

Lashon Hara

By Mordechai Ostreicher, 12th Grade

There are two pesukim in this week's Parsha that state, "Moshe cried out to Hashem concerning the frogs" and "Hashem carried out the word of Moshe, and the frogs died."

The Chofetz Chaim asked why is it that during the plague of Tzfardea Hashem accepted Moshe's tefillah as soon as he uttered it and immediately stopped the devastating plague, yet when the Jews were in the desert and were attacked by fiery serpents, Moshe's prayers did not have an immediate effect? In the case of the snake, Hashem told Moshe, "Make yourself the image of a venomous snake, and place it on a pole" (Bamidbar 21:9), and only then by gazing at the copper "snake" did those who were bitten survive. Why was it necessary for Moshe to perform an action in order to save the Jewish people in the desert, yet in Egypt, no additional action was required?

The Chofetz Chaim answers that this is meant to teach us the severity of the sin of speaking Lashon Hara.

There is a rule that tefillah is effective for removing all misfortunes and disasters. Therefore, when Moshe begged Hashem to remove the frogs from Egypt, Hashem accepted his prayer and instantly stopped the plague. However, the fiery serpents were sent to attack the Jewish people as a punishment for speaking Lashon Hara. Since they had committed a sin, Moshe's tefillah was not im-

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Sanctify Hashem, Not Yourself

By Shmuel Maltz, 12th Grade

The Pasuk in this week's parsha says, "Visharatz Hayior Tzefardaim Vialu Uvau Biveisecha ... Uvitanurecha (And the river shall bring forth swarms of frogs and they will go up and come into your house... and into your ovens).

The Gemara in Pesachim asks, why did Chananyah, Mishael and Ezaryah allow themselves to be thrown into the furnace, rather than bowing down to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar? The Gemara answers that they took an example from the frogs in Egypt. They said: if the frogs jumped into hot ovens — even though they are not commanded to sanctify the name of Hashem — we, who are commanded to do so, should certainly throw ourselves into the fire in sanctification of the name of Hashem.

Tosfos explains that they were not obligated to give up their lives to avoid bowing down to the statue, since it was not an Avodah Zarah. The Nachalas Yaakov explains that Nebuchadnezzar considered himself all powerful, since he ruled over the entire world; therefore, he made a statue of himself to make people believe in him, instead of Hashem, and many were misled. However, it was possible to bow down in his honor — without believing in him. Nevertheless, they decided to give up their lives to sanctify the name of Hashem, and they were then miraculously

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Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

Parshas Va'eira Questions

1. In this parsha, what is called a "morasha" - "a heritage"? What else in the Torah is called a "morasha"?
2. Which grandfather and grandson lived the same amount of years?
3. In this parsha, which married couple begins their names with the same letter of the *Aleph-Bet*?
4. Who is the ancestor of every king from the Kingdom of Judah, and every High Priest except for one?
5. In this parsha, which person has the same name as an ancient city in the Land of Israel?
6. In what context is an oven mentioned in this parsha?
7. Where is a furnace mentioned in this parsha? What other two places in the Torah is a furnace mentioned?
8. In what context are camels mentioned in this parsha?
9. Where does this parsha refer to someone as the sister of someone else? Where else in the book of Exodus is a woman referred to as someone's sister?
10. Where in the book of Genesis is a woman referred to as someone's sister? (5 answers)

Answers

1. In this parsha, the land of Israel is referred to as a "morasha" - "a heritage" ([Exodus 6:9](#)). In parshas V'zos Habracha, the Torah itself is called a "morasha" ([Deut. 33:4](#)).
2. Levi and his grandson Amram both lived 137 years ([Exodus 6:16, 18](#)).
3. The names of Aaron and his wife Elisheva both begin with the Hebrew letter *aleph* ([Exodus 6:23](#)).
4. Aminadav, the father of Nachshon and Elisheva (the wife of Aaron), is an ancestor of King David ([Ruth 4:20](#)) and of every High Priest except for Aaron ([Exodus 6:23](#)).
5. Chevron, an ancient city in Israel, is also the name of the third son of Kehas ([Exodus 6:18](#)).
6. The frogs jump into the Egyptians' ovens ([Exodus 7:28](#)).
7. In this parsha, the ashes that Moshe threw skyward to initiate the plague of boils were taken from a furnace ([Exodus 9:8, 10](#)). Elsewhere, in parshas Vayera, following the destruction of Sodom, smoke rose from the city as if rising from a furnace ([Genesis 19:28](#)). In parshas Yisro, the Torah states that the smoke rising from Mount Sinai was like smoke rising from a furnace ([Exodus 19:18](#)).
8. Camels were smitten in the plague pestilence ([Exodus 9:3](#)).
9. This parsha refers to Elisheva as the sister of Nachshon ben Aminadav ([Exodus 6:23](#)). Elsewhere, when Miriam sings praises to Hashem after the splitting of the Red Sea, the Torah refers to her as the sister of Aaron ([Exodus 15:20](#)).
10. In parshas Bereishis, the Torah states that the sister of Tuval Kayin is Na'amah ([Genesis 4:22](#)). In parshas Tol-dos, the Torah refers to Rivka as the sister of Lavan ([Genesis 25:2](#)), and Machlas (Basmas) as the sister of Nevayos ([Genesis 28:9, 36:3](#)). In parshas Vayishlach, the Torah states that from the family of Esav, Timna is the sister of Lotan ([Genesis 36:22](#)). In parshas Vayigash, Serach bas Asher is referred to as the sister of Asher's sons ([Genesis 46:7](#)).

ALIYAH SUMMARY

First Aliyah: This week's portion opens with G-d's response to Moses (continuation from the end of last week's reading). G-d told Moses that He revealed Himself to the Patriarchs and established with them a covenant to give them the land of Canaan. And now the time has arrived to fulfill His promises. G-d told Moses to tell the Israelites that He has heard their cries, and He will now deliver them from Egypt and bring them to the Promised Land. Moses relayed the message, but their unbearable workload prevented them from accepting his words. G-d then told Moses to instruct Pharaoh to send the Israelites from his land. Moses protested: "If the children of Israel did not listen to me, how then will Pharaoh listen to me? I have a speech impediment?" (G-d's answer below in the Third Aliyah.)

Second Aliyah: The Torah takes a brief interlude and traces the lineage of Moses and Aaron, listing their family trees.

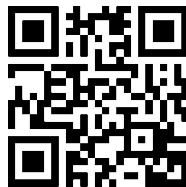
Third Aliyah: G-d tells Moses to go speak to Pharaoh, and Aaron should serve as his spokesman. G-d informed him that He will harden Pharaoh's heart and he will refuse to release the Israelites. At that point G-d will "multiply His wonders" in Egypt, until the Egyptians will recognize that G-d is the L-rd.

Fourth Aliyah: Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh. As per G-d's instructions, Aaron cast his staff on the ground, and it turned into a serpent. When Pharaoh's magicians did the same with their staffs, Aaron's staff swallowed theirs. Pharaoh remained unimpressed—and so the plagues commenced. Plague One: Aaron smote the Nile with his staff. The river and all the waters in Egypt turned into blood, and all the fish perished. Plague Two: Aaron stretched his staff upon the Nile and droves of frogs emerged. They covered the land, entered all the houses, even the ovens and kneading bowls. Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and begged them to pray to G-d to remove the plague, after which he would release the Israelites.

Fifth Aliyah: Moses prayed to G-d, and the frogs all died. Egypt reeked from the odor of rotting frogs, and Pharaoh reneged on his promise. Plague Three: Aaron smote the earth with his staff, and swarms of lice attacked Egypt, covering man and beast. Even Pharaoh's magicians were amazed by this, and informed Pharaoh that this is the "finger of G-d." Plague Four: G-d dispatched Moses to warn Pharaoh that his land will be infested by a mixture of noxious animals. Only the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, would be spared.

Sixth Aliyah: The mixture of wild beasts descended upon Egypt, destroying the entire land with the exception of Goshen. Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and offered to allow the Israelites freedom to serve G-d whilst still in Egypt. When Moses rejected this offer, Pharaoh capitulated and offered to release the Israelites if only the plague came to an end. Moses prayed, the plague ended, and Pharaoh reneged on his promise again. Plague Five: all the Egyptians' cattle suddenly died; none of the Israelites' animals were affected. Plague Six: Moses and Aaron took handfuls of furnace soot and threw them heavenward. The soot descended, covered the entire Egypt, infecting all its inhabitants with painful boils. G-d sent Moses to Pharaoh with a message: Just as G-d wiped out all the Egyptian cattle, He could have easily slain Pharaoh and all his people too. "But, for this [reason] I have allowed you to survive, in order to show you My strength and to declare My name all over the earth!"

Seventh Aliyah: Plague Seven: Moses warned Pharaoh that a catastrophic hail would descend upon the land. Man or beast that would remain in the field would be killed by the hailstones. Moses stretched his rod toward heaven and hail poured down—with fire blazing inside the icy hail. Aside for damage to humans and animal, the hail destroyed all vegetation and trees. Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. "I have sinned this time," he declared. "The Lord is the righteous One, and I and my people are the guilty ones. Entreat the Lord, and let it be enough of God's thunder and hail, and I will let you go..." Moses prayed. The hail stopped. And Pharaoh changed his mind yet again.



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Transcribed by
Shmuel Maltz

Bris On Fast Days

Asara B'Teves just passed, and a few questions regarding a Bris on that day apply: Does the father have to fast? What about the Seudah? What time of day does one do the Bris? Do we add in the Tefilos of the fast day, like Selichos?

A Gemara in Taanis says that in the times of the Beis Hamikdash, a family used to celebrate their own Yom Tov the day after Tisha B'Av, as they would bring the Eitzim L'Maaracha. When Tisha B'Av fell out on Shabbos, the fast was pushed off to Sunday, so they wouldn't fast the whole day. A Gemara in Eruvin says that when you have a personal Yom Tov that falls out after the Tisha B'Av, and when Tisha B'Av falls out on Shabbos and is pushed off to Sunday, you do not have to fast the whole day. Therefore, we pasken that when the Bris falls out on Tisha B'Av, one does not have to fast the entire next day. The question is: What about other fast days?

The Shulchan Aruch says that based on that Gemara in Eruvin, only on Tisha B'Av may one eat, but on every other fast, one cannot eat. The Magen Avraham quotes the Maharam who says that it's incomparable to any other fast day. Tosfos on that Gemara in Eruvin says that a family had a wedding on a fast day, so they gave the wine to a child to make the Bracha since nobody was allowed to drink.

What about the Seudas Bris? The Tashbetz says that if you have a Purim Meshulash, you make the Seudah after Shabbos, even though it's not Purim anymore. He writes further that if this is so, certainly a Seudah of Milah can be done the next day, after the fast.

When is the Bris done? The Shulchan Aruch says that you have to wait until very early in the morning to do a Bris, because of Zerizus. What about a Bris on a fast day? It would be very inconvenient to have the Bris in the morning, as everyone would have to reconvene at night and have the Seudah then. Well, the reason we are Mezaraz in the first place is because Avraham woke up early in the morning, and fastened his donkey's saddle before the Akedas Yitzchak. The Chayei Adam points out that Zerizus always prevails, so it should be done in the morning, and the Seudah should be at night. Rav Ovadia Yosef says that the term "morning" could be loosely defined. Chatzos should be the cutoff point. What about Davening? In terms of the Tzibur, Selichos is still said. The Baalei Bris is a Machlokes, however. Some hold it's a Yom Tov for them, so they don't say it, but others disagree and hold that they do say it. Rav Chaim Kanievskiy agrees with the latter.

SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With
Ari Ivry*

The Context: In this week's parsha, Hashem speaks to Aharon and Moshe saying: "Take the children of Israel out of Egypt... They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to take the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; this is Moshe and Aharon." Rashi comments on this and says that Moshe and Aharon are the sons who Yocheved bore to Amram. Additionally, there are places where Aharon is placed before Moshe and places where Moshe is placed before Aharon. This is to teach us that they are equal, as one (Berishis Rabbah).

The Questions: 1. Why does the midrash say that in some places the Torah mentions Aharon before Moshe; there is only one place where Aharon is mentioned before Moshe that is actually significant? 2. Why does Rashi state the parents of Moshe and Aharon? 3. Rashi seems to deviate from the midrash's words. Rashi says that "they are equal, as one." The midrash says that "they are equal in significance." How is it possible to say Moshe and Aharon are equal? We all know that Moshe was incomparably greater than any other Jewish leader in history?

Preface to the Explanation: The sequence of this segment of Chapter 6 is as follows: Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon to confront Pharaoh and redeem the Jewish people (v.13). Then, the Torah details Moshe's and Aharon's lineage. But, once digressing to discuss the genealogy of Shevet Levi, the Torah broadens its discussion to include the genealogy of both older brothers, Reuven and Shimon (v.14-19). Amram's marriage to Yocheved and the birth of Moshe and Aharon is recorded (v.20), followed by the remaining genealogy of Levi's children (v. 21-25). Our two pesukim (26-27) reintroduce Moshe and Aharon. Then, in verse 29, the Torah returns to Hashem's communications to Moshe and Aharon. Rashi was bothered by the seemingly superfluous inclusion of these two pesukim. Why do we need to be reminded that "this is Aharon and Moshe to whom Hashem said: take the children... We know this already! The Torah should have just continued with Hashem's communication?"

The Explanation: This led Rashi to understand the reintroduction of Moshe and Aharon in our pasuk as being linked to the earlier discussion of their lineage. "This is Aharon and Moshe- whom Yocheved Bore to Amram." The reason why these particular people deserved to be Hashem's agents of redemption was because of the merit of their parents. We previously learned that Yocheved, a midwife, stood up to Pharaoh and refused to follow his decree of killing Jewish newborns. And when Pharaoh commanded that his army should drown every boy in the Nile, causing Jewish couples to voluntarily divorced to refrain from having children, Amram boldly set an example by remarrying and fathering a child. Thus, "this is Moshe and Aharon"- these were children of heroic Yocheved and Amram and that's why Hashem chose them to take the Jews out of Egypt.

The question now becomes: Amram and Yocheved's heroism was only displayed because of Moshe. Aharon was already born before his parents remarriage and Yocheved was famous for hiding Moshe in a basket. Moshe was also central in bringing the Jews out of Egypt. So, in this case Moshe should have been mentioned first?! Therefore, this led Rashi to conclude that "they are equal, as one," not, as the Midrash says, "of equal significance," because this is not apparent from a plain reading of the Torah. Rather, "equal as one" in the sense that they were both equally part of bringing the Jews out of Egypt.

A Deeper Look: Moshe corresponds to Havaya- Hashem being beyond all of creation and Aharon corresponds to Elokim- Hashem being the Creator of all things. The fact that the Torah sometimes says "Moshe and Aharon" and sometimes "Aharon and Moshe" alludes to the unity between the two realities. Hashem as Creator and as beyond creation are one divine reality. When this awareness of Hashem is developed within the Creation itself, it has a lasting effect, as Rashi concludes his comments on pasuk 27: "This is Moshe and Aharon"- they remained loyal in their mission and righteousness from beginning to end.

Yom Kippur: The Pathway to Joy

By: Issac Butler, 9th Grade

From the earliest point in our childhoods, we are taught to express our gratitude for anything we receive. Think back about what were the first things your parents taught you? “Say please” and “Say thank you.” Appreciation and gratitude seem to be fundamental common values. Why is this so? Is it only to give our benefactors a good feeling? Or is there some deeper reason? What precisely do these words mean? In this week’s Parsha, we find a rather strange form of gratitude. As the story unfolds, Pharaoh defiantly refuses to release the Jewish people. So the ten plagues begin first, the Nile River turns to blood. Pharaoh persists in his stubborn refusal, and then the frogs come from the river and swarm all over Egypt. Pharaoh still resists, and the very dust of the earth is transformed into lice, but this too does not convince Pharaoh to release the Jewish people. As the plagues continue, Egypt is overrun with beasts of prey. And so it continues until Pharaoh finally lets the Jewish people go. If we look carefully, however, there is a very interesting difference between the first three plagues and the rest. Moshe was the divine messenger to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and he personally administered the plagues. Nonetheless, Hashem chose his brother Aaron to administer the first three plagues. Why was it done like this? Our Rabbis tell us that for Moshe to strike the river and turn it into blood or to generate a plague of frogs from it would have been an act of ingratitude. When all of the children were supposed to be killed, Moshe had been concealed in the Nile, and in effect, the river had saved his life. How could he now afflict it with plagues? Furthermore, Moshe had struck down an Egyptian who had been abusing a Jewish worker and buried the body in the sand. Therefore, it would have been an act of ingratitude for him to transform the sand into lice. What sort of gratitude was Hashem demanding from Moshe? What is the point of being grateful to inanimate entities such as the river and the sand? Clearly, the primary purpose of gratitude is for our own benefit. People sometimes tend to avoid expressing their gratitude, because somehow doing so makes them feel diminished. Their egos do not allow them to acknowledge that they are helped by others. To counteract this tendency, the Torah repeatedly emphasizes the importance of expressing gratitude. Indeed, the Hebrew word for gratitude is Hakaras Hatov, acknowledgment of the favor. Acknowledgment is the key, regardless of whether the benefactor is another person or an inanimate river. The tendency to ingratitude is one of the major obstacles to a close relationship with Hashem. A person whose ego does not allow him to acknowledge his own limitations and needs will not recognize the limitless presence of the Creator in the world. Only by becoming conditioned to express gratitude at every appropriate occasion, to acknowledge dependency on others, can a person break out of the ego-driven illusions of self-sufficiency and gain a clear vision of the world. This knowledge and humble acceptance is the first step towards connecting with the Master of the Universe. In our own lives, we must never underestimate the importance of expressing gratitude and appreciation to others. We must recognize every act of kindness that is done for us, and we must declare our acknowledgment clearly. We owe it not only to ourselves, but to benefactors even more.

Adapted from torah.com

(Ostreicher-Continued from page 1)

mediately effective. Instead, Hashem instructed Moshe to make an image of a venomous snake for the people to look at. This way, each Jew would think of God and personally repent for his sin. Each Jew would then be forgiven and granted further life. A very powerful lesson is apparent here: we see that Lashon Hara is an egregious sin and that anyone who commits it receives punishment.



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STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: YOEL HORWITZ

About 30 years ago, an American Rabbi visiting Miami gave a lecture on the life and accomplishments of the famed "Chafetz Chaim." The Rabbi described the life of the great sage, explaining that he lived a humble life as a shopkeeper in the village of Radin, Poland, but was recognized throughout the Jewish world as a great scholar, tzaddik and leader.

There was another story the Rabbi reluctantly told, since he only knew part of it. He rationalized that even an unfinished story about the Chafetz Chaim would have a meaningful message.

He began to relate an incident about a teenage boy in the Chafetz Chaim's Yeshiva who was found smoking a cigarette on Shabbat. The faculty and student body were shocked, and much of the faculty felt that the boy should be expelled. However, when the Chafetz Chaim heard the story, he asked that the boy be brought to his home.

At this point, the Rabbi interrupted the narrative and said, "I don't know what the Chafetz Chaim said to the boy. I only know that they were together for a few minutes. I would give anything to know what he said to this student, for I am told that the boy never desecrated the Shabbat again. How wonderful it would be if we could relay that message—whatever it was—to others, in order to encourage them in their observance of Shabbat." The Rabbi then continued with his lecture.

After his talk, the hall emptied of everyone except for one elderly man, who remained in his seat, alone with his thoughts. From a distance, it seemed he was trembling, as if he was either crying or suffering from chills. The rabbi walked over to the elderly man and asked him, "Is anything wrong?"

The man responded, "Where did you hear that story of the cigarette on Shabbat?" He did not look up and was still shaken. "I really don't know," answered the rabbi. "I heard it a while ago and I don't even remember who told it to me." The man looked up at the rabbi and said softly, "I was that boy." He then asked the rabbi to go outside, and as the two walked together, he told the rabbi the following story:

"This incident occurred in the 1920's when Chafetz Chaim was in his eighties. I was terrified to have to go into his house and face him. But when I did go into his home, I looked around with disbelief at the poverty in which he lived. It was unimaginable to me that a man of his stature would be satisfied to live in such surroundings.

"Suddenly he was in the room where I was waiting. He was remarkably short. At that time I was a teenager and he only came up to my shoulders. He took my hand and clasped it tenderly in both of his. He brought my hand in his own clasped hands up to his face, and when I looked into his soft face, his eyes were closed for a moment.

"When he opened them, they were filled with tears. He then said to me in a hushed voice full of pain and astonishment, 'Shabbat!' And he started to cry. He was still holding both my hands in his, and while he was crying he repeated with astonishment, 'Shabbat, the holy Shabbat!'

"My heart started pounding and I became more frightened than I had been before. Tears streamed down his face and one of them rolled onto my hand. I thought it would bore a hole right through my skin. When I think of that tear today, I can still feel its heat. I can't describe how awful it felt to know that I had made the great tzaddik weep. But in his rebuke—which consisted only of those few words—I felt that he was not angry, but rather sad and fearful. He seemed frightened at the consequences of my actions."

The elderly man then caressed the hand that bore the invisible scar of a precious tear. It had become his permanent reminder to observe the "holy Shabbat" for the rest of his life.

Biographical note: Rabbi Israel Meir HaCohen Kagan (1838-1933), popularly known as "the Chafetz Chaim" after the title of one of his many influential books, was one of the most important and beloved rabbinical scholars and leaders of the 20th century. His other works include Mishna Berura, an authoritative, almost universally accepted compendium of Jewish Law, and Shmirat HaLashon, about proper and improper speech.

This story was told over by Yerachmiel Tilles on Chabad.org

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saved.

The Rambam lists the circumstances under which a person is obligated to die to sanctify the name of Hashem. The Rambam adds that, whenever a person commits a sin willingly, he causes a Chilul Hashem; and when a person restrains himself from committing a sin, or does a Mitzvah without ulterior motives, he causes a Kiddush Hashem. Likewise, the actions of a respected person can cause a Chilul Hashem or a Kiddush Hashem.

We may ask: why are we not obligated to give up our lives in any situation that would involve a Chilul Hashem, or alternatively to make a Kiddush Hashem. What is unique about the cases that the Rambam brings?

The answer is: in general, it is preferable that a person should live, because he will then be able to sanctify the name of Hashem by doing many more Mitzvos in the future. This is similar to the reasoning that we are Michalel Shabbos to save a person in a life-threatening situation, because the person will then be able to keep many more Shabbatot. However, in the situations that the Rambam lists, the potential Chilul Hashem is so bad, that a person is obligated to give up his life to prevent it.

The accusation caused by the Chilul Hashem of people bowing to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar was so great, that Hashem was ready to destroy the world; and the salvation came through the Kiddush Hashem that Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah made — when they allowed themselves to be thrown into the furnace.

The purpose of the creation of the world is to generate Kavod Shamayim. The wisdom in every part of the universe, the activity of the sun and the moon, the countless variety of creatures — which each have their own song; all these join up to a tremendous orchestra of praise and song for Hashem. Likewise, the good deeds of the Tzadikim and the punishment of the Reshaim all generate a Kiddush Hashem.

The Michtav M'Eliyahu writes that making a Kiddush Hashem must begin within ourselves. When a person does not learn Torah properly, because he has no respect for Divrei Torah, that is a Chilul Hashem within himself. Only once a person has internalized Kavod Shamayim can he move on to the next stage of making a public Kiddush Hashem — which is primarily in front of ten Jews. Eventually, a person can get to such a high level that he is concerned about Kavod Shamayim to the extent that he seeks to make a Kiddush Hashem even amongst the Goyim.

We see that there are many people who start at the wrong end: they are primarily concerned about making a Kiddush Hashem amongst the Goyim, but they are not bothered about teaching Torah and Emunah to their fellow Jews, and certainly not to themselves. Rav Yisroel Salanter Zatzal explains that this does not come from a desire to create Kavod Shamayim; it is a desire for personal Kavod. Make a Kiddush Hashem within yourself.

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10 Plagues 2 Messages

By: Avi Beylus, 11th Grade

In this week's parsha, Parshat Va'era, Hashem commands Moshe and Ahron to go speak to Pharaoh and ask that the Jewish people be freed from Egypt. Moshe expresses his concerns, saying, "See, I am of impeded speech; how then should Pharaoh heed me!" Hashem tells him to go anyway and that Ahron will speak for him, but also mentions that He will harden Pharaoh's heart so that Pharaoh won't let the Jews go.

The question arises, if Hashem can harden Pharaoh's heart, why can't He just make it so that Pharaoh will let the Jewish people go? The simple answer is that He wanted to punish the Egyptian people, in order "to multiply His signs and marvels in the land of Egypt." But the answer that we are going to propose is that Hashem wanted to make a case to the Jewish people that He, the God of Abraham, was ready and able to save them and deliver them from slavery.

We can see this in many of the individual plagues that Hashem brought upon Egypt. The first plague, Dam (blood), was delivered by Moshe raising his staff over the waters of Egypt and turning them to blood, making it so that the Egyptians will have nothing to drink. Chazal say that when an Egyptian would try to drink water it would become blood, but if a Jew took from the

same water it would remain as water. The plagues played out in all of Egypt in such a way that Jews and Egyptians could witness the greatness of Hashem. This was different from the first meetings between Pharaoh and Moshe and Ahron, which took place in the privacy of the palace. The more public plagues were how Hashem showed his strength and his love for the Jewish people.

The fourth plague, *Arov*, was wild animals. Hashem brought wild animals to Egypt and they attacked and ravaged the Egyptians, but left the Jews alone. Next came *Dever*, pestilence, where all the Egyptians cattle died but the few cattle that the Jews owned remained unharmed.

Hashem made these plagues as punishment to Pharaoh and the Egyptians and to extend a promise to the Bnei Yisrael. He made it clear that He was going to save the Jews with these miraculous feats, while also showing what is possible if His commands were not followed. We will learn in coming weeks that Korach and the generation of the miraglim (spies) didn't heed these lessons and learned the hard way.

Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart to prove to the Jews that they were his chosen people and to clear all doubts about whether He was going to save them, if Moshe was His messenger, and if He should be followed.

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