to tell us the lineage of Levi because of Moshe and Aharon, it began to set out their genealogy in the order of their birth from Reuvain on (Rashi). Why is it necessary to trace and record their *yichus* — pedigree?

ANSWER: Contrary to the belief of the Christian world regarding their own leader, the Torah wants to emphasize that a Jewish leader is not one who is born in a supernatural way. He is a normal person who has a father and mother and who has elevated himself spiritually to be worthy of his rank. Every Jewish boy has the potential to become a Moshe *Rabbeinu* — a leader of the Jewish people in his generation.(מעינה של תורה)



"ויאמר משה אל ה' הן אני ערל שפתים" ***"Moshe said to G-d, 'Behold, I am of uncircumcised (closed) lips.'"*** **(6:30)**

QUESTION: He was referring to the injury which he suffered when he touched his tongue with a burning coal. Why was his tongue injured and not his hand?

ANSWER: When Batya found the baby Moshe in the Nile River, she asked a number of Egyptian women to nurse him. Destined to speak with Hashem, "mouth to mouth" (see *Bamidbar* 12:8), Moshe refused their milk. However, during the process, some of the milk of the Egyptian nurses fell on his tongue and he spat it out immediately.

When non-kosher food comes in contact with a kosher utensil it needs *"kashering."* This is normally done by immersing the utensil in boiling water or using fire to make it red hot so that it will expel

whatever it had absorbed. Thus, Moshe's tongue was burned in order to remove all traces of Egyptian milk.(שפתי כהן)



כָּבֵד לֵב פַּרְעֹה שמות פרק ז,יד "Stubborn is the heart of Pharaoh." (7:14)

QUESTION: The word כָּבֵד means "heavy." Would it not have been more appropriate to say that his heart was "*kashah*" — "hardened" — or "*ikeish*" — stubborn and unyielding?

ANSWER: In Hebrew כָּבֵד also means "liver." The longer meat is cooked, the softer it becomes. Liver must be broiled and the more it is broiled, the harder it becomes. Usually, when a stubborn person is beaten and punished, his heart softens and he begins to concede and yield.

The Torah is telling us that the heart of Pharaoh was like liver: the more plagues he received, the more stubborn he became. (מיוסד על מדרש רבה שמות, ט,ח)



ויאמר ה' אל משה אמר אל אהרן קח מטך ונטה ידך על מימי מצרים...ויהיו דם *"G-d told Moshe 'Tell Aharon to take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters — there shall be blood.'"* (7:19)

QUESTION: Rashi explains that since the river offered protection to Moshe when he was cast into it, it was not smitten through him. For the same reason, the plague of frogs, which had to do with water, was performed through Aharon. The third plague of lice was also performed through Aharon: when Moshe killed the Egyptian he buried him in the sand. Therefore, he did not strike the dust of the earth to bring lice over Egypt.

Why would these reasons preclude Moshe from delivering the plagues so many years later?

ANSWER: From this we can learn a very important lesson: Often, when someone does a favour, we forget it and fail to show gratitude. Hashem, in His instructions to Moshe, was conveying a lesson that one should remain thankful for a lifetime. Though the favour Moshe received from the waters had happened approximately 80 years earlier and Moshe had benefited from the earth approximately 70 years earlier, Moshe was told to be appreciative and not hurt them in any way.

If this is true in regard to water and earth, which are inanimate, how much more so must this apply to a human being who does a favour.

"ויאמרו החרטמים אל פרעה אצבע אלקים הוא" *"And the magicians said unto Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of G-d.'"* (8:15)



QUESTION: Why was it that after the plague of lice the magicians finally conceded: "This is the finger of G-d?"

ANSWER: After the wicked Titus burned the *Beit Hamikdash,* he blasphemed against Hashem. While returning to his city, his boat was threatened by strong waves, and he audaciously declared, "The power of the Jewish G-d is only within the limits of water. Throughout history He has used water as a means of punishment. If He is really all-powerful, let Him meet me on dry land, and we shall see who will be victorious." A voice emanating from Heaven said, "Wicked one, son of the wicked, I have a small creature in my world called a '*yatush*' (a gnat) — come on dry land, and we will see who is

stronger!" Titus arrogantly came on dry land, and a *yatush* entered his nose and bore through his brain till he died (*Gittin* 56b).

The first two plagues that struck Egypt were blood and frogs, which originated from the water. The magicians consoled Pharaoh, "Don't worry, it appears that their G-d is not omnipotent: His strength is limited to water." Therefore, Hashem responded with the plague of lice, extremely minute creatures which come from the earth. Upon seeing this, the magicians were forced to concede that "This is the finger of G-d, and if His finger is so powerful, He is indeed omnipotent." (**שער בת רבים-ראשית בכורים**)



"ומלאו בתי מצרים את הערב וגם האדמה אשר הם עליה"
***"The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of the mixture of animals and also the ground upon which they are."* (8:17)**

QUESTION: The words "and also the ground upon which they are" seem superfluous?

ANSWER: Among the animals of the world there is an extremely rare one found in the wild jungles of Africa and known as the *"adnei hasadeh."* It has the face of a person, long hands that reach to its knees, and a very unusual relationship to its habitat.

It is always connected to the ground through a string that comes out of its navel. Although it is very dangerous and kills anyone who comes within its reach, there is one way to capture it: Shooting arrows at the string which connects it to the ground. As soon as it becomes detached, it screams bitterly and dies immediately.

Hashem brought upon the Egyptians a mixture of all the animals from the entire world, including the strange and vicious *"adnei hasadeh."* In order that they not die before arriving in Egypt, they were brought together with the earth to which they were connected. Therefore, Moshe told Pharaoh, "The homes of the

Egyptians shall be filled with the mixture of wild animals and also *'adnei hasadeh'* will come, together with the ground (earth) upon which they are [attached]. (**פנים יפות, ועי' כלאים פ"ח מ"ה ברע"ב ותפארת ישראל**)

"כי בפעם הזאת אני משלח את כל מגפתי" ***"For at this time I am about to send all My plagues."*** **(9:14)**

QUESTION: Rashi says that from the phrase *"kal mageifotai"* — "all My plagues" — we can learn **שמכת בכורות שקולה כנגד כל המכות** — that "the plague of the killing of the firstborn was equal in severity to all the other plagues combined."

We are now discussing the plague of hail. Why does Rashi discuss the plague of the firstborn?

ANSWER: Rashi is not referring to **מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת**, the plague in which the firstborn were killed, but **מַכַּת בֻּכוּרוֹת**, the plague of the ripened harvest. The Torah relates that the hail destroyed the flax and the barley, which were already fully ripened (Rashi 9:31). This plague was the worst one, because it caused a famine throughout the entire land of Egypt. (**חזקוני**)

The very early editions of Rashi, using an abbreviation, state, **"שמ"ב"** was equivalent to all plagues together." The correct interpretation of **"שמ"ב"** is that **"שמכת ברד"** — "the plague of hail" — is compared to all other plagues. Later, an unlearned typesetter spelled out Rashi's abbreviation incorrectly and wrote **"שמכת בכורות"** instead of **"שמכת ברד"**. (**חנוכת התורה**)

"Hashem's kindness is constant - even during our most difficult times." – R' Elimelech Biderman.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



The *Steipler Gaon* once sent a messenger to **Rav Moshe Feinstein** regarding an important issue which the *Steipler* wanted Rav Moshe to become involved in. The messenger discussed the issue with Rav Moshe at length and told him all the details.

When he was just about finished with his explanations, he decided that he wanted to stress the point a little further, and pulled out a Jewish newspaper, and handed it to Rav Moshe. He explained that the paper happened to have an article about the topic they were discussing, and he suggested that Rav Moshe read it to better understand the issue.

Rav Moshe, however, declined to take the newspaper. He said that he had already heard the details and there was no need for him to read the article. The messenger persisted, explaining that it was possible that they missed a couple of important points, but Rav Moshe said to him, "I have not held a newspaper in my hands for seventy years. As soon as I read a newspaper, I will no longer be qualified to decide the *Halachah* because my mind will not be one hundred percent *Da'as Torah*!"

The man understood and left Rav Moshe with a profound insight to the way the *Gadol HaDor* protected his mind from anything that was purely Torah learning.

Besamei HaTorah by R' Shmuel Winzelberg

Pharaoh saw that the rain, the hail, and the thunder ceased, and he continued to sin; and he made his heart stubborn, he and his servants. (9:34)

Every person must live with introspection and soul-searching, to see that he does not conduct himself in the same manner as the wicked Pharaoh. When he was in distress, he cried out to the Creator and then he received the desired response. When the bad times turned to good, he reverted back to his true nature of the day before, and he did not see the Creator.

We have to learn from this that we cannot be a student of the wicked Pharaoh, and we should not follow his evil ways. Rather, we must serve our Creator at all times and in every situation, even when things are good and pleasant. (*Tiv HaTorah*)

Parshah Reflections by Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

When Moshe threatened Pharaoh by the fourth plague, Wild Animals, he mentioned that they will come with the ground on which they stand (8:17).**וְגַם הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־הֵם עָלֶיהָ**

Rav Yonason Eibeshitz (*Medrash Yehonason*) quotes the *Gemara* (*Sotah* 47a) which teaches us that animals are scared to damage to their fullest extent when they are not in their own environment.

We can now better understand why the environment of each wild animal was a necessary factor for the plague. This natural instinct applies to people as well. We are uncomfortable when we are out of our environment. Therefore, when we encounter others who are visibly not in their comfort zone, we should try to extend ourselves to help them and make them more comfortable.

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

The *Mishnah Brurah* (242:1) writes that on Shabbos we should delight in it with special foods and drinks.

The *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 119a) teaches that we do this to show how special Shabbos is to us. The *Medrash Tanchuma* (*Bereishis* 2) says that we should have delicious foods that are specifically only for Shabbos, and we shouldn't eat the same things as we would during the week. *Ta'amei HaMinhagim* (*Kuntres Acharon* 260) teaches that the Shabbos food should even *look* delicious! This is also part of *Oneg Shabbos*— enjoying how the food looks.

V'halachtah B'drachav - The Ways of Hashem

The *Chasam Sofer* had very poor eyesight in his old age, and he couldn't read anymore. He would get hundreds of *shaylos* from around the world every week. Because of his poor eyesight, his son would read the questions to him, and the *Chasam Sofer* would relate the answer, and his son would write them down.

One time, the son was reading a letter, and it was full of praises for the *Chasam Sofer*, referring to him as the "light of the generation", among other praises.

When the *Chasam Sofer* heard these praises, he sighed. His son asked, "Father, why are you sighing? You *are* considered to be the greatest *Talmid Chacham* of our generation."

The *Chasam Sofer* answered, "That's exactly why I am sighing. I can't help but think how poor a generation is in which *I* am considered to be the greatest *Talmid Chacham*!"

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections by *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*

כִּי יְדַבֵּר אֲלֵכֶם פַּרְעֹה לֵאמֹר תְּנוּ לָכֶם מוֹפֵת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־אַהֲרֹן קַח אֶת־מַטְּךָ וְהַשְׁלֵךְ פַּרְעֹה יְהִי לְתַנִּין לִפְנֵי־ In this week's *Parshah*, Hashem directed Moshe, ***"When Pharaoh will ask you to prove yourselves, tell Aharon to throw down his stick and it will become a snake"*** (7:9).

Rav Meir Shapiro explains that Moshe claimed that the Jewish people are only in such a low state because they are enslaved in Egypt, but when they leave Egypt, they will aspire to greatness. Pharaoh questioned how Moshe and Aharon could be so sure of this, that the people could change when Moshe was in charge.

To this point, Hashem directed Moshe to take the stick, which was holy, and thrown on the ground. Once it went into Pharaoh's domain—on the ground, it became a snake. However, when Aharon picked it up it returned to being a stick. This demonstrated that although the *Bnei Yisroel* were on such a low level under Pharoah, they could be elevated under the leadership of Moshe.

We all have amazing potential; we just have to ensure that we are in the proper environment for us to grow and shine!

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

Why do we have salt on the table when we have a *Seudah*?

The *Rama* says (*Orach Chaim* 167:5) that the reason we have salt on the table when we eat is because today, when we don't have a *Beis HaMikdash*, our tables are like a *Mizbei'ach* and our food is like a *Korban*. Since all *Korbanos* were offered with salt, we eat our bread with salt instead.

The *Mishnah Brurah* explains (167:30,31) that when the *Beis HaMikdash* stood, the *Mizbei'ach* helped us attain forgiveness for

our *Aveiros*. Nowadays though, our good deeds and eating help bring us this forgiveness. The reason eating brings forgiveness for *Aveiros* is because it gives us strength and more energy to serve *Hashem* better.

The *Mishnah Brurah* also says (*Mishnah Brurah* 167:27) that salt also makes the food taste better. Having good tasting food gives honour to the *Brachah* that is said over it. The *Rama* adds (167:5) that having salt at the table provides protection from troubles and bad times!

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

A long while ago, a reporter for a secular newspaper once related that he was curious about the great man called the ***Chazon Ish***. He wanted to know what made him so special, and he made a trip to Bnei Brak to meet the *Chazon Ish* and find out.

The *Chazon Ish*, when he met the reporter, invited him to take a walk together. They walked slowly and in silence, when suddenly the *Chazon Ish* slowed down his pace and began walking even slower. In wonderment, the reporter asked why they had slowed down.

The *Chazon Ish* explained, "In front of us, just a little ahead, there is an older man walking who has a difficult time getting around, and he walks very slowly. It is not proper for us to pass by him with our quick and healthy steps, as it might make him feel bad. It is better for us to slow down and remain behind him, so his feelings will not be hurt."

The reporter then understood by this powerful example, what made the *Chazon Ish* so special!

Yahrzeit of Rav Avrohom ben Rav Alexander Hakohen Zy"a of Kalisk 4 Shevat 5570 Teveriah

A Person's Work is Precious to Hashem:

Rav Moshe Midner zt"l related that a certain person once came to the **Kalisker Rebbe** and bemoaned the fact that his yeitzer hara would not leave him alone and kept trying to overpower him and bombard him with desires. He said that he felt a darkness within him.

The Rebbe replied, "It would not be a difficult thing to instil you with a great light that would evaporate the darkness. But Hashem loves when a person puts forth his own efforts and does whatever he can on his own! You have to do all you can to overpower the yeitzer hara!"

The Rebbe then made a gesture with his fingers and said, "Even if you only put forth a little bit of effort, it will be yours alone. A person is born to toil. That is why we are here. If you do that, Hashem will provide a great light for you.

It Is Worthwhile to Live for 80 Years in Order to Wear Tefillin Once:

It I related that an old man was once seen standing outside the bais medrash of the **Kalisker Rebbe** looking very upset. The Rebbe asked him, "Why do you look so sad?" The old man answered, "I can't figure out why I am still alive. I'm not doing anything here."

The Rebbe responded, ***"You fool. It is worthwhile to live 80 years in this world in order to wear tefillin one time, even in the way you wear them."***

The Straightforward Mishna

The Chazon Ish zt"l, was very hidden from the public eye and was a complete unknown in the Torah world until **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzensky zt"l**, publicized his greatness. **R' Shlomo Shimshon Karelitz zt"l** related, "The Chazon Ish once attended a sheva berachos in Vilna and, as usual, he did his utmost to conceal his greatness by sitting with the simple people on the far side of the head table.

R' Itzele Ponevezher zt"l sat in the place of honour and delivered a very difficult and intricate discourse on the subject of pruzbul. He presented a very novel idea. The Chazon Ish immediately spoke up, "But that contradicts a straightforward Mishna!" R' Itzele assumed that the simply dressed man sitting with the baalei batim hadn't even grasped his words and dismissed him declaring, "We are not Mishna Jews!"

After the drasha, R' Itzele decided that even though it seemed unlikely, perhaps the young man knew what he was saying. He went over to the back table and asked what he had meant. The Chazon Ish showed him a Mishna in Moed Katan which clearly contradicted the Rav's drasha.

When R' Itzele heard this, he was so impressed that he removed his chair from the head table and placed it next to the unknown young man. When R' Shlomo Karelitz, asked the Chazon Ish if this was a true story, he said nothing, as was his wont. R' Karelitz concluded, "It is clear that this was true for if not, the tzaddik would surely have denied it!"

"A righteous man falls down seven times and gets up." – King Solomon, Proverbs, 24:16

His Shame Was Revealed

וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל־פַּרְעֹה *And Moshe and Aharon came to Pharaoh*...(7:10)



Chazal describe how Hashem embarrassed and shamed Pharaoh greatly. The Medrash (Yalkut, Remez 181) says that Pharaoh's palace had 400 doors. By each door was stationed lions, bears and other vicious animals. No man or creature could enter any of the doors without being mauled to death by the wild animals unless meat was placed in front of the animals to keep them calm.

But when Moshe and Aharon came to the palace, all the animals stood around them and licked their feet, accompanying them until they reached Pharaoh. At that time, many kings from the east and west who were subjects of Pharaoh's empire were meeting with him.



When they saw Moshe and Aharon leading the parade of wild animals, they became filled with fear. Pharaoh was also overcome with fright. All the kings took their crowns off their heads and bowed to Moshe and Aharon. At that moment, Pharaoh needed to use the facilities and he went into the bathroom.

Twelve mice ran over to him and began biting him from all sides. He cried out bitterly and all of his top ministers and advisors heard him screaming in pain. Pharaoh then returned to his throne and his confidence returned. He asked Moshe and Aharon, "Who are you and where do you come from? Who sent you to me?" They answered, "The G-d of the Jews sent us to you to tell you to send out My nation so that they may serve Me!' He immediately said to them, "I don't know who this G-d is. I never heard of him. He never sent me a letter or a gift."

Sefer Megaleh Tzafonah asks why Pharaoh had 400 doors in his palace. He explains that Pharaoh was the root of the "sitra achra", force of impurity. It is known that the power of the sitra achra is divided into 400 parts (for this reason, Esav had 400 followers, Bereishis 33:1). All types of wild animals were placed at the 400 doors, which represented the 400 parts of the sitra achra, in order to strengthen the force of impurity and add to the power of the black magic Esav used.

When Moshe and Aharon arrived, the strength of their holiness overpowered the force of impurity; therefore, all the wild animals laid down before them and could not harm them. They licked their feet to show their subservience to them and accompanied them as a display of obedience. All the kings who witnessed this also took their strength from the force of impurity. They too were forced to subjugate themselves to the holiness of Moshe and Aharon, and they removed their crowns and bowed before them.

Hashem then caused Pharaoh himself to be overcome with fear. Pharaoh claimed that he was a god and said that he never needed to use the bathroom. He would secretly go every morning to a hidden place to take care of his needs in order to fool people. But Hashem caused him to become so frightened that he could not control his body and he needed the bathroom right then and there. He had to

get up from his throne and go to a private room to use the bathroom secretly. What did Hashem do then?

He sent twelve mice to bite him while he was using the bathroom, which caused him to cry out in pain. His servants had to run to see if he was okay, and they saw that he was using the bathroom like a regular person. He was now publicly humiliated. Everyone now clearly saw that he was a liar and that he was not a god at all. The top ministers and simple workers in the palace all now knew the truth. And Pharaoh was shamed.

He adds that the reason Hashem sent exactly twelve mice was because Pharaoh had caused suffering to the twelve Shevatim of Klal Yisroel.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

A professor of mathematics wanted his son to leave *Yeshiva* to begin his career. The son was learning in the *Yeshiva* of **Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l***, and was not yet ready to leave *Yeshiva*, so the boy's parents arranged a meeting with Rav Moshe and their son to discuss the matter.

At the meeting, Rav Moshe explained to the parents how important it was for the boy to continue his learning a little longer before leaving *Yeshiva*, since he was just starting to see real success in his learning. The father disagreed, and supported his argument with the Torah concept of following the majority.

He said, "The *Gemara* says that there are 3 partners who create a person. My wife and I are of the opinion that our son leaves *Yeshiva* now. You are of Hashem's opinion that he stays a little longer. Since we follow the majority, it's 2 to 1 in our favour, which means he leaves."

Rav Moshe smiled and turned to the mathematician with a counter-argument. He said, "You are right that we follow the majority. However, your math is flawed." The professor was shocked at being told that he made a mistake in math.

Rav Moshe continued, "Every person is made by 3 partners, as you have said: a mother, a father and Hashem. Therefore, each of us has 3 parts to us, which is 9 altogether. I count as 3, as you have pointed out, because I would like him to stay in *Yeshiva*. You and your wife also have 3 parts each, as Hashem is a third of both of you. Thus, a third of you and a third of your wife, which represents Hashem, says he stays. Since my 3 parts and 1 from each of you would like him to stay, that makes it 5 parts (3+1+1=5) against 2 parts from each of you which is only 4. As you have pointed out, we go after the majority, and that means that 5 parts to 4 parts wish him to stay in *Yeshiva*."

The mathematician was astounded at Rav Moshe's logic and saw how the Torah is the greatest possible tool for one's mind, by the way Rav Moshe proved him wrong using math, the subject of the father's expertise. The boy's father allowed his son to stay in *Yeshiva* and continue his learning.

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

The *Baal Shem Tov* once said, ***"If I am the same person when I take three steps back after Davening Shemoneh Esrei as when I took three steps forwards, then I haven't really Davened."***

However, he taught that the effect from any change that we may accomplish from *Davening* does not last forever, which is why we must *Daven* three times a day!

The Way of Emunah – Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum

Salvation Even Though They Cried for Themselves:

וְגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־נַאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם מַעֲבִדִים אֹתָם וָאֶזְכֹּר אֶת־ בְּרִיתִי "*And also, I heard the moans of the children of Yisroel, whom the Egyptians are holding in bondage, and I remembered My covenant*". (6:5)

The Chida zt"l (Sefer Pnei Dovid) explains the words, ***"And also, I heard the moans of the children of Yisroel"*** -



Hashem is saying that he heard the cries of bnei Yisroel. It is true that they did not cry out l'sheim shomayim and their cries were not because they were pained by the fact that the Shechinah was in exile or because they wanted to be able to serve Hashem better. Rather, they cried because "the Egyptians were holding them in bondage" and they were suffering greatly. Despite this, Hashem declared that he would remember His covenant and save them because the time had come to redeem them.

"Know that however much effort you put into accomplishing your goals, and however much success your efforts appear to bring you, it is really Hashem who does everything." ~ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.

Standing Tall

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הַשְׁכֵּם בַּבֹּקֶר וְהִתְיַצֵּב לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו כֹּה־אָמַר ה'...
And Hashem said to Moshe, "Rise early in the morning and stand erect before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'So said Hashem…(9:13)

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh explains as follows: In this pasuk, Hashem gave three commandments to Moshe.

1. To get up early.

2. To stand erect before Pharaoh and not to bow his head as is customary to do before a king.

3.To relay the message.

He told him to do this as a sign that he was now the ruler over Pharaoh and that his message must be obeyed. Hashem needed to command Moshe to do this because Moshe's normal posture was slightly bent because of his great humility.

Hashem told him that he should not slouch at all in front of Pharaoh. He also hinted to the fact that he should only stand tall and straight "in front of Pharaoh." At all other times, he should remain slightly bent as a sign of subjugation and honour to Hashem.

The Door Got Taller: The Medrash relates that the door leading into Pharaoh's room was very short. Anyone who walked through it was forced to bend down and, thereby, bow to the idol that Pharaoh had placed next to the door. However, when Yaakov, Moshe and Aharon went into Pharaoh's room, the door got taller and they were able to enter without bending down.

Sefer Likutei Yehuda quotes the **Alshich zt"l** as using this Medrash to explain this pasuk. Hashem told Moshe to "stand erect" before Pharaoh. He was telling him that he would not have to bend over and bow down to Pharaoh's idol.

The Light of the Aleph Bais



Sefer Otzar Yisroel relates that two Sefardic Jews were so ignorant that they didn't even know how to daven. At that time, the bais medrash of **Rav Mendel of Vitebsk zy"a** was inaugurated after undergoing renovations. This bais medrash was known to be the place that the **Arizal** davened in, and the exact place where he had stood was still visible. It was also said that Yehoshua bin Nun had davened in the same place. The bais medrash was inaugurated on the night of Yom Kippur and chochomim delivered drashos to mark the occasion.

These two Sefardim wanted to attend, but the shamass would not let them in. He told them that the gathering was only for talmidei chochomim and not for ignorant men like them. The two men stood outside on the porch and told each other, "Let's sing the letter of the Aleph Bais forwards and backwards!" They sang and danced with all their strength and the **Kalisker Rebbe** said that he saw a great light emanating from them.

הַשְׁלֵךְ עַל ה' יְהָבְךָ וְהוּא יְכַלְכְּלֶךָּ - ***When a person places their bag on a camel, they don't feel its weight anymore, because they are no longer carrying it. This is how a person's bitachon in Hashem should be. If one feels burdened with concerns over their livelihood and the like, it is a sign that they have not thrown their bundle of worries on Hashem. Having bitachon means that a person doesn't feel any anxiety over their needs. One must throw their entire burden on Hashem! ~ Rabbi Yehuda Leib Chasman.***

SEFAS TAMIM
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Chizuk – Inspiration

Moshe Minzberg was preparing for his bar mitzvah in 1957 and in honour of the upcoming simcha, a visit was scheduled with the **Brisker Rov, Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveichik ZT'L** (the "Rov") at his home in Yerushalayim.



Moshe was accompanied by his father and his Zaide. Moshe's father turned to the Rov and said, "May Moshe tell the Rov his Bar Mitzvah P'shetel (speech)?" his father asked.

The Rov, who was elderly and not in good health, responded that he didn't have the strength to hear all of the P'shetel but would relish the opportunity to hear a portion of it. Moshe proceeded to say his P'shetel. The Rov interjected several times, asking the young Bar Mitzvah boy questions, and was impressed with his answers.

Toward the end of the P'shetel, the Rov suddenly turned white and covered his ears. "Stop! Stop!" said the Rov.

Moshe didn't know what to make of the Rav's sudden reaction. Had he said something wrong? He turned to his father and Zaide for a possible explanation but they were just as perplexed.

The Rov explained, "Ich vill nisht zein kein dover shekarim (Tehillim 101:7)" דֹּבֵר שְׁקָרִים לֹא־יִכּוֹן לְנֶגֶד עֵינָי – I don't want to be a liar. I said

that I wouldn't listen to the entire P'shetel, but only to a portion of it, and I can tell that we are coming to the end of the P'shetel so I needed to stop you. The Rov's adherence to Emes, to the purest truth, had triggered his sudden reaction. How could he continue listening to the end of the P'shetel if he had said minutes before that he would only listen to a portion of it? Every word that emerged from the Rov's mouth had to be truthful. **("Yated Ne'eman")**



A Shabbos Vort- Rabbi Yisrael Bronstein

וְהִתְיַצֵּב לִפְנֵי פַּרְעֹה "*Stand before Pharaoh* " (9:13)

The Midrash relates that the doorway to Pharaoh's palace was very low so that anyone who wished to enter the palace was forced to bow toward an Egyptian idol that was placed opposite the doorway.

But when Moshe and Aharon approached the doorway it miraculously became higher and they did not even need to bend their heads in order to enter.

This, said **R' Moshe Alshich**, is what Hashem meant when He said to Moshe, "Stand before Pharaoh." When you come before Pharaoh you will not need to bend at all; go in standing straight!

Similarly, continued the Alshich, when Yaakov Avinu went to meet Pharaoh, Hashem made a miracle for him, and the doorway to Pharaoh's palace was enlarged so that the tzaddik would not unwittingly commit the sin of idol worship.

Thus, the verse states (Ber 47:7), "Yosef brought his father Yakov and presented him standing before Pharaoh."

Yaakov entered Pharaoh's palace standing erect, and he did not have to bow to the idol.



L'Maaseh



Rav Moshe Schneider, zt"l, was Rosh Yeshivah in Frankfurt, Germany, until the Nazis closed down the Yeshivah in 1939. Fortunately, he was able to move his Yeshivah to London, where he was able to continue inspiring the next generation of Torah leaders.

Since it was wartime, it was difficult for the Jewish community to donate funds to support the Yeshivah. The Rosh Yeshivah and his Rebbetzin did everything they could to provide for the wellbeing of the Talmidim, both spiritually and physically.

A family in Golders Green, the Grodzinskys, owned a bakery, and they told the Rosh Yeshivah that they would donate to the Yeshivah all of the rolls and cake that had not been sold after three days. There was just one condition, they could not deliver it to the Yeshivah. This meant that a student would have to arise early in the morning, take a bus to the bakery, and then haul back a large, heavy bag, filled with provisions for the Yeshivah.

A rotation system was set up, where every day, another student had the responsibility to pick up and bring the daily supplies to the Yeshivah. However, some students did not enjoy rising early in the morning and making the trip.

One boy, by the name of Moshe, not only never missed his turn, but often, he would also happily cover for others. To him, doing the Chesed for others and enabling them to learn Torah better, was an honour and a privilege.

Another student, also by the name of Moshe, also provided an essential service, each day, for the Yeshivah. The Rosh Yeshivah felt

that it was inappropriate for a student to run into Shul at the last minute and begin Davening. He therefore established a Seder, learning period, one hour before Davening, for the students to come and learn.

The difficulty was waking up the students an hour before Davening. The other Moshe volunteered and accepted upon himself the responsibility of waking up the Yeshivah students every day.

Shortly before 5:00 a.m., this Moshe would begin his rounds, waking up the Talmidim to come to learn. One day, during the Rosh Yeshivah's Mussar discourse, he declared, "**Moshe Reichman**, who goes for the bread consistently and dependably, and **Moshe Sternbuch**, who arises early every day to see that others should learn, should both be Bentched. Moshe Reichman should be blessed with such incredible wealth that the entire world should know of him!

Moshe Sternbuch, who enables others to learn, should achieve such distinction in Torah knowledge, that the entire world should know of his wisdom!" These two Talmidim were rewarded for the good choices they made. The enthusiasm and eagerness of each of them greatly benefitted the Jewish people.

One grew up to be a Gadol in Torah, and the other became a Gadol in Chesed. Later in life, Reb Moshe Reichman remarked, "***I wish I had been the individual who woke up the Talmidim in the morning***." He never regretted his original choice, he just wanted to do more to help other people!

"Every difficulty and challenge that a person faces is an opportunity to elevate their soul and come closer to Hashem." – The Chofetz Chaim [Stories to Inspire]



Avodas Hashem by Yitzchok Henry

'Lego' is a company synonymous with building bricks. The business however didn't start out like this. Lego was originally founded in 1932 in Denmark by Ole Kirk Kristiansen. Over the course of his working life, Kristiansen developed his business from a small woodworking shop that sold household products into a wooden toy manufacturer.

During the early 1930s, Kristiansen's business suffered due to the onset of the Great Depression in Denmark. This resulted in many of his customers being unable to afford his products. This decline in business forced Kristiansen to lay off staff. In order to sell more products, Kristiansen made the decision to produce cheap wooden products, including wooden toys. His business slipped into bankruptcy, but he refused to stop producing toys.



Kristiansen's company moved primarily to the production of wooden toys, such as yo-yos, pull-along animals and trucks. In doing so, Kristiansen made the decision to focus his products on the development of children. With this turning point, Kristiansen effectively defined the core philosophy of the company, which would eventually be expressed in its name in 1934. Lego is a shortened form of the Danish word *Leg godt*, meaning "play well", (and 'I assemble' in Latin) and the company eventually became known as The Lego Group.

Kristiansen made his toy products from birch wood that had been cut from the forest, dried out for two years and then dried in a kiln for three weeks. The toys were put together, sealed, sanded and primed before being painted with three coats of varnish.

He struggled to sell both his household products and wooden toys due to the poverty levels of people living in the local community. However, he continued to produce the toys, sometimes exchanging them for food. By 1935, the toy range included a variety of animals, including a pull-along wooden duck which has since seen numerous variations.

Lego would eventually transfer to the production of plastic bricks following the purchase of a plastic moulding injection machine in 1947. When Ole died in 1958, the management of the company transferred to his son Godtfred.

6 red Lego bricks have 915,103,763 combinations! Visitors to 'The Lego House' are gifted 6 red Lego bricks as a reference to all these combinations, and the companies 6 core values: Creativity, imagination, fun, learning, quality and care.

Lego manufacture over 20 billion bricks a year! There are over 4 billion Lego figures in the world! There are currently over 400 billion Lego bricks out there! If stacked on each other, they would reach the moon – 10 times!

When asked, how come Lego has been so successful, Godtfred told a story of his father's commitment to quality, when Godtfred was just a boy, he was helping out in the workshop making wooden ducks. After dropping them off at the train station, he was excited to tell his father that he had saved the company money and time – "*I gave the ducks just two coats of varnish and not three as we usually do.*"

Ole Kirk sent his son back to the train station to retrieve them and give them the final coat of varnish!



The company's original motto was and still is: "***Only the best is good enough***." This is the lesson the future owner of Lego learned that day! This motto was carved onto a wooden sign and hung up in the workshop.

I think we can learn a valuable lesson from this. We can also be successful in our Avodas Hashem, be it in Torah, Tefilla or Mitzvos, by utilising this motto.

When we go and daven, do we go to a quick minyan just to get it over and done with? Do we go to an early Selichos in the night because it is easier and more convenient? Do we buy a cheaper Esrog just to be yoitze? Are our Mezuzos, Tzitzis and Tefillin of the best quality that we can afford, or do we just get the cheapest? Which minyan has the quickest megillah leinning? How quick does your Pesach Seder take? Do we buy dodgy hechshered foods because they're cheaper.

The list is endless. Do we just tick the boxes? If we have a Mitzvah to do, it's worth doing it properly to the best of our means and ability – the rewards are incredible! - "***Only the best is good enough***!"

Who are you?

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ה'.. וָאֵרָא אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹב בְּקֵל שַׁקִי וּשְׁמִי ה' לֹא נוֹדַעְתִּי לָהֶם *And G-d spoke to Moshe and said to him, I am the L-rd, and I looked at Abraham, at Isaac, and at Jacob, at the G-d of my breast, and the name of the L-rd was not known to them*. (6:2-3).

Referring to the words "***And I looked to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob***," Rashi, the great commentator, says: "And I looked - to

the fathers." And isn't this self-evident? Rather, Rashi wants to emphasize that Isaac was not only Abraham's son, but also a father to me himself, and Jacob was not only Isaac's son and Abraham's grandson, but he was also a father in his own right. Each of the three stands on its own merits.

Sometimes, when we ask the son of a famous person his name, he may answer: "I am so-and-so, son of so-and-so." However, it is not the father that interests us; We want to know - who are you? What are your good deeds? What are your virtues and virtues?

There are people who talk with great pride about their father or grandfather who were scholars, who went to shul every day, who did many acts of charity and kindness. But where are they? Do they also have similar virtues? Will their children be able to be proud of them, as they are proud of their fathers? To such people we must say: '***Who and what are you What are <u>your</u> virtues***?'

Rav Elimelech MiLizhensk - Impressing Yourself With Miracles

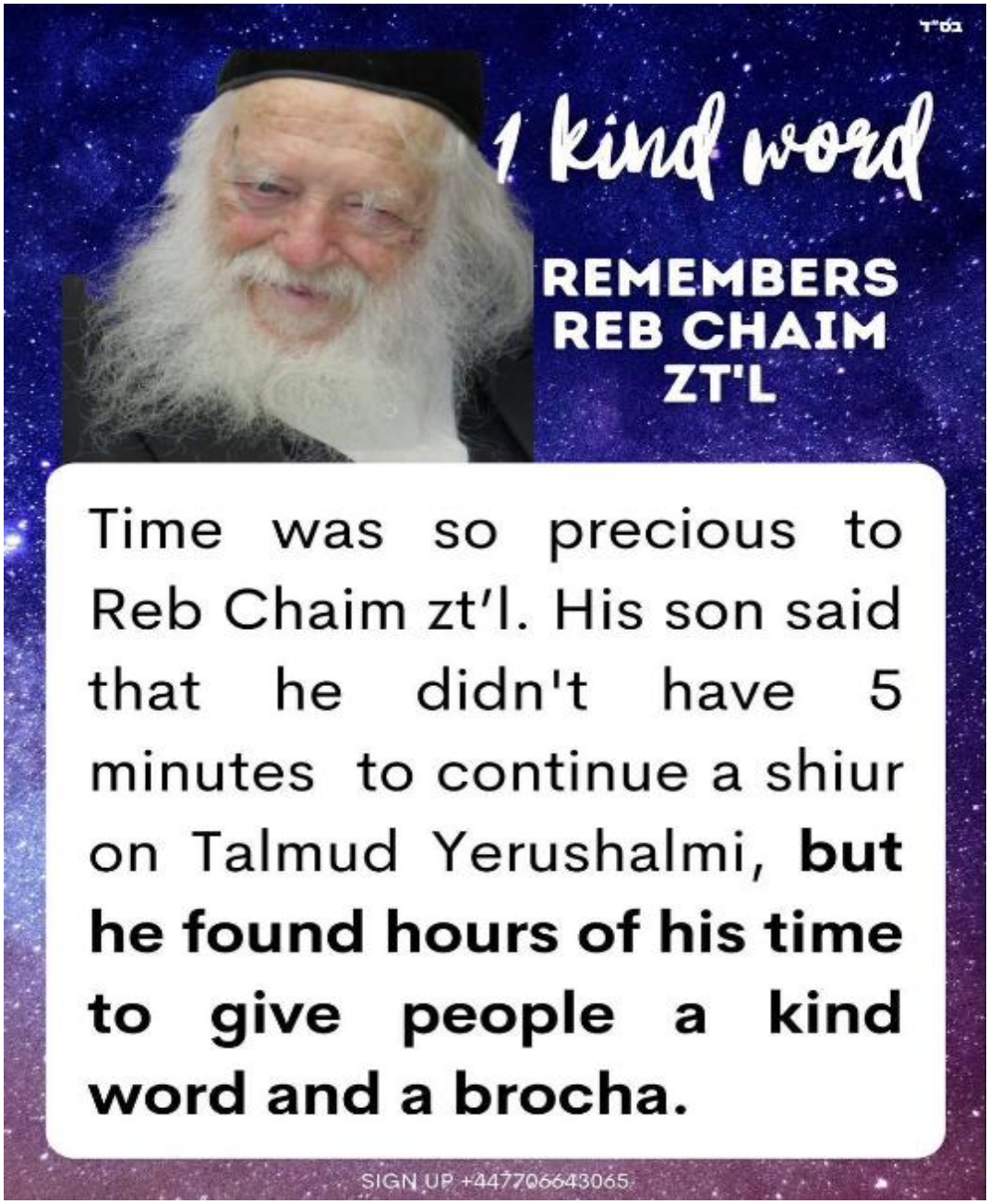


Hashem prepared Moshe for his first showdown with Paroh by telling him (Vaeirah 7:9), **כִּי יְדַבֵּר אֲלֵכֶם פַּרְעֹה לֵאמֹר תְּנוּ לָכֶם מוֹפֵת**, when Paroh will tell you perform for yourself a miracle. The Noam Elimelech asks, shouldn't it say perform for "me" a miracle, meaning for Paroh?

The Rebbe Reb Elimelech answers that there are two kinds of miracles. If a miracle is just an optical illusion or is done with black magic, it only impresses the person performing it on the first occasion, as he is amazed that it works. Subsequently performances dazzle the audience but not the

performer. However a Miracle that comes from the word of Hashem is amazing each time all over again as the performer watches Hashem change the Teva.

Paroh had plenty of magicians. No magic trick could prove Moshe and Aharon's authenticity or the authenticity of Hashem and their mission. The only thing that could impress Paroh is a miracle that is from Hashem. Show me a miracle that will impress you as well, said Paroh. Such a miracle is a true sign that you were sent by Hashem.



Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה כֵּן אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מִקֹּצֶר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה
Moshe spoke thus to the children of Israel, but they did not hearken to Moshe because of [their] shortness of breath and because of [their] hard labour. 6:9



Rashi explains that anybody that is in distress, his wind and his breath are short, and he cannot take a deep breath. They were unable to digest what Moshe Rabeinu was telling them.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh says:

אולי כי לצד שלא היו בני תורה לא שמעו, ולזה יקרא קוצר רוח - מִקֹּצֶר רוּחַ כי התורה מרחבת לבו של אדם - *'Perhaps the people did not respond positively to this assurance because they had not yet received the Torah. Since Torah broadens a person's mind, the Torah may hint at that by describing the Israelites' state of mind as "narrow minded, limited.'*

Had they had the Torah to guide them and give them the insights into what was happening to them, which was divinely ordained with hasgacha pratis, they would have understood everything.

By utilising the Torah as a guide, we can look at any current situation that we are in and understand what is happening to Klal Yisrael and us as individuals, that it is all hashgacha pratis.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

וְהַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר־בַּיְאֹר תָּמוּת וּבָאַשׁ הַיְאֹר וְנִלְאוּ מִצְרַיִם לִשְׁתּוֹת מַיִם מִהַיְאֹר' ***And the fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become putrid, and the Egyptians will weary [in their efforts] to drink water from the Nile***.'(7:18)

The Chasam Sofer says, based on the Medrashim, that when a Mitzri saw a Jew drinking water, he came up to him and requested some water, (**Rav Sholom Scwhadron** said you must consider the mindset of the Yidden. The Yidden were so used to the commands of the Egyptians, that they were extremely meek and did everything that they were asked.) they said, "Ok here have some."

As soon as he took the water, it turned into blood. So, the Mitzri said, "How do I get some water?"

So, the Yid says, "Moshe Rabeinu told us that if you pay us money for the water, than it will remain as water, and not revert to blood." The Egyptian takes out a few small coins and hands it over in exchange for the water, but it doesn't work, it still changes into blood. He says to the Yid, "How much more money do you need?" The Yid answers, "I don't know, just keep on giving me more, and when it is enough, it will automatically turn to water, and remain so."

The Medrash tells us, that depending on the level of their *rishus* – was the amount of money that they had to pay in order for the water to remain as water. This is why the Gemarah in Sanhedrin(91a) says that when the Mitzriyim came to Alexander The Great of Macedonia, and complained that the Jews owed them money, because when they left Egypt, they cleaned us out. They claimed that it says so in the Torah itself - וַיְנַצְּלוּ אֶת־מִצְרָיִם '***and they emptied out Egypt***.' (12:36). We want it all back.

Geviha ben Pesisa counter-claimed that in that very same Torah, it says that The Yidden were enslaved for 400 years. 600,000 men came out (which was only a fifth), so 3 million men working for 400

years – where are all the wages for that? So the Egyptians owed the Yidden a great deal more! So the Mitzriyim ran off leaving fields behind, which Alexander gave to the Jews!

Why didn't the Egyptians also complain about the extortionate amount of money that they had to pay the Yidden for water?

Because it wasn't the Jews that set the fees and charged them. It was Hashem's *cheshbon*, depending on each Egyptian's level of evil and cruelty.



The Chasam Sofer brings another Medrash that says that the Yidden secluded themselves far away from the Nile - in Goshen. This left the Mitzriyim without a way of getting water. So, they filled up barrels of water and schlepped them all the way to Goshen. They had heard that Moshe Rabeinu saying that if the Jews touched the barrels, it would revert into water.

So The Egyptians paid a fee and got the Jews to touch the barrels to turn them into water. But when they drank from the barrel, they spat the water out. The water was full of dead stinking rotting fish!

So they returned to the Nile, to try to dig deep, to find a source of water/blood that didn't have dead fish in it. They then returned all the way back to Goshen in the boiling heat with the new barrels to get them turned into clean water.

This is what the Pasuk is alluding to - The Mitzriyim became exhausted by this scenario!

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series



וַאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׂם לִבּוֹ אֶל־ דְּבַר ה׳ וַיַּעֲזֹב אֶת־עֲבָדָיו וְאֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ בַּשָּׂדֶה

But he who did not pay attention to the word of Hashem, left his servants and his livestock in the field.(9:21)

'Behold, I am going to rain down at this time tomorrow a very heavy hail, the likes of which has never been in Egypt from the day of its being founded until now. And now, send, gather in your livestock and all that you have in the field, any man or beast that is found in the field and not brought into the house the hail shall fall on them, and they will die. He who feared the word of the L-rd of Pharaoh's servants drove his servants and his livestock into the houses. But he who did not pay attention to the word of the L-rd left his servants and his livestock in the field.' (9:18-20)

The Egyptians are being warned about the plague of hail. Every hailstone was like a 'cruise missile'! It would destroy any animal or human being that was left outside.

They have experienced multiple plagues, and: **וַאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׂם לִבּוֹ** – *and they are still not going to pay attention to the word of Hashem,* they are still going to remain outside!?

When somebody doesn't take note of what he has previously seen and experienced, then he is either out of his mind or it is pure madness!

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series



Why was **דם** - blood chosen to be the 1st plague?

The Ben Ish Chai says that there are certain *klippos* (aspects and energies) in the world of Tumah, and certain "**ניצוצות של קדושה**" - Sparks of holiness.

Each *klippah* has a name, which tells us about its essence, its life-source, and ability to succeed and persevere. But it also tells us about the negative aspects as well.

The klippah of Mitzrayim is called – **מצרים**. This can be read as two words, **צר** and **מים**. Within this word, we see the part that it draws its life-source from. which is **מים**. This also corresponds to the physical way in which the Egyptians got their life source from the waters of the Nile. They relied on the Nile overflowing and irrigating all the surrounding land as well as a source of drinking water.

The **חלק הרע** was called **צר** – as we find in Tehillim (107:2) **יֹאמְרוּ גְּאוּלֵי ה׳ אֲשֶׁר גְּאָלָם מִיַּד־צָר** - *Those redeemed by Hashem shall say it, those whom He redeemed from the hands of* **צָר** - *an oppressor*. This is the **כח הטומאה**.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted to show Mitzrayim that 'I have annihilated your **כח** from having any jurisdiction over Klal Yisrael anymore.' Therefore, He took the **מים** that they had, and changed it into **דם**. So that even the **חלק טוב** that they had, was no longer usable.

The Ben Ish Chai asks why didn't Hashem just make the Nile dry up?

Because Hashem still wanted to retain the water for use by the Yidden. Besides using it as drinking water etc, they could also sell it to the Mitzriyim in order to amass wealth.

Maybe this could be the meaning of - וְנֶהְפְּכוּ לְדָם ***and it will turn to blood.*** דמים has two meanings, blood or money. It wasn't taken away completely, but it was changed into a source of sustenance for Klal Yisrael.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series



The Chofetz Chaim was once learning through parshas **וארא**, and he burst out laughing. His talmidim asked him, "What's so funny?

He answered, "I was trying to imagine what went on in the courtroom of Pharaoh. Moshe Rabeinu walks in, and takes a double handful of his, and throws the soot up into the air." וַיִּזְרֹק אֹתָהּ מֹשֶׁה הַשָּׁמָיְמָה וַיְהִי שְׁחִין אַבַעְבֻּעֹת פֹּרֵחַ בָּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה – ***and it became boils breaking out into blisters upon man and upon beast***.(9:10)

When a person gets boils, he becomes very itchy. So he will ask somebody to scratch his back. That person will ask the next one to also scratch his back. Until eventually, you had circles of people scratching the back of the person in front of him.

'I found this image hilarious! The courtroom of Pharaoh becomes a scratching room!'

Rav Meir Shapiro Zt'l says that in reality, this solution didn't work. He brings his proof from the pesukim: **וְהָיָה לְאָבָק עַל כָּל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם וְהָיָה עַל־הָאָדָם וְעַל־הַבְּהֵמָה** ***they were <u>on</u> the people and <u>on</u> the animals***. (9:9) The next pasuk says: **וַיְהִי שְׁחִין אֶבַעְבֻּעֹת פֹּרֵחַ בָּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה** ***and it became boils breaking out into blisters <u>in</u> man and <u>in</u> beast***.(9:10)

It started off as an external affliction. The Medrash says that it caused cuts and open wounds on the skin and body. By scratching, they had some sort of relief. But it soon became apparent that Hashem had caused the affliction to go internally ***into*** the body. As such, scratching would only have a minimal effect to relieve the tremendous pain.

One of the reasons for this, was the **מידה כנגד מידה** when the Mitzriyim whipped the Yidden causing them cuts and festering wounds externally and internally. And also the skin lesions and burnt flesh caused by making the Yidden walk around with candles or burning oil on their heads.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

Chazal say and as Rashi brings,Moshe Rabeinu did not bring the first three plagues **לפי שהגין היאור על משה כשנשלך - . דם צפרדע כינים** - that because Moshe was looked after by the water and there was a **הכרת הטוב** - , The blood was in the water. The frogs emanated from the water. The lice came from the sand/dust which helped him bury the Mitzri. **לתוכו**

This is amazing, as it shows that the concept of **הכרת הטוב** – ***gratitude***, is not just for people or Hashem, but for inanimate objects as well.

Later on in life, **Reb Eliya Lopian Zt'l** resided in Kfar Chasidim in Eretz Yisrael. He was once walking with a bochur after shacharis.

He needed to fold his tallis, so he rested it on a bench and folded it up. When he picked it up, he noticed that the bench had some dirt on it.



Instead of continuing home, he turned in the opposite direction towards the yeshiva. The bachur asked him, "Rebbe, where are you going? Have you forgotten something?"

"No, no, I just noticed that the bench is dirty, so I'm going to get something to clean it with." So the bochur said, "Let me go, I'll do it for you."

So Reb Eliya explained to the bochur that since he had gotten some benefit from the bench, he owes it a debt of gratitude!

"**I** must have **הכרת הטוב**, so **I** must clean it myself!"

This is the extent of gratitude that a person must go through. But more than that. Chazal tell us that when we are **מכיר טוב** – recognise the good, it means that we must appreciate where the good comes from. Where the source of that goodness emanated from – ultimately from Hakadosh Baruch Hu!

So when we have **הכרת הטוב**, to someone or something, we are **מכיר טוב** that it originated from Hashem. This is why we must always be thankful! This allows us to connect to The Riboino Shel Olam in an even more profound way. - Therefore, Moshe Rabeinu's display of **הכרת הטוב** was being **מכיר טוב** to Hashem.

B'ezras hashem, we should always be zoche to see that all the good and bracha that we have – comes from Hashem, and we must be grateful to Him for this.



The Kid in the Rolls Royce – R' Duvi Bensoussan

A boy was born with 'Spina Bifida' – when the spine and spinal cord does not develop properly at birth. The doctors told his parent's that this boy will never walk. But this boy was determined. As he started to grow, this boy fought for every step he took. He wouldn't use a walker or submit to using a wheelchair – he fought for every step.

This boy came to Yeshivat Shaarei Torah in pre-1a in Flatbush, Brooklyn, N.Y. by **Rabbi Chaim Yechezkel Shraga Dahan Zt'l**, a beloved teacher. That year, he was having a battery of very serious surgeries on his back and legs. Because of that, he had no choice that year but to come to school in a wheelchair.

Do you know what Rabbi Dahan did? Instead of this boy feeling like the outcast – like a *nebech* case, Rabbi Dahan put the entire focus of the class, the sports and the games, on the boy in this wheelchair. He was the boy – Rabbi Dahan used to joke, that he showed up to Yeshiva in a Rolls Royce! And Rabbi Dahan would take him in the wheelchair, and he would have races against the boys on their own legs, running up and down the hallways! He made this boy the star of the class. Not only wasn't he the outcast, but this boy became very popular that year, and actually became the coolest kid in the class.

That year could have been a crushing time for this boy, but instead, this amazing Rebbi turned it around, and made him the star, and gave him the confidence to believe in himself that he will fight and succeed in every future step that he is going to take.

Years later, this boy became an athlete! Not only could he walk, but he was faster than most of the kids in the class! And this boy did fight for every step, every basket, and for every 'home run'.

He was now in 6th grade, and he was one of the most popular kids in the class. One day, he is going to a barber's shop with his father on King's Highway, and he bumps into his old pre-1a Rebbi – Rabbi Chaim Dahan Zt'l. When Rabbi Dahan sees this boy, he runs up to him, and says, "Hey, do you remember me?"

The boy looks shyly back, and says, "Yes, of course Rebbi – how can I forget you."

Rabbi Dahan gives this big smile, pulls out his wallet and retrieves a photo that Rabbi Dahan had been carrying for the last 6 years. He shows the boy and his father a picture of Rabbi Dahan and this boy in a wheelchair when he was in his class.

Rabbi Dahan looks at the boy, and says, "I've carried this photo with me for the last 6 or 7 years. Any time that I am feeling down, and I need inspiration, I look at this picture and I get tremendous *chizuk*. – tremendous inspiration – from you! Because, you were that student in a wheelchair, with all the odds against you, but you wouldn't give up! You were determined, and you fought for every step. And now when I have issues in life, I look at this picture of you in the wheelchair, and I relate to you and your challenges! I remember how strong you were, and what strength you have given me."

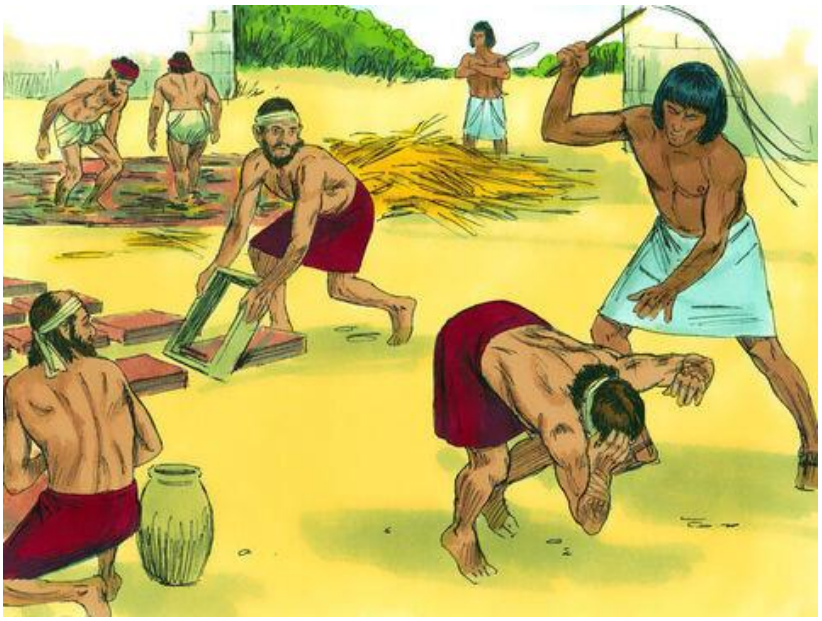
When the boy heard this, on those wobbly legs that were told would never walk, he grew 10 Feet tall, while his father melted on the spot.

Here's a Rebbi that thought out of the box and gave everything he had. Rabbi Dahan would never give up on any boy.

Rabbi Dahan says, "You think that I was doing you the favour? No, you gave me the greatest *chizuk*. As a Rebbi, teaching over the years, that no matter which boy ***rolls*** into my class, I will never give up on him, and I will make every single boy fell like a star!"

Reb Shmuel Donn- Remez לעילוי נשמת יהושע ע״ה בן ברוך הלוי נ״י

וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם *'and I will take the children of Israel out of their midst.'* 7:5



We were held hostage in Mitzrayim for hundreds of years. The bitter slavery dragged on and on with no end in sight.

Yaakov Avinu led the B'nei Yisrael down into Mitzrayim as we learned back in parshas Vayigash, and now we were trapped. There was no way out.

The Ben Ish Chai says that this is hinted to in the very name **מצרים**. The end is a closed **ם**, and the beginning is open **מ**. We went in with ease, and then the land closed in on us. We were stuck in Mitzrayim.

When Hashem took us out of slavery, He opened up the closed **ם**, and we were redeemed.

This is exactly what our Pasuk is alluding to in the words **וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם** - I will take the B'nei Yisrael out - **מתוך ם**- from within the closed **ם**.



Gedolim Quotes

Even if you do not notice any change within you on account of Mussar study – it is still there and will make an impression on you. - R Yisrael Salanter

Peninim Al Hatorah

וַיהִי בָּרָד בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַל־הָאָדָם וְעַל־הַבְּהֵמָה וְעַל כָּל־עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם ***And there will be hail in the entire land of Egypt, on man and beast, and on all the grass in the land of Egypt. (9:22)***



The Torah could have simply stated that hail would rain down throughout the land of Egypt. Recording the detail – man, beast, grass – begs elucidation.

The *Brisker Rav, zl*, derives from the excess verbiage of the *pasuk* that the *barad*, hail, descended only on those places wherein man or animal were to be found. In those areas uninhabited by man or animal and where grass did not grow, no hail came down.

Furthermore, earlier, when Pharaoh was warned to quickly gather the animals to safety, it was not meant specifically to bring the animals inside, so that they be protected by having a roof over their heads. The intention was to inform Pharaoh that the *barad* will fall only on those men and animals that were outside. Those who were under cover, regardless of its flimsy nature, were spared from the effects of the *barad*.

In his *sefer*, *Maasas Hamelech*, ***Horav Shimon Moshe Diskin, zl***, applies this idea to explain the *pasuk*, **הַיָּרֵא אֶת־דְּבַר ה' מֵעַבְדֵי פַּרְעֹה הֵנִיס אֶת־עֲבָדָיו וְאֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ אֶל־הַבָּתִּים**; "***Whoever … feared the word of Hashem chased his servants and his livestock to the houses***" (ibid. 9:20).

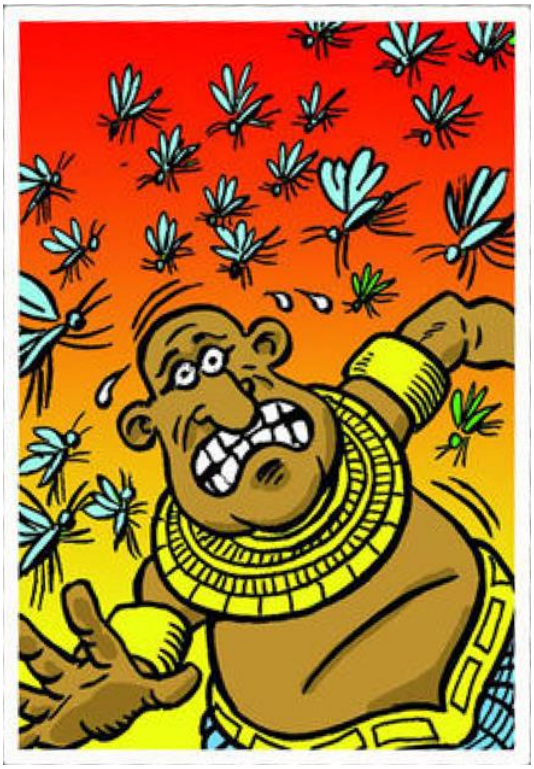
Why does the Torah attribute what seems to be a common-sensical decision to *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven? Any Egyptian that

possessed a modicum of intelligence had seen Moshe *Rabbeinu's* warnings materialise into devastating plagues.

It was not a question of *yiraas Shomayim*, but rather, of *seichel*, common sense.

We must say, explains *Rav* Diskin, that some Egyptians, for reasons of their own, did not want to take their animals into their homes. Instead, they could have built a simple, flimsy hut to cover their livestock.

Indeed, as explained by the *Brisker* Rav, it was not necessary for them to build a solid structure of steel and mortar. As long as it had a cover on top, the livestock would be protected. The mere fact that these Egyptians did not settle for a fragile shack indicated their fear of Hashem. Rather than simply get by, they wanted to carry out the word of G-d.



Peninim Al Hatorah

אֱמֹר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן נְטֵה אֶת־מַטְּךָ וְהַךְ אֶת־עֲפַר הָאָרֶץ וְהָיָה לְכִנִּם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם - *Say to Aharon, "Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the land; it shall become lice.* (8:12)

Rashi explains that Moshe *Rabbeinu* could not bring the plague of lice on Egypt, because it meant striking the ground, something Moshe could not bring himself to do. The dust of the earth protected him from being discovered when he used it to conceal the corpse of the Egyptian whom he had killed. For Moshe to have struck the land would have been a blemish on his attribute of *hakoras hatov*, gratitude.

Chazal teach that whoever denies the favour he benefitted from his fellowman will not stop there. He will also one day deny Hashem's favour as well. One whose character is deficient is blemished across the board. He will not restrict his abysmal behaviour to human beings. He will also manifest his ingratitude to Hashem.

Hakoras hatov actually means recognising the good that one bestows on me. One cannot appreciate what he has not acknowledged as good. He must first concede that he has been a beneficiary, and afterwards he can demonstrate his gratitude. Unfortunately, acknowledging a favour received is probably more difficult and less common than acting gratefully. Sadly, we tend to look for any opportunity to ignore the favour and the benefactor.

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, relates the following anecdote. One of the cities in eastern Europe held a raffle. People from all over the country purchased raffle tickets. The mere thought that a £1 ticket could win a £1 million was mind boggling. A kind-hearted grocer who was known for his acts of *chesed*, kindness, attempted to reach out to Yosele, a man plagued with abject poverty, who lived on whatever scraps he could gather.

"Yosele, why do you not purchase a raffle ticket? Who knows? You might win and become a millionaire."

Yosele thought that his friend, the grocer, had lost his mind, "I am unable to scrape together the few pennies necessary to buy some stale bread, and you expect me to buy a raffle ticket? Have you taken leave of your senses?"

The grocer was not deterred, "But look at how much you might win. Your financial problems would be solved."

This went back and forth until Yosele finally said, "Good, I will buy a ticket if you tell me where I can get the money for it."

"I will lend you the money," the grocer replied. "This might be the opportunity of a lifetime. I want to help you."

Yosele countered, "What if I lose? How will I ever pay you back?" "Do not worry," replied the grocer. "If you lose, you owe me nothing. If you win, you will have more than enough money to pay me back."

Yosele would have to be a total fool to pass up such an offer. He agreed to buy a raffle ticket. After all, it was a "win-win" situation.

A few days passed, and the lottery occurred. The grocer kept Yosele's ticket for him. One can only begin to imagine the shock and excitement that overtook the grocer when he saw that Yosele's ticket had the winning numbers! There were no phones (and even if there were, Yosele could not have afforded the service).

The grocer decided he would notify Yosele of his good fortune. It was a freezing night in the dead of winter. A blizzard was pelting the city with snow that was quickly piling up. Yet, the kind-hearted grocer went out in search of Yosele, who, due to his poverty, lived in a broken-down, ramshackle hovel on the outskirts of town.

It took the man a few hours trudging along in waist deep high snow to reach Yosele's home. It was pitch dark, not a fire, not a candle to illuminate the house. It was past midnight. Yosele was probably sleeping, but the grocer was sure that he would welcome being woken up to hear the exciting news. He kept on knocking and knocking. When this did not work, he tried screaming.

Finally, Yosele called out, quite upset, "Nu, tell me." "Do you expect me to stay outside in this frigid cold? Let me in, so that I can warm up." "Absolutely not," Yosele said. "It is the middle of the night. I need my sleep. Tell me what you have to say."

The grocer saw that Yosele was a hard sell. His wretched life had affected his character, and he was not about to let anyone into his "home." "Ok, Yosele, I will tell you the great news while I am freezing

out here. You won! You won the lottery! You are no longer a poor man. You are a millionaire, probably the richest person in the city."

A few minutes passed, and Yosele came to the door. The grocer thought that he would finally be allowed into the house, maybe even get a hot drink to warm his bones. How shocked he was to hear Yosele berate him, "I cannot understand you," he began. "*Nu*, everyone knows me as Yosele, the poor man, who lives a wretched life. They treat me abysmally because they look at me negatively. That is the way (some) people are. You, however, know (now) that I am a millionaire. How dare you come and wake me up in middle of the night! Where is your respect? You should be ashamed to come banging on my door as if I were still living a life of poverty!"

This is human nature. We pray and pray, and, as soon as we receive a positive response, we stop praying. We forget to Whom we had been praying and for what reason.

Husbands forget all they benefitted from their wives during their marriage. They ignore the *hakoras hatov* imperative. If one does not maintain a sense of gratitude to his/her spouse, how can he/she expect to appreciate what Hashem does for him/her?

"Some gems are mined from deep in the earth. It is extremely dark down there, and the air is suffocating. Only people who are broken, and have lost hope in life, work there. But from those places the gems that will be placed in the king's crown come forth.

Similarly, people go through different struggles and tests in life, but it is possible that from these challenges, Hashem's honor will emerge in a marvelous way." ~ The Beis Avrohom.



Building Bridges

The Arizal teaches that **פרעה** spells **הערף** (neck). The neck is situated between the brain and the heart. This represents Pharaoh's attempt to separate the intellect from the heart.

The Lechovitzer zt'l said that the distance from the brain to the heart is greater than heaven to earth.

The Tzanzer Rav zt'l told his doctor when he asked him what he does for a living, "I build bridges." The doctor appeared bewildered, so the Tzanzer Rav replied, "I am busy building a bridge that will close the gap between my brain and my heart."

That is our avodah, and when one tries, Hashem helps.

All For the Best



People go willingly to doctors and dentists, although they know that the procedure may be painful. But they know it is good for them, and if they don't go through the discomfort, it will become far worse.

Similarly, when one believes that everything comes from his compassionate Father in heaven, why should he be upset? - It is best for him!

Reb Levi Yitzchak Greenwald zt'l, the Tzelemer Rav, was visiting someone in an old-age home, and he met a very old Yid, and they spoke a little. The old man said, "Rebbe, daven for me to die. I am 116 years old and healthy, but I can't take watching my ninety-year-old son suffer. He suffers so much."

The Tzelemer Rav said that he wanted to speak with his son. - "Go speak with him," the elderly man said. "He is in this complex, a flight down." The Tzelemer Rav went to him and saw that it was true. His ninety-year-old son was suffering terribly.



The son said, "The worst part is that I know I have another four years to live, and I can't tolerate living another 4 years with these yesurim."

"How do you know you have another 4 years to live?"

The son replied, "I don't have koach to answer. Ask my father."

The Tzelemer Rav went back upstairs to the 116-year-old Yid, and said, "Can you tell me what's going on? How does your son know that he will live another four years?"

The elderly man replied, "When I was young, I worked as a delivery man for a post office. I was very strong, so I would deliver the heavy packages. Erev Succos, a package labelled **Reb Hillel Kalamaya zt'l** came to the post office. It was probably a package of sefarim. I was very excited to deliver it to this great scholar and tzaddik, so I didn't push it off. It was Erev Succos when I came to Reb Hillel, and I saw that he was sad.

'What's the problem?' I asked him. 'Do you have a succah?' He said that he had. 'Do you need the four minim?' He had that, as well. 'So, what is the problem?"

Reb Hillel Kolamaya answered that in the middle of the night, drunk goyim take sticks, break down Succos, and hit the people inside. "I am afraid they might do that to me and my succah."

"I said to Reb Hillel Kolamaya, 'Don't worry. I will sleep in your succah throughout Succos and protect you from these hooligans.'

"I slept in the succah with a stick near my bed. Around one o'clock at night, the goyim came to the succah, and I hit them and chased them away. This occurred the second and third nights, but by then, they realized that they shouldn't bother Reb Hillel, and they caused havoc elsewhere.

"Motzei Succos, Reb Hillel Kolamaya said, 'I give you a brachah that you should live until 120 gezunterheit, and none of your children shall die in your lifetime.'

"My son knows I will live another four years, and he won't die in my lifetime. That's how he knows he has another four years to live. He wants to die because he can't take the yesurim, and I also want to die because as long as I am alive, my son must live, and he has so much yesurim."

The Tzelemer Rav requested from the secretary of the old-age home that they should contact him if anything happens to these two people.

Four years later, the secretary told the Tzelemer Rav that the father was niftar. An hour later, they called again to say that the son was just niftar.

(This story was told by Reb Nota Freund zt'l, who heard it from the Tzelemer Rav zt'l.) The story tells us the reward one can get for doing chesed. He helped Reb Hillel Kalamaya and merited a very long, healthy life.

Koach Of Tefillah



Reb Yaakov Eidelstein zt'l had a special koach of tefillah. His brachos and his tefillos bore fruit.

Reb Shmuel Wosner *zt'l* once asked Reb Yaakov Eidelstein in which merit he has the *koach hatefillah*.

Reb Yaakov humbly replied, "I don't know that I have the power of tefillah. What people say isn't true."

But Reb Shmuel Wosner insisted it was true, and he wanted to know how. - Reb Yaakov Eidelstein replied, "Many people come to me, tell me their troubles, and I listen to them patiently. I listen until they are certain that I understand what they are going through.

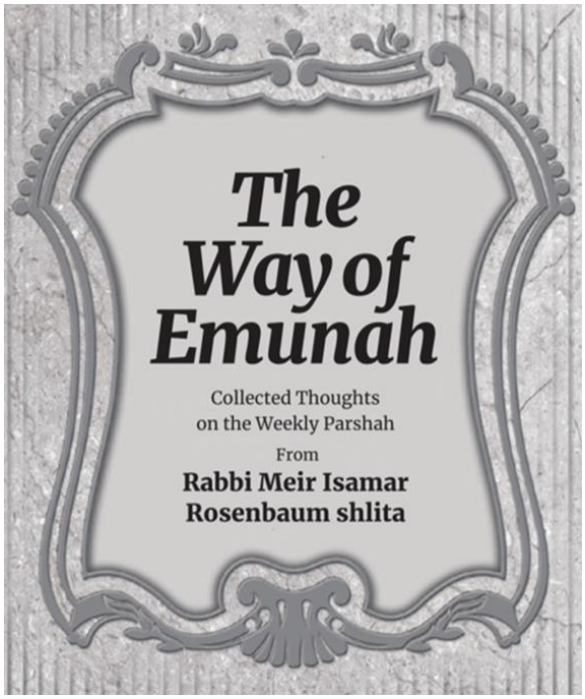
Perhaps Heaven rewarded me *midah kneged midah*. Just as I listen to everything they say, Hashem listens to everything I say."

In this week's *parashah*, Hashem says (6:5) **וְגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־נַאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** - "***I also heard Bnei Yisrael's shouts***."

The word **גם** - "also," seems extra.

Hashem was saying to the Jewish nation, "Just as you care about your fellow man and you listen to his shouts, **גם אני שמעתי** I will also listen to your shouts."

Trusting Hashem means taking the first step even when you don't see the entire staircase.



The Cause of Golus is Misuse of The Mouth

The Ropshitzer Rebbe zy"a (Sefer Zera Kodesh) speaks at length in this Parshah about the destruction that is caused through improper speech. Amongst his words, he says as follows: A person's main avodas Hashem is Torah and tefillah – both of which are done with his mouth. To do this properly, a person must be careful with his speech, as the verse states (Mishlei 21:230: "*One who guards his mouth and tongue, protects himself from suffering.*"

The way a person guards his mouth is by shutting his lips so as now to allow himself to speak empty words, lies, lashon hara and rechilus. This is hinted to from the letter "mem". The name of this letter starts with a "mem" and ends with a "mem". When one wants to say it, he opens his mouth with "mem" and closes it with "mem". That is why the two types of "mem" are known as "mem pechusah", the open mem, and "mem setumah", the closed mem. Thus, the letter "mem" is symbolic of the mouth, which must be opened and closed carefully.

This is also hinted to in the fact that the Torah Shebaal Peh begins with the letter "mem" (in the word "Mei'aimasai"), and ends with the letter "mem" (in the word "B'shalom"). This indicates that the only truly good words for a person to say with his mouth are words of Torah. He adds that misuse of the mouth was the main cause of the bondage in Egypt.

Chazal say (Tanchuma, Shemos 10) that Moshe Rabeinu didn't understand why the nation deserved to suffer so much. But once he saw that some of them spoke lashon hara, he said, "Yes, the thing is known." And in the merit of the tzadikim amongst them who "did not

change their speech" – meaning that they did not speak lashon hara – the nation was redeemed from Mitzrayim.

The Yerushalmi (Brachos 1:2) states: Rav Shimon bar Yochai said: If I had been standing by Har Sinai at the time that the Torah was given, I would have asked Hashem to give people two mouths – one to use for Torah study and one for mundane matters." He then retracted and said, "It is better that we do not have two mouths. Now, when people only have one mouth, they speak so much lashon hara and that causes so much suffering in the world. If they would have two mouths, it would be so much worse."

Embarrassing Anyone is Akin to Murder

Rav Menachem Mendel of Premishlan zy"a wrote the following in his will to his son: "***My son, be very, very careful regarding improper speech. In my old age, I repented from the depths of my heart before the One who investigates the hearts of man for the one time when I called someone a 'shvantz' in jest. The sin of embarrassing even a lowly person is comparable to spilling blood and literal murder***."

This is an incredible thing. Some people permit themselves to shame others by saying; That guy is a sheigitz and a sinner. It's okay to embarrass him. Some even think there is an obligation to shame him. First of all, who appointed you to be the one to make this decision?

Chazal say in Avos that one may not judge his friend until he is in his place. **The Sefas Emes zy"a** adds that you will never be in his place because no human being can ever know the reasons his friend does specific actions or what the root of his sins are. Do you know what challenges and difficulties this person has endured? "

"Besides for this, **Rav Meir of Premishlan zy"a** has told us that when one shames his friend, even if his friend is a lowly person in his

eyes, it is literally like he murdered him. And it is stated in Sefer Hachasidim (Siman 971) that when two people are arguing, one shouldn't say to other: 'What do you have to say, chochom?', because it sounds like he is being sarcastic and calling his friend an idiot."

The Punishment is Small in Comparison to The Sin

In honour of the Yahrzeit of the **Baal Hatanya zy"a** – the 24th of Teves – we will conclude by quoting a lesson he writes that is a great source of encouragement for our generation:

The Gemara (Brachos 60B) states: "***A person is obligated to make a blessing for bad, just like he is obligated to make a blessing for good. What blessing is he required to make on the bad…he only has to accept it with joy***."

A man once came to the Baal Hatanya and said that he might be able to understand why a person has to make a blessing for bad, but he



can't understand how the Gemara could command a person to accept bad things with joy. How is it possible to be happy about bad things? The man added, "Rebbi, please explain this to me in a simple way – not in a way of kabbalah (as the Baal Hatanya was known to explain matters of chasidus in esoteric and mystical ways). Please explain it in a way that even a simple Jew like me can comprehend."

The Baal Hatanya replied, "I'll explain it to you simply with a moshol. "A mighty king went out one day to see what was going on in his kingdom. As he walked, he passed by fields and orchards. He got off his carriage by one field to see how the crops were growing. As he

approached, the owner of the field saw him. He did not know that this was the king and his entourage. Since he thought it was a group of trespassers, he took a handful of mud and threw it at them. Some of the mud hit the king square in the face. "Obviously, the man was arrested right away.

When the day of his trial arrived, the man, who was facing the death penalty, stood in court, surrounded by guards. He was trembling form head to toe in fear. Suddenly, the king himself appeared in the courtroom and said that he would decide the man's fate. After a few minutes, the king said that he had decided to punish the man with a sentence of one year in jail."

The Baal Hatanya then turned to the man and asked, "What do think this man did when he heard his sentence? Do you think he cried and complained about the year he would have to spend in jail? Or do you think he was happy that he got such a light sentence? Of course, he was happy that he was spared the death penalty and that he would be free in a year."

The nimshol is: If a Jew would recognize how much he has sinned, he would know that he deserves a big punishment. If he would only be sentenced to a small punishment instead of the large one he deserves, he should be happy. We all deserve a much worse punishment than what we get. ***Therefore, we should accept the bad things that happen to us with joy***."

Simcha - happiness

"It is only possible to pass through this world, with the influence of Simcha - happiness." • Rav Avrohom **– The Sabah Kadisha of Slonim ZY"A.**

Working on our Middos



At one of the Shabbos meals at an Agudah convention, **Rabbi Shlomo Soroka**, the director of government affairs at the Agudah of Illinois, introduced his Rebbi, **Rav Elya Brudny, Shlit"a**, with a story.

He had been a Talmid in Rav Brudny's Shiur in the Mirrer Yeshivah in Brooklyn. The Shiur was given in Yiddish. However, one day Rav Brudny suddenly switched the language of the Shiur to English, which surprised the Talmidim, and some of them even protested. The next day, some Bochurim wrote a letter requesting Rav Brudny to resume giving the Shiur in Yiddish.

When the letter reached Shlomo Soroka for his signature, he was stunned that this was being done. He reprimanded the organizers and said, "Rebbi didn't forget how to speak Yiddish. If he decided to switch to English, he must have had a good reason for it," and the matter was put aside.

Rabbi Soroka then explained to the convention that in fact, he knew there was a Bochur in the Shiur who had been struggling to keep up with the Shiur, precisely because it was delivered in Yiddish.

When Rav Brudny found out this, he called over the Bochur and told him that he would be switching the Shiur to be in English. Rav Brudny explained, "By me, Yiddish is a Hiddur Mitzvah, but it's not the only way it has to be. If a Talmid will only be able to grasp the Shiur if it's in English, then that will be the language it will be delivered in."

"I know this story," Rabbi Soroka said, "because I was that Bochur!"

Torah Compilations with Yossi

We Should Never Tolerate An Intolerable Situation.

In Parshat Va'eira Hashem promises the suffering Bnei Yisrael in Egypt - **והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים** - '***I will deliver you from under the burdens of Egypt***.'



The Chidushei HaRim brilliantly explains that the term **סבלות** meaning the burdens, the suffering of the people comes from the same root as two other words: **סבלנות** meaning patience and **סובלנות** meaning tolerance.

He explains that sometimes one can be enduring a totally unacceptable situation, however one gets used to it; one succumbs, and one starts to tolerate it. In other circumstances one might exercise patience, believing that actually, one should fight against a particular circumstance, that it's totally unacceptable; but one waits for the right moment which never comes and as a result the **סבלנות** - the patience, leads to **סובלנות** ,which is tolerance.

This, explains the Chidushei HaRim, is what happened to the Bnei Yisrael in Egypt. They suffered many years of slavery. They got used to it. They never believed that the situation could change. As a result, they tolerated what the Egyptians made them go through. Hashem, therefore, declared, **והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים**- I will deliver you from the **סבלות** – from your patience, your tolerance. First of all, you need to be delivered from your negativity, your acceptance of an unacceptable situation. Hashem says you need to deliver yourselves from your defeatist attitude and only after that will I be able to deliver you physically from the slavery in Egypt.

Of course when it comes to unacceptable circumstances one needs to pick the right time and method, but we should never get used to an intolerable situation to the extent that we just allow it to happen. This applies to us, to the situations that we are going through, and equally to situations that we see others going through; we need to do what we can in order to help them in their time of trouble.

So from Parshat Va'eira we learn an important lesson: that we should never tolerate an intolerable situation.

Vechol Maaminim - Koach and Gevurah in the Brachah of Lightning

וְאוּלָם בַּעֲבוּר זֹאת הֶעֱמַדְתִּיךָ בַּעֲבוּר הַרְאֹתְךָ אֶת־כֹּחִי וּלְמַעַן סַפֵּר שְׁמִי בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ
'***But, for this [reason] I have allowed you to stand, in order to show you My strength and in order to declare My name all over the earth.***'(9:16)



In this passuk that was part of the warning of Moshe for the makkah of barad that was accompanied by thunder and lightning, the word "koach" is mentioned in the passuk: **בַּעֲבוּר הַרְאֹתְךָ אֶת־כֹּחִי**. It is a term of gevurah, as Targum Onkelos explained - **דִּיהוֹן מִשְׁתָּעַן גְּבוּרַת - וּלְמַעַן סַפֵּר שְׁמִי - שְׁמִי** - *so that [the strength of] My Name will be declared throughout all the earth.*

And we can say that for this reason, Chazal instituted to mention in the brachah on thunder **שֶׁכֹּחוֹ וּגְבוּרָתוֹ מָלֵא עוֹלָם** [Birchas Ish]

Rabbi's Musings - R' Dani Staum

For us, as believing Jews, prayer is a cornerstone of our faith. In fact, the two are synonymous - Jew and prayer.



Rabbi Shabsi Yudelevich (Derashos Hamaggid 1) recounted a story that appeared in the secular newspapers. It was about a seven-year-old boy from Bogota, Columbia. His parents were so destitute that they couldn't provide for his basic needs. They left him on someone's doorsteps, hoping that he would be cared for there. - Although the boy was taken in and his basic needs were cared for, he missed his parents terribly and wanted to be reunited with them.

The boy wrote a letter… to G-d. He wrote about how painful and difficult things were for him, and how badly he wanted to go home. He asked G-d to give his parents the money they needed to care for him and to help him find them. The boy addressed the envelope to G-d and dropped it in the mailbox.

When the letter arrived at the post office, it was brought to the director of the post office. Not knowing what else to do, he opened and read the letter and concluded that it was written with sincerity. He decided to try to track down the author the letter so they could help him.

After a long search and much advertising in local papers, they discovered who the child was. They helped the parents purchase a home and reunited the boy with his parents.

Afterwards, the director asked the boy why he hadn't written a return address on the envelope. The boy replied honestly that he didn't think to do so because G-d knows where he lives.

Rabbi Yudelevich concluded that we don't need to write letters to G-d. Every sincere prayer we utter is accepted from wherever we are, as long as we call out faithfully.

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus noted that to daven to Hashem and have one's prayers heard, doesn't require that one be righteous. At the same time, even a sinner should never assume his prayers won't be accepted. There is only one requirement for prayer – that one call out to God with sincerity and faith. "Hashem is close to all those who are close to Him; to all those who call out to Him with sincerity." The goal of prayer is that we should feel like we have an ongoing and deep connection with G-d.

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



During the plague of Tzefardei'a, frogs, the frogs went against their nature and jumped into the fires and ovens, because that was the will of Hashem (Pesachim 53b).

Rav Yaakov Galinsky, zt"l, quotes **Rav Itzel'e of Volozhin, zt"l**, who explains that the generation preceding Moshiach will have the attributes of dogs. He explains that just like a dog barks at the stick that hits it, not realizing that there is a person holding the stick, so too, the generation preceding Moshiach will not recognize the true source of their challenges.

Today, we experience challenges to the Torah, as well as nonsensical attacks on Jewish people. We have to realize that the true Source for all of this is Hashem, and He is sending us the message to connect with Him.

Saying Of The Week With Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"No one gets punished an ounce more than they deserve." During the frog plague, Moshe Rabbeinu asked Pharaoh when should the frogs die? (Shemos 8:5). Then, Moshe told him that the frogs will be removed.

The Ramban (ibid.) writes that despite the assurances of frogs being killed off, Pharaoh was scared that these specific frogs would die, but others would take their place. Therefore, Moshe stressed that all frogs would be removed.

Even though Pharaoh is going through these punishments, amazingly, Hashem wanted to spare him from this fear since it wasn't deserved.

We must realize that all Hashem does is for the best and even during hard times, every single ounce of hurt is with a cheshbon (calculation). May we merit to have only blessings in our lives and be able to appreciate what Hashem gives us!

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov had a unique custom. In the early hours of each morning, he would visit the widows, wishing them… "Good morning!" – [Chassidim Mesaprim]





On Shabbos Mevorchim we ask Hashem for a חַיִּים שֶׁל עֹשֶׁר וְכָבוֹד - a life of wealth and glory. But didn't we learn that glory is something that is inappropriate to run after in this world?

Good question. The answer is: We are not looking for glory – but we hope Hashem will help us behave in such a way that we deserve glory. If people honour us because of our good character, we don't mind. We want to succeed in behaving in such a way that we deserve kovod, yes. I'd like people to say, "Miller – he's a nice fellow!" Because that means that most likely I did something that would please people.

So you should do things in such a way that people should approve of you — but you're not living for kovod. And so, in that tefillah we ask Hashem, "Please, give us a life of kovod. Please help us this month so that we should behave in a dignified manner; decently and Torah'dik, and then we deserve to get kovod from people."

If we succeed in doing that this upcoming month, then we'll be very happy because that means that we've had a successful month.

"See not evil in others and good in yourself, but the good in the other and the failings in yourself." ~~ The Berdichever

A Tale of Woe By R' Elazar Meisels



A fellow came in to speak with **Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski Ob"m**, and he told him a very terrible tale of woe. So much tzaros, so many things going wrong in his life. It would be enough tzaros to knock anybody off their feet.

When he had finished off-loading his tale of woe, Dr Twersky said to him, "I've got to tell you something, this is hard to listen to, and yet I'm looking at you, and you appear to be holding up well. You look as though you are keeping it together. You're still in one piece – how do you do it? How do you not stay up all night pulling your hair out?" How are you doing it? How are you holding up so nicely?"

The fellow gave him a beautiful answer. He said, "I did, and I was. I was up every night, crying my eyes out. I was tearing my hair out from anguish and despair. But then I came to the Pasuk in Tehillim 121:4- הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל – The guardian of Yisrael – Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself, Who guards and watches over us, is not sleeping.

I said, Riboino Shel Olam, 'You are staying up all night worrying about me and guarding me – what sense is there in me also staying up worrying?!' If You are staying up, I don't have to also stay up. Thank You so much for watching over me, I'm going to sleep, and I'm going to be ok!

What an unbelievable idea! For a person to take his problems, and say, "Here Riboino Shel Olam, it's all yours - הַשְׁלֵךְ עַל־יְהוָה יְהָבְךָ וְהוּא יְכַלְכְּלֶךָּ – '***Cast your burdens on Hashem, and He will take care of you***!' (Tehilim 55:23)



Jewish Education Program - Turn Off the Gas Before the Pot Boils Over!

וַיֵּ֣ט אַהֲרֹ֗ן אֶת־יָדוֹ֙ עַ֣ל מֵימֵ֣י מִצְרָ֔יִם וַתַּ֥עַל הַצְפַרְדֵּ֖עַ וַתְּכַ֥ס אֶת־אֶ֖רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם "***Aharon extended his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frog emerged and covered the land of Egypt.***" *(Shmos 8:2)*

King Shlomo wrote, מַעֲנֶ֣ה־רַ֣ךְ יָשִׁ֣יב חֵמָ֑ה "***A soft reply repels anger.***" (Mishlei 15:1)

Rabbi Yoffin zt"l *was the Rosh Yeshiva in the Novardok yeshiva. Since there was no dormitory, the students rented rooms in nearby buildings. One of those buildings had more than 20 rooms that were rented to the students. The owner of the building was a widow who was not nice to the students. She ridiculed them, and at different times shut off the water or the electricity.*

One by one, the yeshiva students moved out. Only one student, Yosef Geffen, remained. One morning, as Yosef was returning from shul, the woman saw him and started yelling at him. "You must be crazy! How can you still stay in my building? All the other boys have moved out. Why do you insist on staying?" A normal reaction to hearing someone screaming angrily at you, is to respond in anger. That is not how Yosef responded. Yosef said softly to the woman, "I stay here for your sake. I fear that one night you may fall or become ill and call out for help and there would be no one to hear your cries. I understand that when you yell at us you are merely letting out your frustrations…."

The woman was shocked by the response. She expected to hear an angry retort. She was so touched by Yosef's concern that she begged for forgiveness. From that moment onward, her entire personality changed. She only said kind words to the yeshiva students that she met. Word got around that now she was nice, and

soon all the rooms in her building were again filled by the yeshiva students. (Around the Maggid's Table by Rabbi Paysach Krohn)

Moshe had warned Pharoah about the second plague. Frogs would swarm throughout the land of Egypt. They would go into all the houses, ovens, and even inside the Egyptians' bodies. When the plague started, the Torah says, "*And the frog emerged and covered the land of Egypt.*"



Chazal ask why the Torah says "frog" in the singular and not in the plural. **The Chizkuni** says that it means swarms of frogs emerged. He says that in other places the Torah it does indicate a multitude even though it uses the singular. There was a plague of snakes, yet the Torah uses the term, "snake" (Bamidbar 21:7).

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 67B) quotes Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya who says that one frog came and gave a shrill scream. Frogs from all over the world heard the cry and converged all over Egypt. Rashi gives yet another explanation based on the Midrash (Midrash Rabbah Shmos 10:4). He says that one immense frog emerged from the Nile River. When the Egyptians hit the frog, it split into swarms of frogs.

The question is obvious. Each time the Egyptians hit the frog, it split into swarms of frogs until there were so many that they converged over the entire country. Why did the Egyptians keep hitting the frog? Didn't they realize that their actions were causing more frogs to come? Why didn't they stop?

The answer is also obvious. The Egyptians were angry. The more frogs that swarmed, the angrier they became. They were controlled

by the emotion of their anger, blocking their sensible reasoning which would have told them, "STOP!"

The Talmud (Nedarim 22A) says that one who gets angry, all kinds of Gehinom rule over him. The Rosh explains that anger is destructive to one's health. Another explanation is that anger controls one's actions. Therefore, he will sin and be punished in Gehinom. Rabba bar Rav Huna says that when one is angry, at that moment, even the Divine Presence is not important to him. Rabbi Yirmeya of Difti says that anyone who gets angry, forgets his learning, and increases his foolishness.

The Orchos Tzadikim says that we often see that one who is in a fit of anger and persists in his anger, is not conscious of what he is doing. He will do things that he would never do had he been calm. The Jews in the desert were somewhat disrespectful when asking for water. According to Rashi, Moshe Rabbeinu felt the ever-slightest tinge of anger. Moshe Rabbeinu responded, "Listen, you rebels! Can we extract water from this rock for you?" Due to this slight, slight amount of anger, Moshe erred and hit the rock that was supposed to produce water, instead of speaking to it (Bamidbar 20:10).

The trait of anger can ruin relationships. It can result in a person losing his job. Anger is physically unhealthy and spiritually unhealthy. Realizing and understanding that everything that occurs to us is from Hashem may help us avoid getting angry. After all, the person who angered us is just a pawn in the hands of Hashem! For whatever reason, Hashem felt that this person's actions were beneficial to us.

When we do feel anger stirring-up inside us, there are some techniques to control it. Silence nullifies anger. We should remain silent until we feel calmer. A soft voice nullifies anger. We should speak in a low tone to prevent anger from increasing and to help calm our emotions. When we are angry at

someone, we should not look at him straight in the face because that can increase our anger.

Other popular suggestions are to count to 10, take a drink of water and leave it in your mouth, or go to the bathroom. There are over 40 other suggestions that can be found in, Anger The Inner Teacher by **Rabbi Zelig Pliskin**.

Anger is a normal reaction. But the more we control it, the happier we will be, both physically and spiritually.

Etz Hachaim - L'Maaseh



During a major and important election in Europe, the **Brisker Rov** wrote an extremely fiery letter against the opposing party. The plan was to post the letter Friday afternoon, (elections were to take place on Sunday) and this way the party would be able to deliver a devastating blow to the opponents just before the elections.

The Brisker Rov reviewed the letter, and everything was satisfactory. However, the printing job was finished just an hour and a half before Shabbos. The Brisker Rov called his supporters together and said, "You are too late. It is almost Shabbos, and I am afraid that if you start posting the signs now, it might cause some form of chillul Shabbos."

Even though this letter was extremely crucial for the elections, the Rov explained that if even one act of Chilul Shabbos would possibly come through it, the entire thing was not worthwhile. The Askanim were anxious to get the signs up, yet the Rov would not allow the letters to be posted – at all. He asked that all the signs be brought to his house, since he was afraid that they would not withstand the temptation to post the signs.

Post script: The signs' content was leaked to the other party. They understood that the signs would be posted close to Shabbos to prevent them from answering. Therefore, they wrote an even stronger letter attacking the Rov and posted it minutes before Shabbos. Nobody was able to comprehend why they were writing in such a strong way, and they were shocked by the chutzpah.

When the Brisker Rov's followers posted his signs on Motzei Shabbos, the community saw it as a counterstatement to the shocking declarations of the Rov's opponents. In that light, the Rov's statements, harsh as they may have been, were viewed as relatively mild. The party that followed the Brisker Rav ended up winning by a landslide.

This story shows that all the achievements that one may be trying to achieve, if it is at the expense of being *oiver* one *aveira* it is all not worth it! One has to trust in Hashem and He will repay you for your *mesiras nefesh.* He will safeguard you and repay you greatly.

"Bitachon is the key to all success, for it is only through trust in Hashem that one can find the strength and courage to persevere in the face of difficulties." – Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt – Handshakes



It is commonplace to have agreements and pledges among other things done with a handshake. But do we see any places involving a handshake in the Torah? In five places, Yaakov's name is written full, יעקוב with the letter ו, while אלי-ה - Eliyahu is spelled missing a ו in five places. Yaakov took a letter from Eliyahu's name as security so that Eliyahu will come and herald the redemption of Yaakov's children.

The Maharal explains that the giving of a security was sealed by a handshake.(see Mishlei 6:1)

The letter ו resembles a finger, so five of them represent the hand, which finalizes the giving of security. By taking the ו from Eliyahu five times, Yaakov took his "hand" as a security to ensure that he would redeem his children. This is also alluded to through the fact that the numerical value of ו is six and five multiplied by six is 30. This leads us to the Mishna that says that the hand is composed of thirty segments.



Where do we find in the Torah a source for shaking a person's hand when you greet them? **R' Dessler** (1892-1953) once explained that greeting and blessing someone (when you greet a person with *shalom*, it is a form of bracha) with a handshake is sourced in the Torah.

Why did Yaakov need to put his hands on Efraim and Menashe when giving them a bracha? The

answer is that when there is a connection between the one giving the bracha and the one receiving it, through the hands, at the time of the giving of the bracha, the bracha has a stronger effect.

Similarly, the **Tiferes Shlomo** (1801-1866) says that the hands serve as the conduit for the bracha. This is why people greet each other with a handshake.

Be'er Mayim Chaim

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן הַחַרְטֻמִּים בְּלָטֵיהֶם וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת־הַצְפַרְדְּעִים עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם ***The magicians did likewise with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt*** (8:3)



Unlike the frogs brought forth by Moses and Aaron that jumped into the Egyptians' homes, beds, kneading troughs and even ovens, the frogs produced by the magicians merely dispersed throughout the country. For without a specific G-dly command, there was no need for them to sacrifice their lives.

"The only person who is truly rich is the one with Bitachon. (The one who is content with what Hashem gives them). For it is Bitachon – and not money, that makes a person feel secure about their future." – Matnas Chelko. [Stories To Inspire]

Torah Tavlin



The Alter of Marinover shlit'a (Ish Echod) would say: **וַיִּכְבֶּד לִבּוֹ הוּא וַעֲבָדָיו...** **וַיֶּחֱזַק לֵב פַּרְעֹה** (9:34-35)- Twice by Makkas Barad (Hail) we find that Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart. Why did He harden it a second time - we don't find it by any other makah?

The first time Pharaoh acknowledged 'Hashem is righteous and I and my nation are bad,' was by Barad because by the other makkos, Pharaoh was stubborn and thought it wasn't too bad or he could also perform those miracles. However, Barad, with the forces of nature opposing each other, he realized there was no way for him or his magicians to compete. Thus, he suddenly felt a hirhur teshuva, although he quickly took it back. Hashem hardened his heart twice - one for the teshuva and the second was so that he would not let the Jews leave!"

Yesodos M'ha Sedra

הוא אהרן ומשה. בכל מקום מקדים משה לאהרן ובמקום אחד הוא אומר הוא אהרן ומשה. מלמד ששניהם שקולים. -- תוספתא סוף כריתות

Torah Temimah says that There was no one like Moshe, and it is therefore not possible to really suggest that Aharon achieved the same level. However, if we examine their roles in Yetzias Mitzrayim, it was Aharon who served as spokesman for the nation. He addressed Pharoah, serving as Moshe's mouthpiece. Moshe's role of course, was

to lead the people out of Mitzrayim. Yet, when the Torah speaks about their conversation with Pharoah, it says "hu Moshe v'Aharon". This itself makes sense, because Moshe was our great leader and should be put first. However, when the Torah relates how they took us out of Mitzrayim it says "hu Aharon v'Moshe", placing Aharon first.

These two exceptions come to teach us that a person is not rated on what he achieved, but how much of his role he fulfilled.

Limuday Moshe – R' Moshe Harris

Sandekous and the Segulah of Ashirus



There is a famous **Maharil** which says that sandekous is a segulah for ashirus [wealth]. There are many people who question this based on empirical evidence that we have not seen those serving as sandek becoming wealthy!

I would just like to share a story that **R' Yehonasan Gefen** sent me involving **R' Dovid Feinstein**: Someone came to honour him to serve as sandek at his son's bris, and he made a joke referencing the words of the Maharil that being sandek is a segulah for wealth. Reb Dovid told him a story.

Several years earlier, the yeshivah secretary told the Rosh Yeshivah that a certain Mrs. Klein had called the yeshivah office several times, looking for him. Reb Dovid returned the call. She asked if he

was Dovid Feinstein, the son of **Rabbi Moshe Feinstein**, and he said that he was.

Mrs. Klein explained her sad situation. Her only daughter had given birth to a boy, but she and her son-in-law were not religious and had no interest in arranging a bris milah for the child. Mrs. Klein herself was religious, and when she protested, they told her that if she wanted to take care of the bris, they wouldn't object. She would be making the bris in her home in Long Island, Mrs. Klein said, and she didn't have anyone to honour as sandek. She'd heard about Rav Moshe Feinstein and learned that he had a son who had taken over the yeshivah. So, she'd looked up the number in the phone book, and now she wanted to invite him to come serve as sandek at her grandson's bris.

Reb Dovid accepted, and on the designated day, he travelled to Long Island. There was a sparse crowd on hand, and he didn't know any of the people there, but when Mrs. Klein asked him to stay for the seudah, he agreed. She asked him to share a few words, and again, he agreed. Then he wished the family well and returned to the Lower East Side.

Several years passed, and he received a phone call from a lawyer. Once Reb Dovid identified himself, the lawyer informed him that Mrs. Klein had passed away and had named him as a beneficiary in her will. She'd left $100,000 to Dovid Feinstein.

Reb Dovid looked at his visitor and completed the story. "I did not accept the money for myself, giving it to the yeshivah, but the point is, if the Maharil says that sandekous is a segulah for ashirus, then it means precisely that, whether we see it or not. It's a reality."

Cast no stone into the well that gives you water! ~ Bamidbar R.

Tidbits by Rabbi Ira Zlotowitz

וַיְצַוֵּם אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶל־פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם *'And He commanded them regarding the B'nei Yisrael and regarding Pharaoh the King of Egypt to send out the B'nei Yisrael [from the land of Egypt]'* (Shemos 6:13)



The Pasuk states that the command to set the Jews free was addressed to Pharaoh and also to B'nei Yisrael. What command did the B'nei Yisrael receive regarding their own freedom from Pharaoh?

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Rosh Hashanah 3:4) explains that it was at that moment that the B'nei Yisrael were commanded in the mitzvah of Shiluach Avadim, to release Jewish slaves after a certain period of time. This, then, was their commandment, as hinted in our Pasuk. But the question remains: Why were they given this mitzvah specifically at this time?

The Dubno Maggid *presents a parable of a man who sheltered a king from a rebellion. After narrowly saving the king from certain death, the man asked, "Your Majesty, what was going through your mind when the rebels were so close to capturing you?" The king responded to this question by condemning the man to death, claiming that the question was exceedingly brazen. The man was brought to the gallows and the noose was placed around his neck. Suddenly, the king ordered for them to halt and remove the noose. He tells the 'condemned' man, "Now you have your answer, now you know how I felt!"*

The optimal way to perform mitzvos bein adam l'chaveiro is by putting oneself in the other person's position and trying to understand their needs. And so, just now, while the B'nei Yisrael

were slaves and anticipating redemption, was the most opportune time for them to understand the mitzvah of Shiluach Avadim, as now they were experiencing the plight of an enslaved person. By contemplating how one would want to be treated, a person will be motivated to perform chessed and other interpersonal mitzvos in their highest forms.

Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

וַאֲנִי אַקְשֶׁה אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אֶת־אֹתֹתַי וְאֶת־מוֹפְתַי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם (7:3)

If G-d wanted the Jews to be freed from their bondage in Egypt, why did He harden Pharaoh's heart so that he would refuse to free the Jewish people instead of causing him to agree to allow the Jews to leave so that they could receive their freedom and the Torah that much sooner?

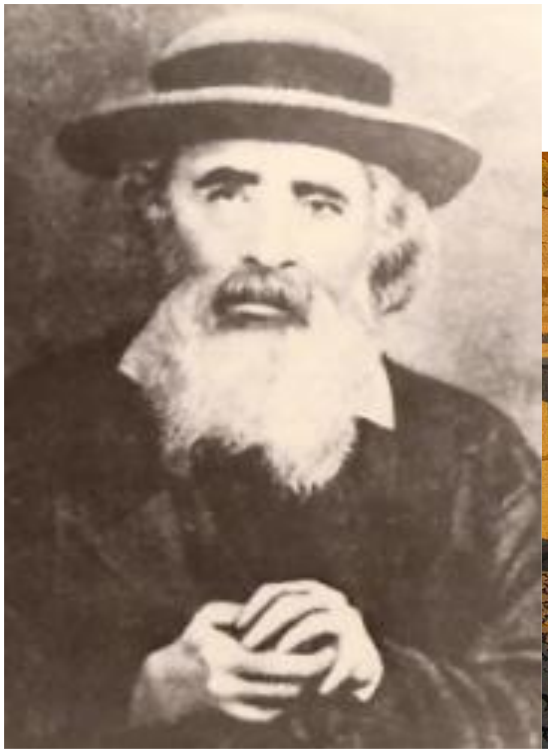
Rabbi Chaim Friedlander explains that there was a danger that if Pharaoh willingly freed the Jews, they would feel gratitude toward him and view him as the one who was responsible for their independence. God wanted to make it absolutely clear that their freedom came solely from Him and they were indebted to nobody else, and in order to do so, He hardened Pharaoh's heart until the plagues made it clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was G-d who was liberating them and not Pharaoh.

Bitachon is the foundation of a life filled with meaning and purpose. When we trust in Hashem's plan, we are able to live with joy and peace, even in the midst of challenges. – Rabbi Moshe Weinberger. [Stories to Inspire]

MEOROS HATZADDIKIM

Lights Of Our Righteous

Rav Moshe Yehoshua Yehuda Leib Diskin Maharil Diskin
(Teves 29, 5658 / 1898 - 125th Yahrzeit)





The Maharil Diskin was born in year **תקע"ט** . He was appointed and served as rabbi of Lomza, Kovno, and Brisk. In **תרל"ז** he made aliya to serve as Rav of Yerushalayim at a time when the winds of change where blowing fiercely the world over and specifically threatened the Torah true community in Eretz Yisroel. He was the pillar of the old yishuv who staunchly resisted inroads being made by those that threatened Torah principles and Torah life in the Holy Land.

He was known as a fierce warrior against the maskilim who jeopardized the traditional purity of chinuch. He feared none and was the chief defender of the faith against all such breaches. Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin authored seforim such as, Shu"t Maharil

Diskin, Toras HaOhel and Maharil Diskin Al HaTorah. He passed away in **תרנ"ח** and was buried on Har HaZeisim (Mt. of Olives) in Yerushalayim.

"I once watched how the gaon, the Maharil Diskin, recited birkas haTorah," said **Rav Yosef Chaim Scheiberger**. "The Maharil was honoured with an aliya. When the Maharil said the beracha over the Torah, he was aflame with such hislahavus that he resembled what it must have been like to be present when the Kohen Gadol (whose face "burned like a pillar of fire") recited the Divine Name.

The rav brought such intensity of awe to the moment that the sinews and veins in his face protruded. The impression of the sight was such that its powerful impact lasted for half a year!" (Maasei Tzadikim p. 216)

A Holy Hat

The Maharil Diskin was once in Lomza when he passed by a sick Jew in the street. This Jew was mentally disabled, nebech, so that he walked around without a head covering. When the Maharil noticed this, he asked the sick Jew, "Where is your yarmulke?" "I don't have one," answered the sick man. Without hesitation, the Maharil removed his own yarmulke and placed it on the sick man's head. Immediately, his sickness departed, and his mind began to operate normally – he was miraculously healed on the spot!

From then on, he always wore the Maharil's yarmulke; he never took it off, and even wore it when he went to the mikve! (Maasei Tzaddikim, p. 215)

A Shabbos Segula



Rav Diskin once used a Shabbos food as a segula to heal a sick child. When **Rav Yisrael Dovid Braverman** was a young child, he was sick with an ailment that attacked his throat. His situation was so grave that his mother feared for his life.

It was Erev Shabbos, right before shkiya (sunset). At her wits' end, she grabbed the sick child and ran to her neighbour, the Maharil Diskin, begging the Tzaddik to save her sick son.

Quickly, the Maharil took the child, and rushed over to a pot of hot Shabbos soup that was simmering on the stove. The Tzaddik took one spoonful of Shabbos soup and fed the child. Immediately the child calmed down and his situation improved until miraculously he recovered and his health was restored! (Heichal HaShabbos I, p. 72)

Rav Yerachmiel Yisrael Yitzchok Dancyger Alexander Rebbe, Yismach Yisrael (Teves 29, 5670 / 1910 - 113th Yahrzeit)

In his youth, Yerachmiel Yisroel Yitzchok basked in the glow of tzaddikim such as the Rebbes of Vurka and Radzimin. Renowned as a pure, holy individual, a miracle worker, as well as a sharp minded gaon (genius) in Torah, thousands flocked to him from all over. He of Alexander and he authored the sefer Yismach Yisroel. He did not have any children and his brother, the Tiferes Shmuel took over as rebbe after him. He passed away in tav reish ayin, and was buried in Alexander.

His Segulos: Parshas Hamon And Feeding The Birds



The Perisha in Orach Chaim cites the Yerushalmi that it is a good practice to recite "parshas hamon" daily. The reason for this segula for parnossa (livelihood) is emuna. The Yismach Yisrael of Alexander explains: A person may fool himself into thinking that when he works hard and earns a living, it is "kochi ve'otzem yodi osa li es hachayil hazeh (Devorim 8:17) – my hard work and my toil is what built this up and it is my own two hands that created this livelihood and success". This is the illusion. For when a person lacks emuna and is arrogant enough to think that he himself is the source of his financial success, then he is clogging up his own "spiritual plumbing". The pipelines of blessing and shefa (abundance) get clogged from such thoughts.

However, daily repetition of parshas hamon ingrains in us the truth that it is all really from Hashem and He is the true source of blessing and parnossa.

This is also one of the reasons for the minhag to feed the birds on Shabbos Shira. The Yismach Yisrael notes the objections of the Mogen Avrohom who rules against this practice, saying that since the birds do not rely on us for their food, we should not feed them (OC 324).

The Alexander Rebbe counters: That, itself, is the very lesson of the monn. We are like the birds: We do not rely on human hands to feed us as domesticated animals and beasts of burden do. If we rely on sustenance from human hands, then we can be likened to beasts

of burden - and no better! Rather, we feed the birds because it reminds us that we are like them - relying on Hashem alone to feed and nourish us!



Reward For Honouring The Torah

People were holding Sifrei Torah in hand, while others held hands with each other as the merrymakers sang and danced circuits around the bima. It was during the hakafos of Simchas Torah in Alexander and one chassid stood out from the crowd of dancing, singing congregants. His comical and whimsical motions expressed overabundant joy, setting him apart to the extent that the rebbe, the Yismach Yisroel of Alexander took notice of his unabashed manner. His entire being was suffused with simchas haTorah. He was also, unfortunately, childless.

The rebbe seized the opportunity, turned to the chassid and said, "You surely know that Michal, the daughter of Shaul, never had children (Shmuel II 6:23). She was punished because she shamed Dovid haMelech who was willing to disregard his personal honor for the sake of kevod haTorah. We know the principle that good middos are stronger than negative ones. If she was punished with no children for dishonouring the Torah, you, who disregarded your own shame and honour for the sake of simchas Torah, should be rewarded with a son: Your salvation is at hand!" The rebbe's beracha was fulfilled and that year our chassid was a happy father to a baby boy. (Tiferes Rabuseinu Alexander p. 117)



"Never rebuke a man in such a way as to shame him in public." ~~ Rashi



Rav Yitzchak Kaduri Zt'l (Teves 29) - Slow To Anger



Rav Sosana, the Rosh Kollel of Ohr Dovid from Rishon LeTzion, told the following story: I once travelled to meet Rav Kaduri to ask him to write a kamiya (amulet) for a friend who needed his help. The writing of kabbalistic amulets is a painstaking and time-consuming process. It would require concentrated preparations - yichudim and other kabbalistic forms of kavanos. So, I was hesitant to request it, except that my friend's need was great.

When I sat with Rav Kaduri and explained what I needed, he immediately smiled characteristically and agreed. He sat down and got to work, while I sat patiently waiting. After an hour or so, the voice of the rebbetzin was heard calling the rav to supper. The rav was so engrossed in the task at hand that he did not hear her calling.

Seeing that there was no response, the rebbetzin came in, not knowing about the amulet or what the rav was engaged in. She was simply looking after him, ensuring that he ate his regular meals as she worried about him taxing his health with his rigorous schedule. The rav was so engrossed that he did not respond, even when she repeated herself, saying that his food would get cold.

In order to get his attention, she shook the table a bit, but that bit was all that it took! The table shook and the inkpot spilled, ruining all the work that the rav had done!

I sat on the side, watching and not knowing what to do. Instead of getting upset at the rebbetzin, who had accidentally ruined all his work, Rav Kaduri began to laugh! He then turned to me and said, "***She knows what she is doing***!"

I learned a great lesson and glimpsed the gadlus (greatness) of the that day. Rav Benayahu Shmueli once testified that he never saw Rav Kaduri get angry, even when there seemed to be a justifiable reason for doing so. He laughed off even the most infuriating circumstances. He was totally absorbed in Torah and his whole being cried out: "I am a servant of Hashem!" (Rav Kaduri Ch. 13 p. 154-155)

September 11 - 9/11



The date September 11, 2001 will be remembered historically as a tragic day. The events of the horrific terrorist attack on U.S. soil touched so many lives. Nonetheless there are many accounts of hashgacha and emuna that have come down to us from that event. Here is one account of a miracle that the protagonist attributes to the power of Rav Kaduri's berachos: I am a businessman whose operations span many continents. My office was in the World Trade Centre and I had a company that employed many workers, conducting business there for many years. I always consulted Rav Kaduri before entering into my many business ventures. I saw continual success from receiving his blessing and advice at each turn.

The date was September 1. I took my scheduled flight and landed in Eretz Yisrael. I made my way to the hotel where I had booked a room and spent the week in business meetings. I recorded the details of proposals and deals and prepared to bring them before the Rav for his advice and blessings. I visited the rav on the last day of my trip and he listened attentively. He gave his advice and his

blessings for success. Then he made a most unusual request: "Please remain here in Eretz Yisrael for another day. Do not go back to the U.S. today; go back the next day - tomorrow."

The request was strange, but as someone who has enjoyed Rav Kaduri's blessings and advice, I did not hesitate to fulfil it. First, I called my travel agent and cancelled my flight and taxi to the airport and had him rearrange them for the following day. I also had to book an additional day at my hotel. Then I remembered my employees. They were on vacation until my return. I had to make several calls to have them all notified that their vacation would be extended by a day and that the office would remain closed.

Rebooking everything and making all these calls cost me time, effort and money, but the thought of not heeding the rav's request did not even cross my mind. In the end, it saved all of our lives.

On September 11, at 6:30 a.m., I arrived at the airport terminal in Ben Gurion. At seven o'clock I sat in the business lounge to relax and review the various deals and transactions I had worked out and was about to close on. By 10:00 a.m., we were in the air, and I closed my eyes to nap. By 1:00 p.m., when I opened my eyes, lunch was served and afterward I tried to rest once more. By late afternoon, 8:46 a.m. EST, catastrophe had struck.

I sat together horror along with all the passengers, as news of the terrorist attack unfolded. I was shocked more than those around me, as I realized that the rav's request had saved my life and the lives of all my employees!

His far-seeing holy eyes had perceived what others had not. His seemingly strange request to stay one more day had spared me and my employees from being at the Twin Towers on that terrible day. (Rav Kaduri Chap 14, pgs 166-169)

His Ahavas Yisroel

Rav Kaduri lived to a great old age of over one hundred and ten years old! He used to testify that his secret to long life was in the merit of never becoming angry or upset with any other Jew!

His family testified as well that they never saw him get angry at another Jew, never heard him raise his voice and was always smiling. (Oros MiMizrach, ch. 23)

Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira Baba Sali (Shevat 4, 5744 / 1984 - 39th Yahrzeit)



Baba Sali zt"l

Born on Rosh Hashanah of 5650/1889 in Tafilalet, Morocco, to the illustrious Abuchatzera family. From a young age he was renowned as a sage, miracle maker and master kabbalist. In 1964 he moved to the Holy Land, eventually settling in the southern development town he made famous, Netivot. He passed away in 1984 on the 4th of Shevat. His graveside in Netivot has become a holy site visited by thousands annually.

The young Rav Yisrael observed how his father, Rav Masoud, would lock himself in an attic for hours, deep in study of both the revealed and hidden Torah. His brother Rav Dovid, 24 years his senior, never slept in a bed; rather, he would doze off a bit at the table, over his sefer.

Unlike most children his age, the young Rav Yisrael never longed for toys or sweets. All he wanted was a new siddur. He learned to daven

with great devotion. After his bar mitzvah, he went on to master Shas with many Rishonim and became expert in such areas as shechitah, milah and safrus.

Most of Moroccan Jewry began emigrating to Eretz Yisrael after 1948. Rav Yisrael's brother Rav Yitzchak founded a kehillah in Ramle, and urged Rav Yisrael to share the challenge of reorienting Moroccan Jewry to their new environment.

In Elul 5711/1951, Rav Yisrael boarded a ship for Eretz Yisrael, which arrived on Erev Rosh Hashanah at the Haifa port. Rav Yisrael went to Yerushalayim, where he intended to settle. He was deeply pained by the spiritual condition of Yerushalayim at that time. After much thought, he decided to leave Eretz Yisrael. At first, he went to France. In 5713/1953 he decided to return to Tafilalet, which had a then-stable government. Rav Yisrael lived near his son, Rav Meir, who served as the regional Rabbi and Dayan.

In 5723/1963 Rav Yisrael turned 73, the age when both his father and grandfather were niftar. That year Rav Yisrael did not travel, so that if he was niftar he could be buried alongside them in Tafilalet, in accordance with Chazal's teaching that when a man reaches the life span of his father, he should prepare himself for death. But the year passed and Rav Yisrael was healthy and vigorous.

In 5724/1964 he moved back to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Netivot, a small city in the Negev with a largely Moroccan-Jewish population. From the moment Rav Yisrael arrived in Netivot, it became a magnet for people in need of a tzaddik's wise counsel. The Baba Sali had a profound impact on Netivot and its surrounding settlements. Many residents of these towns changed their lifestyle and began to observe mitzvos.

His Segulos: Segula To Receive Noam Kedushas Shabbos – The Pleasure And Delight Of The Sanctity Of Shabbos

When Rav Avrohom Elimelech of Karlin was in America visiting his Chassidim, he told them to form groups and study together the holy sefer, the **Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh**, each leil shishi (Thursday night). He explained that this is a segula to receive noam kedushas Shabbos – the pleasure and delight of the sanctity of Shabbos. Afterward, when he returned to Eretz Yisrael, he confirmed that his Chassidim did indeed experience a greater, more pronounced delight and sweetness of kedushas Shabbos by learning the Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh as he had instructed them.

Another Tzaddik also used to say that one of the ikorim – the primary principles of Avodas Ho'Odom, serving Hashem on Shabbos Kodesh, is to study the sefer Ohr HaChaim HaKodosh. The reason he gave was that many Tzaddikim taught that the study of the Ohr HaChaim is beneficial to the soul, just like the study of the holy Zohar, and since Shabbos is called Yoma DeNishmosa – a day of the soul, studying the Ohr HaChaim is intimately bound up with the sanctity of Shabbos Kodesh. (Shivchei Ohr HaChaim)

Who Needs A Driver When The Baba Sali Is Behind The Wheel?



Rav Dovid Chai Abuchatzeira of Nahariyah used to relate how his father-in-law was often the designated driver for the Baba Sali in Morocco. Once, the Baba Sali travelled to Casablanca to officiate at a seudas mitzva and, as was his custom, he distributed lechaim from a stiff drink called

Machiyah. When the seuda concluded, he asked my father-in-law to drive him back that day to Tefillalat.

When they asked the Baba Sali what the hurry was that he could not wait to travel the next day, he explained that he had to get back, since he was having guests. "How do you know you are having guests?" his relatives asked, to which he smiled and responded, "I know." Finally, they explained that his driver had had one too many lechaims (he couldn't refuse a lechaim given to him by the Tzaddik) and he was in an inebriated state of "Gilufin and Joy!" and not in any fit condition to drive him back. To this he replied, "No need to worry – sit him in the driver seat, turn on the engine and I will do the rest!"

Accustomed to the Baba Sali's miraculous ways and seeing that the Tzaddik was adamant and that he somehow thought he could get back in such a way, they did as he bade them. They sat my father-in-law down, started the car's engine and watched in wonder as it drove itself home!

When they arrived in Tefillalat by sunrise, they had to take my father-in-law and put him in bed, since he had no idea where he was – and the Baba Sali arrived safe and sound! (Shemuos Tovos)

Rain In Morocco In The Summer

The mikve, dug deep into the ground, received its water supply from a natural spring beneath it. Once during the beginning of summer, in Tammuz, the spring dried up and the water disappeared from the mikve. How could the town be without a mikve through the summer? There would be no rain until autumn!

In their despair, the heads of the community enlisted the aid of Rav Yisrael Abuchatzeira. The Baba Sali (as he was popularly known) told them to dig a new mikve according to the superior specifications that he outlined for them. The village workmen prepared the new

mikve according to Baba Sali's instructions and soon it stood, all ready for use. But without water, no one would be able to immerse in it. Pure rainwater was needed to fill the mikve. But in Morocco, rain only fell in the autumn and winter. Where would they find rainwater in Tammuz?

Again, the townspeople came to Baba Sali. "We have completed the construction of the new mikve," they reported, "but we still have no water to fill it. What shall we do now?" Baba Sali went to inspect the new mikve. He looked thoughtfully at the bright blue sky and said, "Master of the world, You commanded us to be pure and holy and we wish to follow Your teachings. We have done everything in our power. We built this mikve as best we could. It is now up to You, Hashem, to help us, for Your sake."

This short tefilla was hardly out of his mouth before the skies clouded over and rain poured out of the sky. Enough rain fell to fill up the mikve with the required amount of water so that it could be used!

Baba Sali returned to his room to continue learning. In the process, he discovered that the drainpipe leading to the mikve had not been built according to the standards of the strictest opinions in the matter. Baba Sali, who always tried to do things to the maximum and in the strictest possible manner, was displeased that it did not meet the specifications of all of the sages. Although the mikve was kosher, he felt it lacked perfection.

He went back to the mikve and told the workmen to drain out all the water and to rebuild the drainpipe so that it would meet the most stringent requirements, according to all the authorities. When they heard that the Baba Sali had gone to visit the mikve again, the Rabbonim of the town came to see what was amiss. They were surprised to hear that he had demanded that all the precious, miraculous rainwater be drained.

His cousin, Rav Yichye Dehaan, turned to Baba Sali saying, "Wasn't the mikve kosher according to most of the authorities? Why, then, did you order that all the water be drained? Where will we obtain fresh rainwater to fill it again, once the fault is corrected? Miracles don't happen every day, after all!" But the Baba Sali was adamant. He insisted that all the water be let out.

The workers, of course, did as he said. After the necessary corrections had been completed and the work had gained the Baba Sali's approval, he went outside, spread his hands heavenward and prayed, "Master of the world, it is perfectly clear to You that I did not do anything for my own glory, nor for the glory of my father's house. I only did what I did in order to increase purity among Your people."

The sky clouded over and blessed rains fell. The mikve filled and the town maintained its high standard of purity from that time on. - All those present were overawed by what they saw. They thanked Heaven for having been blessed with a leader who possessed such saintliness and power that even Hashem saw fit to fulfil his requests.



Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchchev once saw a wagon driver greasing the wheels of his wagon while wrapped in his tallis and tefillin. The Defender of Israel lifted his eyes heavenward and said, "Master of the Universe, look at how magnificent are Your people! Even while greasing the wheels of their wagons, they continue to invoke Your Name!"

Rav Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter Sfas Emes (Shevat 5, 5665 / 1905 - 118th Yahrzeit)



HaRav Hakodosh R' Yehuda Leib Alter was the son of R' Avrohom Mordechai zt"l, the eldest son of the Chidushei Harim of Gur. He was born on erev rosh chodesh Iyar 5607 (1847) and as a boy of only two, he was orphaned of his mother. When he was about nine years old, his father too was niftar and he was brought up by his holy grandfather who treated him as a son, even rebuking him when necessary.

Once when the young boy came late to shiur, the Chidushei Harim rebuked him publicly which he accepted in silence. His friends, who knew that he had been up all night learning asked him why he did not tell his grandfather so. "It wouldn't have been worth forfeiting my grandfather's rebuke," replied the boy. The Sefas Emes slept the bare minimum and ate very little throughout his youth, but when he became weak in his later years he admitted. "I feel that my body is weak probably due to my minimal sleep and food when I was young. I don't regret the missing sleep because mi'ut sheinoh is one of the

ways with which Torah is acquired but I do regret not having eaten properly for now I am suffering the consequences."

After his bar mitzva he married the granddaughter of R' Boruch Taam, and continued living in Gur with the Chidushei Harim. The latter was niftar on 23rd Adar 5626 (1866) and the young Yehuda Leib was appointed av beis din. He refused to act as rebbe and travelled together with the chassidim to R' Chanoch Henoch of Alexander zy"o until the latter's passing in 5630. He turned to the Admor of Kotsk in keeping with the advice of the Chidushei Harim who had told him before his death: "***Buy truth and do not sell - as long as you can acquire truth do not sell***."



On Shavuos, when he saw the massive crowd which had gathered around him, he agreed to join the chassidim in "giving ourselves chizuk" but still did not say divrei Torah in public until Succos the following year. Finally, when he started giving forth his pearls of Torah wisdom, the world was astounded. These divrei Torah were printed in his famous sefer Sefas Emes al Hatorah. His seforim on Shas were also printed many times. On Sunday 24th Teves 5665 (1905) a rare illness poisoned his body and at dawn of the 5th of Shevat he returned his pure soul to its Maker.

Throughout our long and bitter exile, the times when young Jewish men and boys were conscripted into the army of their host country was always an eis tzoro. It denoted fear of the unknown, dread of what the future would bring and desperate efforts to bribe anyone who had a say in the government.

The days of the Sefas Emes zt"l were no different. As soon as the conscription time began, a long queue would form outside his home in Gur and, like a caring shepherd, he would give each person in turn a brocho, comfort and chizuk. To the bnei Torah he would cite the mishna in Pirkei Ovos: 'He who takes upon himself the yoke of Torah will be freed from the yoke of the government!'

The chassidim used to say that one could tell from the Rebbi's advice and blessing whether the person standing before him would be sent to the army or not. Once, two young men, one who barely made a living and the other a man of considerable means, came to ask the Sefas Emes if and how much they should bribe the officials in order to avoid conscription. The rich man he advised, "It's a shame to waste your money on bribes as even a hundred rubles will be of no avail. Rather invest it so that your wife will have a good business to live on." Whereas the poor man he advised to scrape together twenty-five rubles and that will suffice to save him (as it did).

The Russian government began to suspect that the Sefas Emes was preventing people from joining the army, and sent a spy to confirm their suspicions. A Jewish meshumad of draftable age was chosen for the job. He entered the room of the holy Sefas Emes disguised as a chassid, to request a brocho from the Rebbi and guidance in his inevitable enlistment. To the wonder of all those present, the Rebbi shrugged, "Nu, the Russian army needs soldiers; without fighters we cannot win wars."

The reply that evoked such astonishment among the chassidim was only later understood, when they heard that this "chassid" was just a spy planted by the Russian authorities.

In his later years war, broke out between Russia and Japan and this time all bribery and ransom were to no avail. Whoever was of age received a draft order to appear in the town square on a certain date and from there they were despatched directly to the battlefront. Thousands of young men and boys were torn away from the beis medrash and uprooted from their homes, leaving behind terror-stricken parents, wives and children.

All through the war the Sefas Emes zt"l never slept on his bed at all. Instead, when the hour turned late he lay on the floor with only a thin garment spread underneath him. After he got up in the morning, his assistants would find the garment soaked with the tears that he had cried all night for the young Jewish soldiers on the front lines.

In addition to the pain of being far from home, the chassidim were broken at being cut off from their spiritual world, the hallowed walls of the beis midrash and the court of their holy Rebbe. Letters full of longing arrived to him, from one chassid describing how, having no shofar on Rosh Hashonoh they just sat together discussing the shofar and its awakening power! Another chassid wrote that during Succos while digging trenches, they somehow found the strength and will to set up three boards within the trench, forming a succah so that they could each eat a kezayis inside! One talmid who excelled in Torah learning sent a lengthy explanation with his own chiddushim on the Rabbenu Yonah! The Rebbe was so moved that he sent a letter back which later became world-famous. Quoting the posuk from Ha'azinu: Ha'idosi bochem eis hashomayim ve'eis ho'oretz - using ha'idosi to mean decorate as in "adi adoyim" - the Rebbe wrote: "With heroic people like you my dear chassidim, Hashem adorns the heaven and earth."

When the war intensified, a general order was given again for those who had remained behind, to fight for the mother country. Men and their wives, mothers and their sons gathered at the entrance to the

Rebbe's house, pleading with him to save them. Immediately, he instructed them to go to shul, light candles and start saying Tehillim. The Rebbe himself joined them and their tearful prayers rising in loud cries that must surely have pierced the heavens.

The Rebbe turned to all those assembled and in a now calm tone assured them that be'ezras Hashem all would be well. A short while later news that the war had ended spread through the country, bringing home the soldiers and saving the rest from having to leave. However the returning hordes of barbaric Russian soldiers from the front plundered and robbed their way back home leaving a trail of havoc and sorrow in their wake.

The sight of the returning Jewish soldiers, crushed in body and spirit, many of them wounded or with missing limbs, and the troubles that had been Klal Yisroel's lot in his times, broke the Sefas Emes. His pure body, unable to bear the heavy burden it was carrying fell ill with a strange malady that no one could cure, slowly paralyzing his vital organs. In a desperate attempt to heal him, Polish Jewry stormed the heavens, gathering all over to say Tehillim and fast. In Gur itself, prayers were said on his behalf around the clock without a break. But as dawn broke on the 5th of Shevat the angels won the battle over this pure soldier, taking the aron hakodesh to the heavenly spheres.

The Avnei Nezer, who arrived the day before in Gur to visit the Rebbe, did not sleep all night, keeping a constant vigil and tefillos at his bedside. At the levaya he revealed why the Sefas Emes zt"l had to be stricken with such a rare illness.

"Chazal tell us one who prays for his friend while he himself is in need of that yeshuo is answered first. All his life our Rebbe the Sefas Emes bore the burden of all our illnesses, our pains and sorrows, pouring out his heart in prayer for Klal Yisroel, that sick people be healed and the healthy not fall ill. Had he become ill with a common illness, he would immediately have been answered. So,

when the Creator wanted to take him away from this world, He struck him with an unknown illness for which the Rebbe had never davened for a fellow Jew and thus took him to Gan Eden.

The Key to a Jewish Heart

On one Shavuos night at the tisch he conducted, the Sefas Emes told the Chassidim, "It says in davening (Shacharis in Uva LeTzion Goel) 'Hu yiftach libenu besoroso – He, Hashem shall open our hearts through His Torah.' You hear?! It says the key to open our hearts is the Torah itself! Only through Torah can a Jew open his heart up for Torah. In the Torah itself is hidden the key to opening up a Jewish heart!!"

These words caused such a storm, that every sefer was grabbed off the shelf, every bench and shtender was occupied, all the Gemoras, Shulchon Aruch and sifrei Chassidus were snatched off the shelves till they were bare, and the Chassidim studied all night, trembling and in awe like at Har Sinai!

Longest Word

The word in the Torah containing the most letters is in this week's parsha. What is it?

Hashem told Moshe (7:28) to warn Pharaoh that the frogs would strike in his palace, bedroom, and bed, and in the houses of his servants, as well as in their ovens, and in your kneading bowls.

וְשָׁרַץ הַיְאֹר צְפַרְדְּעִים וְעָלוּ וּבָאוּ בְּבֵיתֶךָ וּבַחֲדַר מִשְׁכָּבְךָ וְעַל־מִטָּתֶךָ וּבְבֵית עֲבָדֶיךָ וּבְעַמֶּךָ וּבְתַנּוּרֶיךָ וּבְמִשְׁאֲרֹתֶיךָ

With ten letters, this word is the longest in the Torah.

The Scrolls They Read On Shabbos Gave Them Hope



There is an interesting Medrash Tanchuma that comments on Pharoah's reaction to the plagues. The pasuk [Shemos 5:9] says that Pharoah's reaction to the plagues was to turn the screws tighter against the slaves: "***Increase the workload upon these people and make sure they do it and do not allow them to occupy themselves with false words***."

The Medrash elaborates on the "false words" that concerned Pharoah: "They had scrolls (megillos) in their possession that they used to enjoy reading each and every Shabbos. In the scrolls was recorded a promise that G-d would redeem them and take them out. Pharoah wanted to increase their workload so they would no longer have time to read these scrolls of 'propaganda and fantasy'. We need to understand: Why did the spare time activities of the slaves bother Pharoah? Why did he care that they were reading these scrolls, as long as they completed their work? What was his obsession with these megillos?

Perhaps these scrolls represented more than merely something to help pass the time on Shabbos. Pharoah was not merely interested in having people work for him. He was interested in breaking the spirit of the people. The way to break the spirit of a nation is by taking away from them that which every human being and every nation needs — hope. The scrolls that they would read every Shabbos promised that G-d would redeem them. These scrolls kept them going. No matter how bad it became and how terrible it was,

they knew that it would come to an end. Ultimately, G-d would take them out.

The Jews did not understand the reason for their dire circumstances. They were righteous. The Egyptians were wicked. They asked the question: Why do the righteous suffer? But somehow, despite the questions, they had the strength to continue. Why? Because they read in the megillos that G-d would redeem them and they had hope.

Taking hope away from a people breaks a people. No matter how desperate a person becomes, as long as there is hope, he is not broken. This is what Pharoah wanted to destroy.

A Message from the Kalever Rebbe

Illnesses and Suffering come from the heavens for goodness

Over the years, while traveling throughout the world, meeting with Jews from diverse backgrounds, many secular Jews would commonly ask me: "Where was *Hashem*, the protector of Israel, during the Holocaust?"

I would answer this question with an analogy: A father had one child, a son, that was born later in his life. He cherished his only child and loved him dearly. When the boy was young, tragedy struck, and he became severely ill with a life-threatening disease. Seeking a cure, the father brought his son to a specialist who recommended a surgery that, while excruciating and painful, would cure the boy.

Obviously, the loving father agreed. However, his son was too young to truly appreciate the gravity of the situation. And, as the doctor proceeded with the surgery, the son cried out in agonizing anguish to his father to stop the surgery. When his father remained stoic and allowed the doctor to continue, the son thought his father had abandoned him.

However, when the boy grew up, he understood that that surgery saved his life and the pain he had to experience was for his ultimate good.

The lesson is clear. *Hashem*, the Creator of everything in the world, selected the Jewish people as His only child. And *Hashem* loves and cherishes every Jew, and He only showers goodness and kindness on the Jewish people. However, like the father in the analogy, there are times when *Hashem* knows that it is necessary for a Jew to endure a challenge or to suffer for a finite amount of time on this world, to merit ultimate and eternal goodness for their soul.

However, like the child, that person doesn't always understand how that pain is saving his life and paving the way to an outcome that is only and fully good. They falsely feel like *Hashem* has abandoned them. And, they start to believe that this pain is without purpose, that their suffering is not Divine Providence, *Hashgacha Pratis*.

Millions of precious Jews were murdered during the Holocaust. It is understandable that someone might begin to forget that suffering in this world is for an ultimate good; that the pain has a purpose. However, when a person comes to the Upper Worlds, he will be able to clearly see that everything that had happened in this world, in his life, was only for the ultimate good. The pain was the path to the cure.

Rescued through an illness

In fact, we clearly saw *Hashgacha Pratis* throughout the Holocaust. There are countless miraculous stories of *yidden* being saved within those darkest moments of human suffering. And many of the survivors who suffered in the days of the Holocaust, managed to see how their suffering was an *Hashgacha Pratis* to save their lives. Through the temporary suffering they were able to live long and sweet lives, and merited to see their families and communities rebuilt and thrive.

Let me share one example of my own life. I was born before the war in Mihalyfalva, Hungary. When I was a child, my holy father Ztz"l had developed an illness that required specific medical attention and care that was simply not available in our town. Therefore, he would travel to the Romanian town of Arad where there were doctors who could treat him. He travelled so often, that eventually our family had made the difficult decision to relocate to Arad. During the Holocaust, when the Germans occupied Hungary, the entire town of Mihalyfalva, every single Jew, was sent to Auschwitz. The illness led our family to moving, which, in the end, saved our lives.

In the margins of my father's Chumash, at the beginning of the next Pasuk, next to the word **וארא**- ***I appeared*** (Shemos 6:3), he wrote: **וארא** is an acronym for the words in the pasuk (Yeshayahu 44:6), **אֲ**נִי **רִ**אשון **וְ**אנִי **אַ**חרון – '***I am first and I am last***.'

Hashem alone oversees and intervenes in the world. At times, He first sends suffering and hardships, but in the end it will be good. That same essence of goodness is present in the "beginning" and the "last".



P'nimiyus Haparsha

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ה' And Elokim spoke to Moshe saying, "I am Hashem..."

At the end of last week's parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu complained to Hashem regarding the fact that things only seemed to get worse, not better, since he was sent on his mission to redeem the Jewish nation from their enslavement in Egypt. "לָמָּה הֲרֵעֹתָה," he cried. "***Why are You bringing harm upon this people? Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has dealt worse with these people***!"

Our parsha begins with the words, **וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ה׳** -"***And Hashem spoke to Moshe and said to him, "I am Hashem.***"

Commenting on the word **וַיְדַבֵּר**, a word for speech which always connotes harshness, Rashi says that Hashem spoke harshly to Moshe here in reprimand for his improper protest of לָמָּה הֲרֵעֹתָה. **The Mei HaShiloach** follows **Rashi's** cue but widens the scope to include the second half of the verse, where the words "**וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו**" – which connote softness and comfort – stand in stark contrast to the harsh tone of the opening.

The tzaddik sees an important message hinted to in this drastic shift. In a healthy parent/child relationship, any anger expressed over mistakes that the child makes reaches only as deep as the conditional element of the relationship. When the misstep has been addressed with the appropriate severity and consequences suffered, unconditional love bursts forth like a mighty geyser.

In that sensitive moment, the mask of anger is removed and the parent rushes to embrace his child who stands shaking, vulnerable and scared, in a desperate bid to let him know that no possible mistake could ever be big enough to sever their bond completely.

With soft words of comfort and love, the parent communicates with the child on a level far beyond misdeeds, addressing the goodness at his essence, the sweetness at his core.

Using this parable, the holy **Ishbitzer** explains the shift in tone that occurs in the difficult verse with which our parsha begins. "**וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹקִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה**": "And Elokim, the trait of harsh judgement, reproached Moshe for his inappropriate outburst. But this reprimand was only on the level of his name, Moshe; an external element of his identity from which misdeeds derive.

"**וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי ה׳**": Immediately after conveying this scolding, Hashem, Middas haRachamim, spoke "eilav", to the very essence of his being, forever removed from sin, whispering soft words of

comfort and hope and reminding him that the bond of their love runs far deeper than any mistake could ever reach.

Frightful and real as it may be, divine anger is only a mask. "Yaakov chevel nachalaso"; a spiritual cord that runs from the deepest essence of the Jewish soul to the deepest essence of the Infinite One carries an ever-abiding flow of unending kindness and unconditional love.

"***Behind the mask of Hashem's anger echoes the whisper of His unconditional love***."

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלקִים וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלקֵיכֶם הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלוֹת מִצְרָיִם

Moshe Rabeinu says to Klal Yisrael, "The Riboino Shel Olam is sending me to tell you, that He is going to take you out of Mitzrayim, from being under the ideology of Egypt. He is also going to take you out from the physical hard labour and slavery of Egypt. And take you out from the borders of Mitzrayim. He will take you out and give you the Torah, at which point, you will understand.'

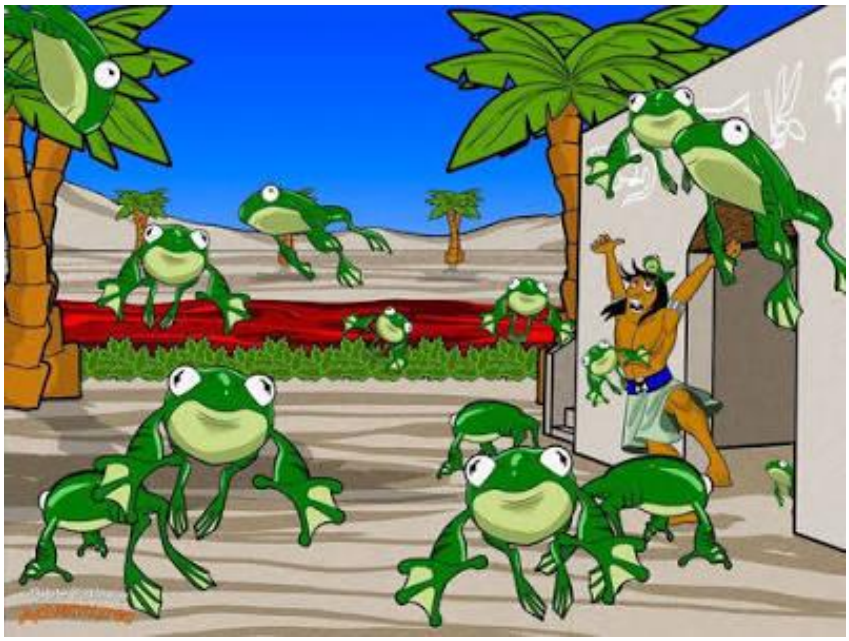
This is why in our Pasuk **הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם** is exactly the gematria of 613, because this is the whole purpose of the *shibbud* and eventual exodus in taking you out – was to receive The Torah!

Some of the most stunning seashells were shaped by the roughest waves. You may not realize it now, but all the tumbling, the crashing, the chaos – they're all polishing you into something precious and beautiful. ~ Inspired by the teachings of Rabbi Asher Resnick.

בס"ד

למודי משה

Tzfardeah



Three Explanations from Rabbeinu Ephraim Why Moshe "Screamed"

The *Moishav Zekeinim* brings from Rabbeinu Ephraim three reasons why Moshe "screamed": 1) So that he wouldn't be accused of witchcraft, and he needed to scream as the sound of croaking was very loud, and he wanted to be heard by the Egyptians. 2) It was difficult to remove them from the ovens, therefore, he needed to increase in *tefillah*. 3) Moshe accredited greatness to himself when he said **"הִתְפָּאֵר עָלַי לְמָתַי אַעְתִּיר לְךָ"**, therefore, as a punishment he now had to scream and increase in *tefillah* and supplications". (The *Rosh Al HaTorah* also brings this third *peshat*).

Paneach Raza

The *Paneach Raza* explains, that Pharaoh never requested for a complete end to the frogs - he never asked that they should die, all he asked for was that they should be removed. Moreover, all he asked for was that they be removed from him and his people, however, he never asked that they be removed from the houses and courtyards. However, in order to show the wonderfulness and mercy of Hashem, Moshe added by himself that they should die completely, and they should be removed even from the houses and courtyards.

Therefore, "It says here he 'screamed' more than in other places, as he needed to scream more, as Moshe was asking for more than what Pharaoh requested."

The Frogs Wanted to Be *Moiser Nefesh* and Didn't Want to Leave, Therefore, Moshe Needed to "Scream" to Get Rid of Them

HaGaon HaTzadik MiPapa, R' Yosef Greenvald, in his *sefer Vayechi Yosef* (pg. 38) explains that since the frogs were *moiser nefesh* [gave up their lives] to enter into ovens – they wanted to stay there, out of love for the mitzvah of dying *al pi kiddush* Hashem, a regular *tefillah* wouldn't help override the *tefillah* of the frogs, therefore, Moshe needed to scream and *daven* a special *tefillah*.

Here is what the *Vayechi Yosef* writes:

The Gemara in *Pesachim* (53b) asks: What did Chananyah, Mishoel and Azariyah see to make them give up their lives by jumping into a fire? The Gemara answers: They made a *kal v'chomer* from the frogs, if frogs which have no mitzvah of *kiddush* Hashem jumped into the ovens, then us, who are commanded in the mitzvah of *kiddush* Hashem must certainly be prepared to go into ovens and be prepared to die.

Tosfos asks: Why did Chananyah, Mishoel and Azariyah need to make a *kal v'chomer*, they were being forced to serve *avodah zorah* in public and one must be prepared to give up his life to avoid transgressing even a light *aveirah* in public, and certainly a severe *aveirah* like *avodah zorah*? *Tosfos* answers, that it wasn't real *avodah zorah*.

However, if *Tosfos* is correct, then we can ask on the *kal v'chomer*: The frogs were directly commanded to enter into the ovens, however, Chananyah, Mishoel and Azariyah weren't as it wasn't real *avodah zorah*, if so, what is the *kal v'chomer*?

We can answer: All it says in the Torah is that the frogs should go into "the ovens and into the utensils used for putting things into the oven", and this can be interpreted as meaning that the frogs should go into the ovens when they were cold, however, out of love for the mitzvah they went above and beyond and entered into the ovens whilst they were hot. From here Chananyah, Mishoel and Azariyah derived that if the frogs were *moiser nefesh* when they weren't commanded, then how much more so must we be prepared to be *moiser nefesh*.

According to this we can answer: Since the frogs were *moiser nefesh* to enter the burning ovens out of love for fulfilling the word of Hashem, they didn't want to leave, as the mitzvah was very beloved to them, therefore, it wasn't enough for Moshe to simply *daven* a regular *tefillah* that they should leave, as they were refusing to leave. Consequently, it says "Moshe screamed out to Hashem", as he had to *daven* with greater strength and greater power, like we find that a loud voice arouses *kavonah*, in order to remove the frogs."

One Last Explanation – Moshe Screamed So That Pharaoh Could Hear His *Tefillos*

The *sefer Ohr Yisrael* (R' Isser Yehudah Malin *zt"l*, pg. 188) writes: Pharaoh's house was full of *avodah zorah* and Moshe couldn't *daven* there. Since the removal of the plague was dependent on the *tefillah* of Moshe, how would Pharaoh know that the plague was removed due to Moshe's *tefillah*, if he wasn't able to *daven* in his presence?

Because of this, as soon as Moshe left Pharaoh's house, he *davened* loudly, so that his voice could be heard in the house of Pharaoh, and Pharaoh would hear that Moshe was *davening* to Hashem. And when in fact the next day all the frogs left, and only those in the river remained, everyone saw the strength and wonders of Hashem, and that there is no one as powerful as Him."

The Weekly Vort

■ **וארא אל אברהם אל יצחק ואל יעקב ...– *I revealed Myself to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov…*** (4:3)

On the word **וארא**, *I revealed Myself*, Rashi says **אל האבו** , *to the Avos*. The *pasuk* specifies that Hashem revealed Himself to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. - Why does Rashi define "to the Avos" when this has seemingly been clarified?

R' Meir of Premishlan explains that Rashi is answering a question. It would have been sufficient if the *pasuk* would have said "I revealed Myself to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov." Why the word **ואל**, *to*, between each of the names of the *Avos*?

One might think that the greatness of Yitzchak or Yaakov stemmed from their lineage. The **אל** between each name is to teach us that each one attained the singular level of greatness to be worthy of Hashem's revelation in his own merit. Therefore, Rashi stresses that each of the three was an *Av* in his own right. (A Gut Vort)

■ **ולא שמעו אל משה מקצר רוח ומעבדה קשה – *But they did not heed Moshe, because of shortness of breath and hard work*** (6:9)

Why was Klal Yisroel unwilling to accept Moshe's message that they would be freed?

Meshech Chochmah explains that a person who is suffering, senses the pain of the present so vividly that he cannot be consoled by promises of a bright but distant future. The Jews, so short of breath due to the backbreaking labor, were incapable of absorbing Moshe's message of a rosy future that included a receiving the Torah and entering Eretz Yisroel. They needed instant relief from their present suffering. Hashem therefore instructed Moshe again (in *pasuk* 6:13) "to take Bnei Yisrael out of the land of Egypt."

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Before World War Two, a yeshiva student left Europe and came to Bnei Brak, Eretz Yisrael. In Europe, he was a student of a Novardoker mussar yeshiva, and therefore, he trained himself to view all aspects of life through the prism of mussar.

In those days, Bnei Brak was a small town, and for pennies, one could purchase large plots of land. 20-30 years later, the small town became the metropolis of Bnei Brak. People who bought property in Bnei Brak in the early years made a fortune when they sold years later and became extremely wealthy.

Once, this Novardok student was sitting with his children and grandchildren, and the family spoke about a particular person who earned a fortune in this manner. They asked their father and grandfather why he didn't buy property in those good years.

He replied, "That is a good question, and I don't have an answer. If I were wise then, I would buy land. But now I think to myself that a similar question will be posed to me after 120. In heaven, I will be asked, "You were in this world, and you had many opportunities to acquire eternal merit with small deeds. With every time you say **אמן יהא שמיה רבא**, and every time you guarded your eyes, etc., you acquired large estates in Gan Eden. Where were you all those years? Why didn't you take more advantage of these opportunities?"

We ask ourselves the same question during these days of Shovavim. We can achieve so much; why don't we take advantage of the opportunity?

"There is no such thing as a Jew who is distant from Hashem. There are only those who do not yet know how close they truly are." ~ Noam Elimelech, Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1787)



Rebuilding An Empire

There is a perplexing statement made in the middle of this week's Haftorah: **וְהָיְתָה אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לִשְׁמָמָה וְחָרְבָּה, וְיָדְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי ה'; יַעַן אָמַר: יְאוֹר לִי, וַאֲנִי עָשִׂיתִי.**- *the land of Egypt will fall into desolation and ruin, and they will know that I am the Almighty because [Pharaoh] proclaimed, 'The Nile River is mine, and I made it.'"* (Yechezkel 29:9)

Why does the Egyptian ruler's inaccurate and arrogant declaration that he is the creator of the Nile warrant the destruction of the entire empire?

Rav Dovid Siegel (Va'eira 5757) beautifully explains that Egypt deserved the demolition of their empire because they believed their success was based solely on their leader's wisdom and creativity in harnessing the power of the Nile.

Following his nation's lead, Pharaoh claimed the river as his creation and accepted his deity status. Although it may seem the arrogance of mighty kingdoms controlling the world remains unchecked, the Almighty always reminds us that He is the only One truly in charge

The Sfas Emes **(וארא תרס"ג)** ***says, "Just as we are obligated to believe in Hakadosh Baruch Hu, even if we don't always understand His ways, so too, we must believe in Bnei Yisrael, even when they appear black. As it states (Shir HaShirim 1:5)*** **שחורה אני ונאוה** ***- 'I am black, but I am beautiful.'"***

Similarly, Reb Tzaddok HaKohen (Tzikdas HaTzaddik 154) writes, "Just as one must believe in Hashem, so must one believe in himself."

Nashim Tzidkaniyos

The Gemara in Sota (11b) says **בִּשְׂכַר נָשִׁים צִדְקָנִיּוֹת שֶׁהָיוּ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַדּוֹר נִגְאֲלוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם** - that in the merit of the nashim tzidkaniyos we got out of Mitzrayim, and Chazal say that in their zechus we will get out of this golus as well.

When **Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstien Z'l** was asked to open Ohr Nava and focus on women, he was concerned it would take too much of his time away from teaching bochurim. He went to ask **Rav Gamliel Rabonovitch shlit"a, and Harav Dovid Abuchatzeira shlit"a** what to do. They both told him to focus on the girls, quoting this Chazal, because it will bring the geulah.

Rabbi Shalom Arush emphasizes that the "quiet heroism" of today's women—their persistence, faith, and dedication to building Jewish homes—is the force that will ultimately bring the *Mashiach*.

Parshah Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ לֹא־שָׁמְע֣וּ אֵלַ֔י וְאֵ֣יךְ יִשְׁמָעֵ֥נִי פַרְעֹ֖ה - Moshe Rabeinu drew a comparison that if the Bnei Yisroel would not pay attention to him, then certainly Pharaoh would not either (6:12).

Although the Bnei Yisroel were oppressed and therefore in a very different situation than Pharaoh, explains **Rav Yaakov Galinsky, zt"l**, Moshe was certain Pharaoh would not listen.

This was because Pharaoh lived a life of fallacy. As long as a person lives in an imaginary world full of self-imposed misdirection, even if the truth was right in front of him, he will not change.

Who finds a faithful friend, finds a treasure.

וְגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־נַאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם מַעֲבִדִים אֹתָם ***Moreover, I have heard the groan of Bnei Yisrael whom Egypt enslaves***. (6:5)



An incident is brought from the **Rebbe, R' Michel of Zlotchov ZT"L**. After a day of hard work in a concentration camp, the Rebbe came to his barracks and was about to eat his daily ration of bread. He noticed another Jew lying on his 'bed' who was literally dying of hunger. This Rebbe took his own portion of bread and gave it to this Jew. The Jew gave him a *berachah*: "I *bentch* you that you should get out of this place alive."

This was no minor act of sacrifice on the part of the Rebbe. It is not like if you skipped supper one night, you could make up for it with a larger meal for breakfast the next morning. Now the Rebbe was lying there on his bad, famished. He said to the Ribbono Shel Olam, "I received a *berachah* from this person, but I am not going to make it either!"

At that moment, a kapo walked into the barracks and saw the Rebbe of Zlotshov and noticed the dire condition he was in. The kapo had a sack of sugar cubes in his pocket and he gave the sugar cubes to the Rebbe. The Rebbe said that those sugar cubes saved his life, and he felt that the *berachah* of the Jew to whom he gave the piece of bread was fulfilled. He received those sugar cubes in the merit that he shared his last piece of bread with that other person. "Anyone who has mercy on his fellow creature, has mercy upon himself from Heaven." (Shabbos 151b).

This is the same concept as the Rabbinic teaching: "Someone who prays on behalf of his friend and he needs the same thing – he will be answered first." (*Bava Kamma* 92a). If your daughter needs a *shidduch*, daven that someone else's daughter should find a

shidduch. If a person needs a *refuah*, pray for the *refuah* of someone else. The nature of human beings is not to do that. "I have enough *tzores* [suffering]. I have my own problems!" However, that is not the right attitude. The right attitude is that even if you have your own problems, the 'key' to getting out of those problems is to do something for someone else.

This is the lesson of "**וְגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי**" - (and also) I heard the cries of Bnei Yisrael." (**R' Frand**)

הוא היה אומר

R' Shimon Schwab *zt"l* - (Mayan Bais Hashoeva) would say: **וּמֹשֶׁה בֶּן־שְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וְאַהֲרֹן בֶּן־שָׁלֹשׁ וּשְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה בְּדַבְּרָם אֶל־פַּרְעֹה** (7:7)



- Why does the *Torah* need to tell us Moshe and Aharon's ages?

The fact that they spoke to Pharaoh shows that his decrees don't last. Eighty years earlier, Pharaoh ordered all boys thrown into the river - then Moshe was born. Three years before that, he demanded they kill all boys - then Aharon was born.

After all his attempts to erase them, they stood before him, proving that while human plans rise and fall, only *Hashem's* plans truly endure."

From success to failure is one step; from failure to success is a long road.

וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלֹת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעֲבֹדָתָם 6:6

Chazal say that the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt in the merit that they did not change their attire, language and names throughout their sojourn there. Yet we find in **Rashi** (*Shemos* 3:12) that they merited to be redeemed because of their future acceptance of the *Torah* at *Har Sinai*. - Which one was it?

The truth is that both these things are one and the same. **R' Shimshon Pincus *zt"l*** points out that one will not find it written anywhere in **Shulchan Aruch** that it's forbidden to use a non-Jewish name or speak in a gentile tongue, nor will he find it spelled out that it is forbidden to dress in the latest styles. Nevertheless, a *yid* must know that it is not enough for one to keep just the dry letter of the law; rather, one must also be "Jewish" - to speak Jewish, to dress Jewish, and to be called a Jewish name, as only then does he show how his performance of the *mitzvos* is done out of love for *Hashem* and His people. - And it is this *mesiras nefesh* to retain their Jewishness that gave the Jewish people the merit to leave *Mitzrayim*.

Indeed, the *Rebbe*, **R' Henoch of Aleksander *zt"l*** would explain the *posuk* (*Shemos* 6:6): " **וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלֹת מִצְרַיִם** " to mean that *Hashem* took the Jewish people out from getting used to and being able to tolerate (**לְסָבְלוֹ**) all the *tumah* and *shmutz* they found themselves in while in *Mitzrayim*.

According to the above, this was measure for measure, a reward for their tenacity in retaining their Jewishness. Thus, when it says in *Shemos* (3:12) that *Bnei Yisroel* were redeemed in the merit of " **תַּעַבְדוּן אֶת־הָאֱלֹקִים עַל הָהָר הַזֶּה** ", it doesn't say outright that they merited redemption because of their accepting the *Torah* at *Har Sinai*, but rather that it will be in the merit of *"serving Hakadosh Baruch Hu"* on *Har Sinai*.

In other words, it is not the *Torah* and *mitzvos* in and of themselves that took them out, but the fact that through them we serve *Hashem* as His Nation - that was the merit that allowed for *Yetzias Mitzrayim.* And it is our separation from the gentiles and their ways and our identification with the Jewish people that will bring us the final *geulah* as well, **בִּמְהֵרָה בְיָמֵינוּ אָמֵן**!

Parshah Pearls (Adapted from the Ma'ayanah shel Torah)

The Good Side of Suffering

וְגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־נַאֲקַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם מַעֲבִדִים אֹתָם וָאֶזְכֹּר אֶת־בְּרִיתִי - *"And I also heard the cries of B'nei Yisrael ... and I remembered My covenant"* (6:5).

The Gemara in B'rachos (5a) writes that the Torah uses the same word "B'ris" both with regard to salt ("B'ris melach Olom Hi" [2:13]) and in Ki Savo (28:69 [with regard to Yisurin {suffering} "Eileh divrei ha'B'ris"]). Just as the former sweetens the meat and makes it palatable, so too, do Yisurin 'sweeten the person', and cleanse him of his sins.

Salt only sweetens the meat, the Ma'or va'Shamesh explains, if one adds the right amount. Too much salt, on the other hand, spoils the meat, rendering it inedible.

And so it is with suffering. The right amount will have the desired effect. Too much suffering will drive a person out of his mind and cause him to rebel against his Creator.

That is why the Pasuk says ***"And I also heard the cries of B'nei Yisrael ... and I remembered My covenant".*** The time has come to take Yisrael out of Egypt. Because any more suffering will have an adverse effect on Yisrael and negate the implementation of the covenant.

The Redemption - A Means to an End

***וְיָדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלוֹת מִצְרָיִם* -"And you will know that I am Hashem who took you out from the land of Egypt**"** (6:7).



Here, Hashem promised Yisrael, says the **S'fas Emes**, that not only would He redeem them from Egypt, but that He would also see to it that they realized that He had redeemed them from exile.

The Redemption itself was a wonderful thing, but what is perhaps no less significant is to be aware that it is Hashem who redeemed us and to acknowledge it (hence the Seider night).

For the purpose of the Ge'ulah, says the S'fas Emes, is to strengthen our faith in the One who redeemed us, and not just to remove the shackles of bondage.

It Was Not for Them

וְנָתַתִּי אֹתָהּ לָכֶם מוֹרָשָׁה אֲנִי ה' -"And I will give it to you as a 'moroshoh' " (6:8).

Rabeinu Bechaye observes that the Torah writes, not 'Yerushah', but "moroshoh", implying that they would not inherit Eretz Yisrael, but would pass it on to their children. A broad enough hint that the generation that left Egypt was destined to die in the desert and would not enter Eretz Yisrael.

Paroh Won't Listen

הֵן בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי וְאֵיךְ יִשְׁמָעֵנִי פַּרְעֹה וַאֲנִי עֲרַל שְׂפָתָיִם - "Behold the B'nei Yisrael did not listen to me (said Moshe), so how do you expect Paroh to listen, I have a speech impediment?" (6:12)

But Yisrael did not listen on account of their suffering, as the Pasuk testified a little earlier. So how does it follow that Paroh would not listen (a Pircha on the 'Kal-va'Chomer' as the Gemara would say)?

The commentaries offer many suggestions to answer this Kashya. **The S'fas Emes** gives three ...

1. True, the Pasuk testified that Yisrael did not listen to Moshe on account of their suffering. But that is not what Moshe believed. Moshe thought that it was due to his speech impediment, in which case Paroh would certainly not listen to him, for the very same reason (as he specifically said here).

2. Moshe thought that Paroh without the suffering was less likely to refuse to listen, than Yisrael with the suffering, since first of all, he was concerned with retaining Yisrael (whereas Yisrael were certainly concerned with leaving), and secondly, Moshe lisped (as Chazal explained), and although this didn't seem to affect Yisrael adversely, it would certainly affect Paroh.

3. If Yisrael themselves refuse to listen to their leaders, how can one expect their enemies to listen to them? The Jewish leaders adopt their power to lead Yisrael from Yisrael themselves.

Had Yisrael received Moshe's words with enthusiasm, then his lips would have opened, and his words would have influenced Paroh to let Yisrael go. But now that Yisrael themselves were not interested, he knew that his words would fall on deaf ears. - And that is why he said, "Behold the B'nei Yisrael did not listen to me, so how do you expect Paroh to listen, seeing as I (still) have a speech impediment?"

The Frogs and Aharon, *"And they (the frogs) will come up ... and in the houses of your servants and your people and in your ovens and in your doughs"* (7:28).

The frogs actually entered the ovens, as Chazal teach us, even though they got burned (and even though frogs are water creatures which don't like heat at the best of times). Indeed, it is from them that Chananyah, Mishael and Eltzafan learned to jump into the furnace to sanctify Hashem's Name (see main article).

This explains, says the Toras Moshe, why in Perek Shirah, the Pasuk said by the frogs is "***Baruch Sheim K'vod Malchuso le'Olom Vo'ed***," words which remind one of one's obligation to give up one's life for Hashem's sake.

The only other time that the Torah uses the expression ***"and bring up" (ve'Ha'al)*** is when it says, in connection with Aharon's death "***and bring him up to Hor ha'Har***". Aharon knew that, just like the frogs, he was ascending Hor ha'Har in order to die and, just like the frogs, he obeyed Moshe's instructions without hesitation, in order to fulfill G-d's wishes.

The Egyptian sorcerers too, produced frogs, as the Torah writes (8:3). Only there, the frogs only went up "over the land of Egypt". They did not go into the ovens, says the Eidus bi'Yehosef, because G-d did not order them to.

All for the Sake of Hashem, *"And Moshe cried out to Hashem, because of the frogs that He had placed against Paroh*" (8:5).

When Moshe cried out it was always "to Hashem" (on behalf of Hashem). His sole concern was that the frogs should disappear at the given time (tomorrow) as Paroh had requested. He was not so much concerned for Paroh's wellbeing nor even for his own Kavod, only that the frogs should vanish the next day, so that G-d's Holy Name should be sanctified.

From The Haftarah (Adapted from the Ma'ayanah shel Torah)

No Wonder They Worshipped the Nile

**דַּבֵּר וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹּה־אָמַר ה' אֱלֹקִים הִנְנִי עָלֶיךָ פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם הַתַּנִּים הַגָּדוֹל הָרֹבֵץ בְּתוֹךְ יְאֹרָיו אֲשֶׁר אָמַר לִי יְאֹרִי וַאֲנִי עֲשִׂיתְנִי: - *"Who said 'My canal (the River Nile) is mine and I developed myself*" (Yechezkel 29:3).



It rarely rains in Egypt. What happens is that the Nile overflows its banks and irrigates the fields that are in its vicinity. That explains, says the **B'nei Yisaschar**, why the Egyptians denied Divine supervision. Rain after all, constitutes one of the major signs that point to the Divine Power that rules the world. The Egyptians, who never needed to look upwards for their water supply, were short of that reminder.

Nor is it surprising that they declared the Nile, together with the crocodiles that it produced, to be their god. After all, that was where they turned their eyes for water.

The Redemption and the Plant

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אַצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל- *"On that day, I will cause the horn of the House of Yisrael to sprout"* (Yechezkel 29:21)

The salvation of Yisrael is compared to a plant, the **Avnei Azeil** explains. Just as a plant begins to flourish and to grow only after the seeds have begun to rot in the ground, after they reach a stage where it seems that they are about to die, and there is no chance of survival.

So, it is with the B'nei Yisrael, he says. The salvation of Yisrael comes about only when Yisrael have reached their lowest possible ebb, and it appears as if all hope is lost. That is why the Pasuk writes "***I will cause the horn of the House of Yisrael to sprout",*** which the Navi translates as 'אַצְמִיחַ ', an expression of 'planting', and that explains why we say in the Amidah 'King, who puts to death, who brings back to life and who causes the horn of the House of Yisrael to sprout".

The sprouting of a plant after it has rotted is the greatest testimony that there is for **תְּחִיַּת הַמֵּתִים.** The dead may well turn into dust, yet, when the time comes, they will sprout from the earth and come back to life.

Rabbi Jeremy Golker – בְּחִירָה

One of the major themes in this week's parsha is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu hardens Pharoah's heart. We see seven of the ten plagues in parshas Vaera, and Pharoah time and time again withstands the warnings and the makkos that are being showered upon him – and he ignores it. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu hardens his heart - **וַאֲנִי אַקְשֶׁה אֶת־לֵב פַּרְעֹה** (7:3).

The meforshim grapple with this. How was it fair? How could Hashem take away Pharoah's **בְּחִירָה** – free choice? Surely that is an axiom of our faith?

Nobel Prize-winning Yiddish author **Isaac Bashevis Singer** quotes: ***"We must believe in free will. We have no choice in the matter."*** [**Rabbi Isaac Bernstein** (1939–1994), a renowned Torah scholar and orator from London, who frequently quoted this specific paradox during his lectures on Jewish philosophy and the Torah portion.]

The Rambam begins by establishing that every human being is given free will. If a person chooses to be righteous, they can; if they

choose to be wicked, they can. There is no predetermined "destiny" for a person's moral character.

The Rambam says (Hilchos Teshuvah 6:3) explains that explains that the hardening of Pharaoh's heart was itself a **punishment**. - For the first five plagues, Pharaoh hardened his own heart. He used his free will to choose evil so consistently that, as a punishment, Hashem eventually removed his ability to repent, allowing the full weight of justice to be served. In this view, Pharaoh was punished for the choices he made while he still had his freedom; the later hardening was the spiritual penalty for those choices.

The **Sforno and Ramban** argue for the opposite: that Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart to restore his free will! - The plagues were so devastating that any rational person would have surrendered out of sheer terror. If Pharaoh had released the Jews simply to escape the pain, it would not have been a moral choice, but an act of coercion. – Hashem "strengthened" – (וַיְחַזֵּק) Pharaoh's heart so that he could withstand the physical pressure of the plagues and act according to his true, internal character.

Sforno explain that if Pharaoh had surrendered after the first plague, the world would have thought it was a natural disaster. By "stiffening" his heart, Hashem allowed the full sequence of ten plagues to occur, demonstrating Divine mastery over every aspect of nature.

The "Natural Process" View - Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler

In modern Mussar thought, it is taught that every time a person repeats an action, it becomes their nature.

וְהַכְבֵּד אֶת־לִבּוֹ - Pharaoh "*hardened his own heart*" initially (8:15). By doing so repeatedly, his stubbornness became an ingrained habit. – [We become "locked in" to the character traits we choose to practice.]

בְּחִירָה

In the teachings of the **Chafetz Chaim,** the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is explained as a natural consequence of a person's repeated choices rather than a direct removal of free will.

His perspective, often shared in his works and commentaries on the Torah, includes several key insights:

Choice Forfeited Through Action: The Chafetz Chaim aligns with the classical view that for the first five plagues, Pharaoh hardened his own heart. By repeatedly choosing to ignore the truth and suppress his conscience, Pharaoh eventually "lost" the merit of free will as a form of divine punishment.

The Power of Habit: He emphasizes that every time a person commits a sin and ignores their inner voice of truth, it becomes easier to do so again. This "hardening" is a spiritual law where a person's character becomes fixed in its path, making repentance increasingly difficult without divine intervention.

Enabling Genuine Choice: Another interpretation within this school of thought is that Hashem "strengthened" Pharaoh's heart so that he would not simply surrender out of physical pain or fear of the plagues. By giving him the strength to withstand the suffering, Hashem allowed Pharaoh to make a choice based on his true inner convictions rather than being forced by external pressure.

A Warning for All: The Chafetz Chaim uses this as a moral lesson for every individual. He warns that if one constantly pushes away the "reminders" or "signs" from Hashem to improve, they risk reaching a "point of no return" where their heart becomes too heavy or stubborn to change.

Free will is a gift – use it or lose it!

וְשָׁרַץ הַיְאֹר צְפַרְדְּעִים וְעָלוּ וּבָאוּ בְּבֵיתֶךָ וּבַחֲדַר מִשְׁכָּבְךָ וְעַל מִטָּתֶךָ וּבְבֵית עֲבָדֶיךָ וּבְעַמֶּךָ וּבְתַנּוּרֶיךָ וּבְמִשְׁאֲרֹתֶיךָ. - *"The Nile shall swarm with frogs, and they shall come up and enter your palace and your bedroom and upon your bed, and into the houses of your courtiers and among your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls."* 8:28



In Tractate Sanhedrin (67b), Rabbi Akiva says: "There was only one frog, and it swarmed/multiplied [into many]." Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria (REBA) said to him: "Akiva, what have you to do with Aggadah (homiletics)? Go back to the laws of Leprosy and Tents. [In fact], there was one frog, it whistled to the others, and they all gathered."

The *Chasam Sofer* explains REBA's argument based on the Gemara in Pesachim (53b). There, it is stated that Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah [in the furnace of Babylon] sacrificed their lives based on a "Kal V'Chomer" (a logical inference) from the frogs of Egypt: "If the frogs, who are not commanded to sanctify God's name, entered the ovens, how much more so should we."

Now, according to Rabbi Akiva, the creation of these frogs was a miracle—one frog spawned many. This means their entire creation was solely for the purpose of this plague. If so, they were created specifically to be burned for the sake of the plague. If that is the case, what proof is there for Hananiah and his companions? Humans are commanded "and you shall live by them" (the Mitzvos), not die

by them. How could they learn the duty to die from creatures created specifically to die?

Therefore, REBA argued that the frog whistled to existing, "natural" frogs. These were frogs that lived in the Nile and were created to live, not specifically to die. When *they* chose to enter the ovens and sacrifice themselves, it provided a valid logical proof (Kal V'Chomer) for Hananiah and his companions.

The Beis Av - הרב אליקים שלעזינגער says:

It appears we can add to this to understand Rabbi Akiva's view and REBA's strictness toward him. Rabbi Akiva is consistent with his own philosophy in Berakhos (61a) regarding the verse "With all your soul"—which he interpreted as "even if He takes your soul." When the Romans were combing his flesh with iron combs, he told his students: "All my life I was troubled, wondering when I would have the opportunity to fulfill this verse."

We see that according to Rabbi Akiva, the very **purpose** of man's creation is to reach the moment where he can die for the sanctification of God's name. Therefore, according to his logic, it is perfectly fine that the frogs were created solely for that purpose, as they were achieving the ultimate goal of creation.

However, REBA disagreed with this fundamental premise. He held that while a person is indeed obligated to sacrifice their life if the situation arises, the primary purpose of creation is "and you shall live by them"—to live and fulfil the commandments.

Because he disagreed with Rabbi Akiva on this fundamental principle of the human mission, he told him, "What have you to do with Aggadah?" and interpreted the miracle of the frogs differently.

Mistakes are the portals of discovery.

"Natural Habitat" of the wild animals during the plague of Arov

שמות ח

טז) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה הַשְׁכֵּם בַּבֹּקֶר וְהִתְיַצֵּב לִפְנֵי פַרְעֹה ... וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר ה' שַׁלַּח עַמִּי וְיַעַבְדֵנִי

יז) כִּי אִם אֵינְךָ מְשַׁלֵּחַ אֶת עַמִּי הִנְנִי מַשְׁלִיחַ בְּךָ וּבַעֲבָדֶיךָ וּבְעַמְּךָ וּבְבָתֶּיךָ אֶת הֶעָרֹב, וּמָלְאוּ בָּתֵּי מִצְרַיִם אֶת הֶעָרֹב, וְגַם הָאֲדָמָה, אֲשֶׁר הֵם עָלֶיהָ.



"And Hashem said to Moshe: 'Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh... and say to him: Thus says the L-rd, let My people go that they may serve Me. For if you do not let My people go, behold, I will let loose against you, your courtiers, your people, and your houses, the swarm of wild animals (Arov); and the houses of Egypt shall be filled with the swarm, ***and also the ground (Adama) upon which they are.***'" (8:16,17)

Chanukat HaTorah - Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Cracow

Many interpretations have been offered for this word "*Adama*" (ground/earth). It can be explained as follows: Rashi defines *Arov* as "all species of harmful wild animals."

However, the Rash (Rabbi Samson of Sens) on Tractate Kilayim (Chapter 8, Mishna 5) mentions a specific creature called the ***Yiduoni*** (sometimes identified as the *Adneis HaSadeh* or "mountain man"). This creature has a long cord/stem emerging from a root in the earth [connected to its navel]. When people try to hunt it, no one can approach because it mauls and kills anyone nearby. The only way to capture it is to pull it until the cord snaps, at which point it immediately dies.

If so, one might wonder: How could Hashem bring the *Yiduoni* as part of the plague of *Arov*? If it is tethered to the ground by a cord and dies if separated, it could not "fill the houses of Egypt." To address this, the verse says: "...and also the ground upon which they are." This means that Hashem [miraculously] brought the very **ground** to which the creature was tethered along with it, allowing it to survive and attack within Egypt.

Beis Av -Rabbi Elyakim Schlesinger

Perhaps we can suggest another explanation based on natural science: Generally, wild animals do not leave their natural habitats. It is their nature to remain within their specific boundaries, which is why they do not typically enter human settlements to cause harm; harm usually occurs only when a person enters *their* territory.

One could say that during the plague of *Arov*, their boundaries were fundamentally changed. For the duration of the plague, the land of Egypt itself **became their natural habitat**. Therefore, they entered the cities as if they were in their own domain and caused damage.

Through this, we can understand why the Torah emphasizes here: *"And I will set apart on that day the land of Goshen."* Although the other plagues also did not affect the Israelites, a new detail is highlighted here regarding the land of Goshen itself. Since the land of Egypt had been transformed into the "natural territory" of the wild animals, the miracle was that the land of Goshen remained a "human settlement" boundary. Therefore, the animals did not enter there.

This is the meaning of the conclusion of the verse 8:18: **אֲנִי ה׳ בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ** - He controls the very nature and boundaries of the land. It is a declaration that Hashem's leadership is not just miraculous and distant, but penetrates **nature, territory, and geography**. He is the landlord of the physical world.

Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein - When Silence Hears

I was once in Toronto, where there is an extraordinary yeshiva for deaf boys, which has been operating for decades. The *rosh yeshiva* himself is deaf, as is his wife, and the students. At the time, there were about twelve boys, ages fifteen through eighteen. I can say without exaggeration that they are among the happiest, most radiant boys I have ever encountered. Not superficially happy, but deeply and genuinely alive.

Before my visit, I received a call from their interpreter. She told me that the boys usually daven with the neighboring yeshiva, but they had one request. Since I was in town, they wondered if they could have their own minyan, just to daven together with me.

I'll be honest. For a moment, the technical questions ran through my mind. A minyan? Kaddish? Are we *yotzei*? Then I stopped myself. You're being offered the opportunity to daven with twelve deaf boys whose sincerity pierces Shamayim. Why would I ever miss that *zechus*? And I can tell you: the Shechinah was present in that minyan in a way few places ever merit.

I told her I would absolutely be there.

That Thursday night, when I arrived in Toronto, she called me again and said, "The boys are beside themselves with excitement!" Afterward, she said, I would speak with a signer translating. "No problem," I said.

When I walked in, they greeted me with hugs and pure, overflowing joy. I'd spoken to audiences before, but I had never received so much warmth in my life. If anyone ever feels down, I strongly recommend getting on a plane and going to that yeshiva. These boys are extraordinary and so filled with happiness, love, and an openness of heart and soul.

When we began to daven, the chazan stepped up. He was a young man with a cochlear implant, able to articulate more clearly than some of

the others. And then he began to pronounce the words more carefully and with more concentration than people who have been davening fluently their entire life. Each word mattered. The boys davened—some vocally, some silently—but all wholeheartedly.

Then we reached *Shema Yisrael*.

They stood there, hands over their eyes, saying *Shema* as best as they could. And as they did, I broke down crying.

Shema means "listen." *Shema Yisrael—listen, Israel.* But these boys cannot hear! I found myself crying out silently: "Hashem, I don't understand. How can they say Shema Yisrael?"

And then the Shema continued. - "*Baruch Shem Kevod…*"—the words recited by the angels, as the Midrash teaches (*Devarim Rabbah* 2:36). And then the Shema goes on even further with the next paragraph: "*Ve'ahavta es Hashem Elokecha bechol levavcha*—Love Hashem with all your heart."

And suddenly it hit me. Shema does not mean listening with your ears. It means listening with your heart. And in that room, it was deafening. The intensity of their hearts filled the space. And I thought to myself: They have one up on me. I may think I hear, but they hear far more than I do. - Not with their ears, but with their hearts.

After davening, I stood up and spoke to the boys. I told them my famous elevator *mashal* about a person who gives up just one step before the breakthrough, not realizing success was within reach.

Later, when I addressed the broader community, I said something I meant with complete sincerity. Toronto is protected, I said. As long as those boys are learning Torah in that yeshiva, as long as that minyan exists, there is nothing to fear.

And yet, listen to this. At the time, the boys were learning in trailers. I said to the community, "These boys don't deserve trailers. They deserve a castle."

We are allowed to ask questions in life. Moshe Rabbeinu asked questions. But Hashem told him something fundamental: "You can ask, but you are misunderstanding."

"I am Hashem," he told Moshe. I bring people into the world who can hear and people into the world who cannot hear. But it is all the same Hashem. I do not "run out of parts." I don't suddenly realize I'm missing components—missing hearing here, sight there, intelligence here. Everything is deliberate. Everything has meaning. Everything is exact.

And what you see is not what you get.

That is what Hashem was teaching Moshe Rabbeinu. And Moshe was far greater than we are. Yet even Moshe said, "You sent me to save them? You sent me to make things easier. And look what happened; it got harder. What is going on?"

And Hashem's response was: Hold on. Parshas Va'eira begins with the words, "And G-d spoke to Moshe, and He said to him, 'I am Hashem'…"

The Names Elokim and Hashem are the same, Hashem told Moshe: If I am doing this, I am doing it intentionally. Nothing here is accidental. I wanted Pharaoh to make it harder because one plague was about to become ten, and ten were about to become two hundred and fifty at the sea.

This was not a setback. This was a setup.

And when we learn to not simply hear with our ears, but with our hearts, we can pick up the faint whisper of Hashem telling us, "I am Hashem… I am here with you."

"When you truly trust Hashem, He takes care of you completely- wherever you are, no matter who you are." ~ Rabbi Yosef Zundel of Salant.

Rabbi Shlomo Hoff Shlita – How to understand the Kal V'chomer of Moshe Rabbeinu and what lay behind the instruction to speak to Pharoah with respect

Moshe Rabbeinu's Mission and Kalvachoyma:

Moshe was first commanded to approach Kal Yisroel, the general Israelite population, and then Pharaoh. The Israelites, burdened by their difficult situation, could not receive Moshe's message of hope due to a lack of "ruach," a spiritual breath or vitality necessary for understanding and belief. **וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה כֵּן אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מִקֹּצֶר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה** 6:9

Rashi interprets **מִקֹּצֶר רוּחַ** as literal shortness of breath due to distress. However, the deeper explanation provided is that a lack of "ruach"—a connection to Torah and spiritual vitality—prevents a person from hearing or internalizing hope. Without this spiritual breath, the Israelites could neither grasp nor believe in Moshe's message of future redemption, no matter how hopeful it was.

Moshe hesitated to approach Pharaoh because if the Israelites' distress caused them to not listen, Pharaoh, who seemingly lacked this spiritual limitation, would be even less receptive. **הֵן בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי וְאֵיךְ יִשְׁמָעֵנִי פַּרְעֹה**

The ruach is described as a spirit of Torah, belief, and connection to The Ribboino Shel Olam. This spirit gives a person the ability to rise above hardships, imbuing hope and enabling one to perceive redemption even amid suffering. Without ruach, despair prevails, and hope cannot be internalized.

The teaching extrapolates that when a person faces difficulties, maintaining a connection to spirituality and Divine guidance (ruach, ruchnius) is crucial for overcoming despair. This spiritual state allows for clarity, hope, and belief in eventual salvation.

Despite Pharaoh's cruelty, Moshe and Aaron were commanded to speak respectfully to him, avoiding derision or embarrassment. This

instruction is profound because if Pharaoh were humiliated, it could lead to divine forgiveness (kapara) for him, thereby nullifying the justification for the plagues.



6:9 וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה כֵּן אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מִקֹּצֶר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה

'Moshe spoke thus to the children of Israel, but they did not hearken to Moshe because of [their] shortness of breath and because of [their] hard labor.'

The Power of the Torah: **The Ohr Hachaim** famously suggests that if the Israelites had been occupied with the study of Torah, they would not have suffered from "shortness of breath". He argues that the spiritual nourishment of Torah provides the resilience needed to withstand physical and emotional distress.

Physical vs. Spiritual Capacity: He explains that the "hard labor" was not just physical exhaustion but a spiritual barrier. The intense suffering had so diminished their souls that they lacked the "vessel" or the mental space to receive a message of hope.

The Mechanism of Redemption: He notes that the people's refusal to listen did not stem from a lack of faith in Hashem, but rather from their extreme physical and mental state. The "shortness of breath" refers to a state of panic or overwhelming anxiety that prevents a person from thinking clearly.

Preparation for Freedom: The commentary implies that for a person to truly "hear" a message of redemption, there must be a degree of internal peace. The Egyptian bondage was specifically designed to strip away this peace, making the eventual Exodus an even greater miracle of spiritual revival.

In his commentary on Parshas Vaera, **the Meshech Chachma** (Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, 1843–1926) provides deep philosophical and halakhic insights into the redemption of Israel and the plagues in Egypt.

Psychology of Despair: Addressing why Bnei Yisrael could not listen to Moshe due to "shortness of spirit" (6:9), he notes that Moshe originally offered two messages: immediate freedom and future entry into the Promised Land.

He explains that people in deep distress cannot process remote goals; therefore, Hashem later instructed Moshe to focus only on immediate liberation until they were actually free.

In his commentary on, **Ralbag** (Rabbi Levi ben Gershon) analyzes why the Israelites failed to listen to Moshe's message of redemption. His interpretation focuses on the psychological and physical exhaustion caused by their enslavement.

Psychological and Physical Exhaustion: Ralbag explains "shortness of breath" (kotzer ruach) as a state of intense mental and emotional distress. He notes that the Israelites were so overwhelmed by their immediate suffering that they lacked the mental "bandwidth" or spirit to contemplate a future redemption.

The Weight of Hard Labor: He emphasizes that the "cruel bondage" (avodah kashah) was not just physical toil but a form of psychological crushing. The relentless nature of their work left them with no time or energy to believe in promises that seemed far-fetched given their current reality.

Ralbag highlights the lesson that people under extreme physical or emotional duress cannot be expected to process complex messages or maintain high levels of faith, as their immediate survival takes precedence.

True to his rationalist style, Ralbag interprets the people's lack of response not as a moral failing or "wickedness," but as a natural human reaction to trauma and exhaustion.

In a departure from the traditional interpretation, Ralbag argues that the phrase kotzer ruach (shortness of spirit/breath) in Exodus 6:9 refers to Moses, not the Israelites.

While most commentators (like Rashi) view kotzer ruach as the Israelites' physical and psychological exhaustion from slavery, Ralbag provides a unique rationalist reading:

Moshes' Dispirited State: Ralbag suggests that Moshe himself was "knocked for a loop" and somewhat dispirited by recent events. After his first meeting with Pharaoh resulted in increased labor for the people, Moses was discouraged and lacked his usual enthusiasm or "spirit" when delivering Hashem's second message.

Oratory Impact: Ralbag posits that because Moshe was feeling this internal "shortness of spirit," his delivery lacked the necessary excitement or persuasive power to overcome the people's immense suffering.

This interpretation helps explain the logic of the Kal Vachomer Moshe uses later in verse 12: "If the Israelites did not listen to me, how will Pharaoh?". In Ralbag's view, Moshe was attributing the failure to his own state of mind and limited oratory skills at that moment.

The Miracle of Pharaoh's Home

וַיִּפֶן פַּרְעֹה וַיָּבֹא אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וְלֹא־שָׁת לִבּוֹ גַּם־לָזֹאת – *'Pharaoh turned and went home, and he paid no heed even to this.'*

The Meshech Chachma offers a unique insight into the plague of blood (7:23), noting that while the rest of Egypt suffered from a lack of water, Pharaoh likely had water in his palace because he had raised Moshe and "paid" for water through that hospitality.

This explains why Pharaoh "did not take it to heart"—because his own immediate needs were met, he ignored the suffering of his nation.

Rabbi Shlomo Hoff Shlita

לֵךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה בַּבֹּקֶר – 'Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes out to the water. Wait on the bank of the Nile to meet him.' 7:15



According to Jewish tradition, particularly in the **Or HaChaim's** commentary on Shemos, (specifically the Midrash Tanchuma), the Pharaoh of the Exodus claimed to be a god who was above all human needs, including defecation.

The Pretence: To maintain the illusion of divinity, Pharaoh supposedly told his subjects he never needed to go to the bathroom. (Ohr HaChaim and Rashi)

The Secret Ritual: The Midrash explains that Pharaoh would wake up very early in the morning and sneak down to the Nile River to relieve himself in secret.

The Confrontation: This provides the context for why Hashem instructed Moshe to meet Pharaoh "by the river" in the morning. Moshe essentially caught Pharaoh "red-handed" while he was attempting to hide his human vulnerability, exposing the lie of his divinity.

The Lesson: This encounter was intended to shatter Pharaoh's ego and show that, despite his claims of perfection and divinity, he was a physical being bound by the same biological laws as any other human.

The Ohr HaChaim explains that by confronting him at this exact moment, Hashem was showing Pharaoh that his power was an illusion.

Despite his massive empire, he could not control even his own bodily functions.

Why "Perfect" Creations Need to Relieve Themselves

"Relieving oneself" is discussed as a fundamental proof of human mortality and a refutation of the false divinity claimed by Pharaoh.

Jewish theology reconciles the "perfection" of Hashem's creation with the "indignity" of bodily functions through several concepts:

The Body as a "Vessel": The body is not perfect in a divine sense (being infinite or unchanging), but it is a "perfect tool" for the soul's work. Bodily functions are the mechanism by which the body maintains its health so the soul can function.

Constant Renewal: Every morning, Jews recite the Asher Yatzar blessing, which praises Hashem as the "Wonderful Physician." It acknowledges that if a single "opening" or "tube" in the body were blocked or ruptured, it would be impossible to survive.

Humility vs. Pride: In the context of Pharaoh, the need to relieve oneself serves as a constant reminder of human dependence on Hashem. It prevents man from becoming "haughty" like Pharaoh and mistakenly believing he is the source of his own life.

Distinguishing the Creator from the Created: True perfection belongs only to Hashem, who has no needs. Humans are created "incomplete" or "needing" to create a space for Free Will and the ability to earn reward. Our physical needs are the "boundary" that separates us from the Divine.

Human biological needs serve as a built-in mechanism for humility. They distinguish the Creator (who has no needs) from the created (who are dependent). - Pharaoh's attempt to hide these needs was a rejection of his own humanity and an act of extreme pride.

Project Mesorah – Rabbi Pesach Krohn



A Guten Erev Shabbos, my dear friends of Project Missorah. This is your friend Rabbi Pesach Kroon speaking to you Erev Shabbos, Parshas Vaera.

In this week's Pasha, we have a fascinating Pasuk, a great Rashi, and a great insight from the **Steipler** about how we should live life.

The Pasuk tells us - **וַיֵּ֣ט אַהֲרֹ֗ן אֶת־יָדוֹ֙ עַ֣ל מֵימֵ֣י מִצְרָ֔יִם וַתַּ֥עַל הַצְפַרְדֵּ֖עַ וַתְּכַ֥ס אֶת־אֶ֥רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם** - *'And Aaron stretched forth his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frog (one) came up and covered the land of Egypt.'*

What do you mean it covered the whole land of Mitzrayim? There was only one?

So Rashi says on the spot, and brings a medrash that the people lost their temper and they hit their frog. And when they hit the frog, it doubled. One became two, then four, then eight, 16, 32, 64, 128. - There was no end.

So the Steipler asked, were these people crazy? Didn't they see what was happening?

But the answer is that when you lose your temper and you lose control, you do dumb things, you do make wrong decisions, and you say wrong things.

And so, we all have to be so careful, because sometimes you can hurt a spouse, you can hurt a child, you can hurt a Rebbe, you can hurt a dear friend. - You say something and you forget it, but they don't forget it.

And not only that, Meforshim say that if a Ben Torah, a Talmud Chochom gets angry, it's a tremendous chilul Hashem. And even

health-wise, it strains the heart and it raises a person's blood pressure.

The idea is that when a person loses their temper, after a while they feel terrible shame and they regret what they said and regret what they did.

So let's see if we can learn the lesson from the Steipler to control ourselves because otherwise it becomes easier to lose yourself and lose patience - And lose our reputation and lose our self-control.

So, let's see if we could calm down and be kind to each other and kind to ourselves and not lose ourselves and not cause ourselves shame by doing the wrong things and saying the wrong things.

It states (Shemos 8:9) **וַיָּמֻתוּ הַצְּפַרְדְּעִים מִן הַבָּתִּים מִן הַחֲצֵרֹת וּמִן הַשָּׂדֹת** - "The frogs died from the houses, from the courtyards, and from the fields." But the pasuk doesn't mention that the frogs that leaped into the ovens died.

Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei HaTosfos says that, indeed, those frogs didn't die. "This is because they trusted in Hakadosh Baruch Hu and they went into the ovens on Hashem's command."

We learn from this the greatness of bitachon. Even frogs that trust in Hakadosh Baruch Hu are protected from harm.

Rav Moshe Feinstein & the Wet Floor

It is told that Rav Moshe was once seen carefully drying a floor he had accidentally wet with an umbrella. When asked why he didn't leave it for the janitor, he replied that his minor convenience should never result in someone else's extra labour or potential injury.

UK for TORAH @gmail
Authentic Hashkofa from Gedolei Yisroel

Insights Into The Torah Perspective From Great Personalities Of The Last Generation & Beyond

These articles were sent out over the last two years in the weekly UK for Torah email updates, each one for the yahrtzeit of the subject of the article and sometimes accompanied by pecies written by him. It goes without saying that each Torah personality warrants full length books detailing his accomplishments and presenting his legacy.

The articles in this collection are simply snippets of insights into hashkofa which were taken to give ourselves chizuk, but do not represent even a fraction of what there is to write.

In general, we do not elaborate on the lives of those Torah luminaries who already have books written about them or who are well-known, and instead limit ourselves to presenting some of their insights. Articles about Torah luminaries who are less well-known (particularly to the English-speaking readership) usually include some historical and biographical information.

26 Teves: Rav Shlomo Brevda

Rav Shlomo Brevda was one of the most influential ba'alei mussar and maggidei shiur of the previous generation. Through his lectures and seforim he inspired countless people in Eretz Yisroel, United States, and United Kingdom to strengthen their commitment to Torah and yiras Shamayim.

Born and raised in America, he eventually moved to Bnei Brak where he became a devoted talmid of the great mashgiach Rav Chatzkel Levenstein. Under Rav Chatzkel's guidance he absorbed the classic mussar approach of the Lithuanian yeshiva world, which he later transmitted to thousands of students and listeners.

Rav Brevda authored numerous seforim, particularly on the teachings of the Vilna Gaon and on the Yamim Tovim. His works are widely studied and are known for presenting deep ideas in a clear and inspiring style.

Letters During the Six-Day War

A fascinating window into Rav Brevda's thinking appears in the collection **Igros Shlomo**, published in 5776, which contains over two hundred of his letters. Among them is a series of letters written in 5727, during the tense weeks surrounding the Six-Day War.

In these private letters, written from Bnei Brak to close friends, Rav Brevda described the intense fear that gripped the country before the war, the relief afterward, and the powerful spiritual tests that followed the military victory.

He noted how the yeshivos strengthened themselves during those days through increased Torah study, Tehillim, fasting, and tefillah. At the same time he warned of the spiritual danger that can arise when people attribute success solely to military power rather than recognizing the hand of Hashem.

Rav Brevda stressed that the real challenge of such moments is maintaining clarity of faith and avoiding the mindset of **"kochi v'otzem yodi"**—the belief that human strength alone determines events. He encouraged strengthening emunah, supporting Torah institutions, and remaining firmly connected to Torah learning and tefillah during times of national upheaval.

Standing Firm Amid Confusion

In his letters Rav Brevda reflected on how difficult it can be for individuals to maintain a Torah perspective when public opinion is swept up in excitement and triumph. He emphasized that true strength lies in remaining faithful to Torah values even when they differ from prevailing attitudes.

He often encouraged personal chizuk through sincere conversation between friends, explaining that in confusing times individuals must strengthen one another in emunah and clear Torah thinking.

His Legacy

Rav Shlomo Brevda devoted his life to teaching mussar, clarifying Torah hashkafah, and inspiring spiritual growth. His lectures, writings, and personal guidance influenced generations of students around the world.

Through his seforim and recorded shiurim, his voice continues to inspire those seeking deeper understanding of Torah, emunah, and the teachings of the great ba'alei mussar.

יהי זכרו ברוך.

וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל מֹשֶׁה מִקֹּצֶר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה (ו/ט)

The **מסילת ישרים** writes that **פרעה** continuously demanded more work from the **אידן** in order to stop them from plotting against him. He kept the **אידן** so busy thereby not giving them anytime to stop and scheme.

The **יצר הרע** does exactly the same. In order to stop a person from thinking about life and asking himself, 'am I heading in the right direction?' 'Am I growing spiritually?' he constantly bombards him with new distractions; keeping him busy chasing the latest crazes, and before a person knows it, his prime years have passed and he has not achieved a fraction of his true potential.

● **Rebbe Shalom Schwadron זצ"ל** relates that once he entered an old age home to catch a minyan **מנחה**. And he entered the gardens he heard two old men sitting on the bench arguing; one said, '42' and the other shouted, 'NO! It's 43!' Then the first pensioner said, '43' and his friend angrily replied, 'No. It's 44.'

Seeing that they were having some serious disagreement, Rebbe Shalom approached them offering his assistance in trying to solve their dispute, but they told him there was no need for his assistance.



Rebbe Shalom stood a distance away to see how this was going to end. He noticed that every time a bus drove past, the argument was reignited. It was then that Rebbe Shalom realized that they were counting how many busses had passed and they had a difference of opinion as to whether this was the 48th or 49th bus to pass.

He then entered the **בית המדרש** of the old age home and he saw old men sitting there with large **גמרות** and magnify glasses learning with enthusiasm. It brought tears to his eyes...

...a person can spend his whole life counting buses while others are learning **גמרא**.

וְלֹא יָאָסִיף הַבַּיְתָה--וַיֵּרֶד עֲלֵיהֶם הַבָּרָד, וָיָמוּת. . . הַיָּרֵא אֶת-דְּבַר ה' מֵעַבְדֵי פַרְעֹה--הֵנִיס (ט/יט-כ)

משה warned that the next **מכה** of **ברד** was about to come and as a result of this **מכה** all animals that were left out in the fields, and not brought into the house, would die. The **פסוק** tells us that the **מצריים** who feared Hashem brought their livestock into their houses.

The **מצריים** had already experienced six dreadful **מכות**, many of which had been predicted by **משה**. So which fool would take the risk and leave all his livestock outside, on the chance that this time **משה** might be wrong? Why then does the **תורה** call those who brought their livestock inside **ירא ה'**? Surely they were just being practical!

The קהלות יצחק answers that ה׳ told them to bring the animals into their living quarters. As the מדרש writes: the מצריים would make the אידן live amongst the animals. So now ה׳ was giving them a taste of their own medicine. If a מצרי wanted to save his livestock it would be no use putting them in a barn, they had to be brought into the house.



Yes! Cows in the kitchen, horses in the dining room, sheep and goats in the bedroom! As the פסוק writes: The livestock that were not brought into the בתים died; -even though they might have been brought into a barn or shed.

Now we know why they were called ירא ה׳. There were many מצריים who said בית doesn't really mean a house as long as it is under a roof it'll be ok. A shed or barn will be fine. It can't really be that we are meant bring in hundreds of animals in our house! However, the ירא ה׳ didn't try to explain 'what ה׳ really means.' They just followed ה's instructions down to the last detail. And if ה׳ said בית that is what they did. -And they brought the cows and horses into their living rooms!

הוּא אַהֲרֹן, וּמֹשֶׁה (ו/כו)

רש״י writes that the reason why the **תורה** sometimes writes **משה** before **אהרן** and sometimes **אהרן** before **משה** is to tell us that they were both equal in greatness.

The question is; how can you say that **אהרן** was considered equal to **משה**, who was the greatest **נביא** and was the one through whom the **תורה** was given?

Answers **ר׳ משה פיינשטיין זצ״ל**: since **אהרן** used his abilities and potential to their fullest he is considered equal to **משה רבינו** -even though **משה**'s **מדרגה** in **תורה** was far higher than him. **ה׳** does not measure success by results, rather; success is measured by the effort and toil that one puts into his **עבודת השם**.

As **אהרן** did all that he could do, even though **משה** was the greatest **נביא** since they both did their best, they are both considered equal by Hashem.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו, מֹשֶׁה, כְּצֵאתִי אֶת-הָעִיר, אֶפְרֹשׂ אֶת-כַּפַּי אֶל ה׳ (ט/כט)

רש״י writes that **משה** told **פרעה** that he must go out of the city in order to daven since during the **מכת ברד מצריים** brought the sheep, which was their **עבודה זרות**, into the city in order to shelter them in their houses. Therefore, **משה** could not daven in the city.

Rebbe Meir Shapiro זצ״ל asked, why couldn't **משה** stay in the city and just go into an empty room and daven there?

He answered it with the following story that happened to him.

Rebbe Meir Shapiro once went to visit the **חפץ חיים** who was already in his later years and due to his old age was housebound. The **חפץ חיים** bemoaned to him the fact that the levels of **צניעות** was unfortunately dropping.

Rebbe Meir asked the **חפץ חיים**, "How does the **חפץ חיים** know that the level is dropping? Has the Rov been in the streets and seen it?"

The **חפץ חיים** replied, 'I don't go to the marketplaces, and I haven't been through the streets but I can feel in the air that the **קדושה** is being driven away by **פריצות** and arrogance.

Says Rebbe Meir; we see from here that someone who is sensitive to **קדושה** can feel in the air the **טומאה** that is outside. That is why **משה רבינו** had to leave the city. (**ח"ח החדש/ה**)

❖ We find the same with **קדושה**. Every **מצוה** a person does, creates **קדושה**. There was a Jewish girl from Toronto who was brought up in a very traditional home. Unfortunately, before discovering the sweetness of **אידישקייט** she decided to travel to India to seek spirituality. She joined some cult and participated in their lectures and events.

During one lecture the chief guru said, "I am now going to bring down some spiritual forces upon us. He then closed his eyes and started his process of bring down this **כח הטומאה**. Suddenly, he stopped. He announced "there must be a Jew in this room that is ruining the progression. The Jew is requested to leave at once".

The girl was too embarrassed and stayed on her place. The Guru tried once again, and this time he was really infuriated. He fumed, 'There is a Jew in the room! He is foiling my whole feat. Leave immediately!'

Seeing that no one left the room, he asked each person separately, 'Are you a Jew?' When it came to the girl she said, 'yes.'

He angrily asked her, 'what were you doing during the lecture?' She replied, "Taking notes." The guru said, 'Impossible! What else?'

The girl replied, 'Well, actually I popped a sweet in my mouth.'

The guru was still not calmed, "There must have been something else!"

The girl replied, "Well, before I popped the sweet into my mouth I said a few words a blessing."

The guru started yelling, 'That blessing ruined my whole lecture. Leave at once and I don't want to see you ever again.'

The girl saw the **כח** and **קדושה** of a **ברכה**. She made her way to **ירושלים** and became a **בעלת תשובה**.





ויחזק ה' את לב פרעה ולא שמע אליהם וכו' (ט-יב)

Hashem hardened Paraoh's heart to prevent him from relenting and freeing *Bnei Yisroel*. This poses a problem. We are aware that man's entire existence in this world is to exercise free will. If so, how could *Hashem* deprive Paraoh of his free will and chance to do *teshuvah*?

R' Eliyohu Dessler ZT"L clarifies this. The ultimate goal of punishment is for a person to learn from his experiences and return to *Hashem*. But there is a pitfall: If a person stops doing evil only because of his tribulations, when they pass, he is likely to return to his previous wrongdoing. *Hashem* therefore, enables the *Rasha* to harden his heart in the face of *yisurim* - tribulations, so that he will not repent. This makes it possible to learn from his hardships and to repent from his own free will.

This, in essence, is what *Hashem* did for Paraoh. He provided him with the courage to reject the impact of the ten *plagues*. Had he repented, it would have then been a true *teshuvah*. But Paraoh did not withstand the test and continued his evil ways even after the *yisurim* left him, thus proving that his regret during the *Makkos* was not genuine.



R' Boruch of Medzibozh ZT"L would say: "How pleasant is the world if we do not subjugate ourselves to it and how difficult it is if we do!"



Medrash U'Maaseh - Rabbi Fyvel Shuster

Scent-sitivity - A small act of Rav Dessler zt'l teaches a big lesson about leadership.

Welcome back to **מדרש ומעשה**, sharing a story for this week's **פרשה, פרשת וארא**.

Last week was the **יארצייט** of **רב דסלר זצ"ל**, and I was reading a variety of things, both that he wrote and things that memories of people who knew him.

So there was someone named **רב יהושע הלר**. He was a **באבובער חסיד**, was very involved in in building the **פוניבז' ישיבה**. When **רב דסלר** came from England, **רב דסלר** first came by himself, his wife came afterwards, so he took it upon himself to help out **רב דסלר**, to make sure that he was comfortable. And one of the things **רב דסלר** needed to do was his laundry. So he arranged for **רב דסלר** to give the laundry to the laundry service of the **ישיבה**.

They had women who did all of the washing that was needed for the **ישיבה**. And he noticed that **רב דסלר**, when he gave in his clothes to be washed, would pour a little bit of **מי בושם**, a little bit of cologne on the clothing, because in case there was any kind of unpleasant smell to the clothing, he wanted to minimize any unpleasantness the women who were washing might have.

So that is a tiny **מעשה**, but I think that it's really something gigantic of showing **רב דסלר**'s thoughtfulness and the way in which he related to things. He also was very grateful to the women and expressed it to them, but that little idea of trying to minimize discomfort even a little bit, meaning they were probably washing hundreds of items of laundry, and a person might think what difference would it make that this little bit of laundry coming from this one person might have a pleasant smell as opposed to unpleasant? But he didn't minimize that. He realized anything he can do to minimize the discomfort of another is key.

On one hand, it connects to this week's **פרשה**, because we find that the end of **מכת צפרדע**, the plague of the frogs, so it says that the frogs, the Egyptians piled them up, and then **ותבאש הארץ**, the land stank because of the smell of the dead frogs.

Nothing that happened in the **מכות**, in the plagues to the **מצרים**, was incidental. Everything was done with a complete **חשבון**. **הקדוש ברוך הוא** calculated exactly what type of punishments the Egyptians were supposed to get, and that idea of the smell was part of it.

So may we be able to be **זוכה** to see and do what we can to save anyone we know even from a little bit of discomfort, to learn from **רב דסלר** that way of thinking, and to try to look at things that way, and hopefully then we'll be able to smell the sweet smells, right, of **אהבה, אחוה, ושלום, וריעות**, and be **זוכה** to the **גאולה שלימה**. And of course to the return of captives and to the victory of the soldiers who are fighting **במהרה בימינו**.

Have a wonderful **שבת**.


ראש חודש שבט
שבט תתבשר
בשורות
טובות
חודש טוב ומבורך