

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Vaeira



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For subscription & comments
Email: **Mail@torahwellsprings.com**
TEL: **718-484-8136**

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The Parashah's Theme

One of the themes of this *parashah* is "belief in Hashem."¹ In various ways and expressions, the Torah repeats, וידעו מצרים כי אני ה', "Mitzrayim will know that I am Hashem. בעבור תדע כי אין כמוני בכל הארץ", "So you shall know that no one in the world compares to Me," etc.

Rebbe Hirsh of Zidichoiv *zy'a* said that the *parashah* is called וארא, which is *roshei teivos* for (Yeshayah 44:6), אני ראשון ואני אחרון, "[Hashem says], 'I am first, and I am last.'"² This is the title and the theme of this week's *parashah*.

It states (7:7), ומשה בן שמונים שנה ואהרן בן שלש, "Moshe was 80 years old, and Aharon was 83 years old when they spoke to Pharaoh." Why is it relevant for us to know their ages? Reb Shimon Schwab *zt'l* (בית השואבה) explains that their ages were given to prove to Pharaoh that he can't do anything against Hashem's will. We will explain:

Pharaoh's decrees against the Jewish nation changed over time. Pharaoh's first decree against the Jewish nation was slavery. As it states (Shemos 1:14) וימררו את חייהם, "They made the lives of the Jewish people bitter" due to slavery.

The next decree was (Shemos 1:16), אם בן הוא, "If [the new-born child] is a male, kill him."

One day, the sorcerers told Pharaoh, "The savior of the Jewish nation was born today, and we don't know whether he is Egyptian or Israelite." Pharaoh decreed that (Shemos

1:22), כל הבן הילוד היאורה תשליכוהו, "Every child born [including Egyptian children] should be tossed into the Nile." This was the third phase of Pharaoh's *gezeiros*.

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 26:1) says that מרים was born when the first decree of וימררו את חייהם went into effect, and this is the reason she is called אהרן מרים. מרים was born in the era of the second decree. He was called אהרן, from the word הריון, pregnancies, because the order of that time was against pregnancies of the Jewish people (killing the new-born males). משה was born during the third decree. He was named משה, which means drawn out of the water. As it states (Shemos 2:10), ותקרא שמו משה, "She named him Moshe, and said, 'because I drew him out of the Nile,'" and it alludes to the *gezeirah* of the time, to throw all new-born children into the Nile.

We are told their ages to hint to Pharaoh that his decrees didn't achieve anything. "Eighty years ago, you decreed that all children should be thrown into the Nile; 83 years ago, you decreed that the midwives should kill the male children. Now, two people who were born in those times stand before you, demanding that you free the Yidden from Mitzrayim. Recognize from the fact that they survived and are standing before you that you cannot go against Hashem's will. Therefore, when we request in Hashem's name that you free the Jewish nation, you should oblige, because you aren't in charge – Hashem is."

1. The theme of the entire Torah is emunah. As it states (Shemos 20:1-2) וידבר אלוקים את כל הדברים האלה לאמר אנכי ה' אלוקיך, and the Noem Elimelech explains, Hashem said all the words of the Torah so people will know אנכי ה' אלוקיך.

2. The next words of the *pasuk*, ומבלעדי אין אלקים, can also be found in the letters of וארא.

Emunah Saves from all Troubles.

The *parashah* begins, וידבר אלקים אל משה ויאמר, עליו אני ה' "Elokim spoke with Moshe and said I am *Havayah*." What is this *pasuk* saying, and why is Hashem's name referred to in two different ways (אלקים הוי"ה) in this *pasuk*.

The Shach al HaTorah explains that אלקים is *gematria* 86. The final words of the *pasuk* are אני הוי"ה and are *gematria* 87. The *gematria* of אני הוי"ה is one more.

The Shach al HaTorah explains that אלקים expresses Hashem's name of harsh justice, which is the root of *dinim*, the hardships people go through in life – each person in their way. We want everything to be רחמים, with Hashem's compassion, without any *tzaros*. How can we accomplish that? Hashem adds אל"ף, one more, and then אלקים (Hashem's name for harsh justice) becomes אני הוי"ה, (Hashem's name for compassion, רחמים) and everything becomes good.

Rebbe Hershele Liska (*Ach Pri Tevuah*) quotes this *vort* from the *Shach al HaTorah*, and he adds, "I think that this is the meaning of these words: When a person is going through hard times...he must believe that it didn't happen by chance, *chas veshalom*. Everything happens through Hashem's *hashgachah*..." When one truly believes that whatever he is going through comes from the "one" Hashem, this adds on one more onto the *gematria* of אלקים and it turns into אני הוי"ה, everything becomes compassionate and good.

In other words, the belief that everything is from Hashem – and things didn't happen by chance – sweetens the *dinim* and makes everything seem good. Therefore, the solution to life's problems is to believe that all situations were arranged by Hashem. That turns everything around, and everything

becomes אני ה', Hashem's compassion and love.

At the end of last week's *parashah*, Pharaoh decreed that the Jewish nation must gather straw and still produce the identical sum of bricks. Moshe complained, למה הרעת לעם הזה, "Why did you do bad to this nation?" Hashem's response is, וידבר אלקים אל משה ויאמר, עליו אני ה'. With these words, Hashem taught Moshe how he could turn the *dinim*, hardships, into sweetness. Hashem told him that if he adds *one* onto אלקים, which means to believe that everything, even the difficulties, are from the One Hashem, the result will be אני הוי"ה, Hashem's compassion, and everything will become good.³

This is a wonderful solution for all troubles and problems. Remember that it is from Hashem, and then it will turn around and become good.

There is still one question remaining, which Rebbe Hershele Liska addresses. He writes:

"Why did Hashem create *dinim* in the first place? Hashem could have given us perfect *chesed* [without requiring us to sweeten matters with our *emunah*]."

Rebbe Hershele Liska replies that Hashem wanted us to turn situations around on our own so that we will be happy with the good we receive. Otherwise, we would be embarrassed to receive so much good from Hashem.

He writes, "Chazal tell us that an *apikoros* once asked Reb Akiva, 'Whose deeds are better, Hashem's or man's?' Reb Akiva understood that he was asking why we circumcise ourselves (*bris milah*). Isn't Hashem's deeds [the way Hashem created man] better? Reb Akiva asked a servant to bring loaves of bread. The loaves of bread were made by

3. Rebbe Hershele Liska writes, "Moshe said to Hashem (*Shemos* 5:22), למה הרעותה לעם הזה, 'Why did you do bad for this nation?' In response, Hashem taught Moshe the process of sweetening the *dinim*... Hashem said, 'This matter is up to you. You can sweeten the *dinim* when you believe that Hashem did it all and it wasn't by chance.'"

man and were better than wheat. Reb Akiva was teaching that Hashem wants man to bring about the rectification so we won't be embarrassed to receive the goodness, it shouldn't be נהמא דכיסופא [like poor people who are ashamed to look at their benefactor that provides them with bread to eat]."

The Gemara (*Taanis* 21.) writes that נחום איש גם זו is called by this title because he would always say, גם זו לטובה, "This, too, is for the good."

It seems that the most important word, לטובה, is missing in his name! His name translates as "Nachum, the man who says, 'also this,'" which doesn't mean anything. His name should be נחום איש גם זו לטובה, "Nachum, the man who says, this, too, is for the good."

Rebbe Hershele Liska *zt'l* answers, "The word גם teaches us to add on (see *Bava Kama* 65:), because Nachum would add on to the name אלקים one more, so it became the *gematria* of אני הוי"ה. So, his name is נחום איש גם זו, Nachum, the man who added one more (גם means to add one more), and that turned אלקים and made it אני הוי"ה."

Perhaps we can also explain that he would always say גם זו, "This, too, is from

Hashem." And due to his belief, everything became לטובה, good.

Rebbe Eizik of Kamarna *zt'l* (*Zohar Chai, Va'ara*, ר"ה במחו בה) writes, "Believe me, my brothers, if it weren't that I believed that Hashem stands behind everything that happens, and if I didn't believe that Hashem's *hashgachah* is over every detail, I would be lost from the world (i.e., depressed and broken) long ago due to all the hardships, distress, poverty, exile, and shame that I endured... But Hashem helped me, and I don't get distressed over these troubles. Because when a person truly believes that there is nothing in the world other than Hashem, all the *dinim* (hardships) are sweetened in the wake of his *emunah*. Even without shouting out to Hashem in prayer, with just *emunah* and *bitachon*, everything will appear to be a *chesed*, immediately."

For example, if someone is having financial problems – the bank wants to take away his house, and the grocer isn't permitting him to buy on credit anymore, etc. – and he raises his eyes to heaven and he believes that this situation was planned by Hashem, that belief solves the problems. Somehow, things will work out. He won't lose his house, he will have money for the grocer, and all his other needs.⁴

4. Reb Mendel lives in Yerushalayim, and supports his large family by dealing in antique *sefarim*.

On the night before his daughter's *chasunah*, Reb Mendel was sitting by the table with his wife and children and he said, "I need twenty-five thousand dollars for tomorrow's *chasunah*, and I have no idea how I will get it. But I'm not worried. Hashem put me in this situation, and Hashem will pull me out. Somehow, Hashem will help..."

While he was talking with his family, Shimon, an antique dealer of rare *sefarim*, knocked at his door, and he asked Reb Mendel if he has any antique *sefarim* for sale.

Reb Mendel replied, "I recently bought a three-hundred-year-old *Rambam* for fifty dollars. There are many Talmudic notes in the margins. It is obvious that it was once owned by a great scholar, but I didn't succeed to figure out who that scholar was. Without knowing the name of the scholar, the set doesn't have any retail value. In fact, I offered it to someone for fifty dollars, but he declined."

Shimon perused the *sefer*, and he became excited. "I think I might know who the original owner was, and if I'm correct, it is worth a lot of money. Can I bring it to my home to check it?"

Reb Mendel replied, "You can bring it home, and you can sell it, too. Give me 5/6th of the sale, and you can have 1/6th for yourself."

For example, if a *bachur* that is already older and *shadchanim* stopped calling long ago – and despite the hardships, recognizes that this is all planned by Hashem, that belief will save him. He will surely find his *bashert*. The *segulah* of faith sweetens the *dinim*, and everything becomes sweet.

This is hinted at in this week's *parashah*, for it states (6:7), וידעתם כי אני ה' אלקיכם המוציא אתכם, מתחת כבלות מצרים. We can read the *pasuk* like this: וידעתם כי אני ה' אלקיכם, when you believe in Hashem, המוציא אתכם מתחת כבלות מצרים, Hashem will save you from your troubles.

We will now bring a source from Chazal for this wonderful *segulah*:

The Yalkut Shimoni (519) writes, "*Emunah* is very precious to the One who created the world... Our forefathers were redeemed from Mitzrayim because they had *emunah*. As it states (4:31), ויאמן העם, "The nation believed." Similarly, each person earns his own personal salvation when he has *emunah* and believes that any situation he finds himself in was planned and arranged by Hashem.

In last week's *parashah*, Pharaoh increased the workload after Moshe asked that he free Bnei Yisroel. The *parashah* ends with Moshe saying to Hashem, למה הרעתה לעם הזה למה זה, שלחתיני, "Why did you do bad to this nation? Why did you send me?" The Kamarna Rebbe *zt'l* explains that Moshe was saying to Hashem that the Jewish nation needs *emunah* to be saved from the *galus* of Mitzrayim. But their workload became harder, and this weakened their *emunah*. Therefore, למה זה שלחתיני, "Why did you send me? They can't be freed from Mitzrayim if they don't have *emunah*!"

Everything is for the Good

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 9:10) teaches, "This is what happened when an Egyptian and a Yid were in the same house, and there was a barrel filled with water. The Egyptian filled his jug from the barrel, and when he took out the jug, he found it filled with blood. But for the Yid, the barrel was filled with water. The Egyptian said to the Yid, 'Give me a drop of your water.' The Yid did so, but it turned to blood. The Egyptian said, 'Let's try drinking together from the same cup.' [But this trial also failed, because] the Yid drank water, and the Egyptian drank blood. But when the Egyptian paid money for the water, he was able to drink water. This is how the Yidden became wealthy."

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), ויהפכו כל המים אשר ביאור לדם הדגה, "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), וזכרנו את הדגה אשר נאכל במצרים הגם, "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 favor. At that moment, it looks like a problem, but one

Shimon discovered that this set of *Rambam* had once belonged to the Pri Chadash. The proof is that the *chidushim* on the margin are the same that are written in the Pri Chadash's *sefer*. Shimon sold it for thirty-thousand dollars. Shimon kept a sixth for himself (five thousand dollars) and he gave twenty-five thousand dollars to Reb Mendel, the exact amount he needed for his daughter's *chasunah* that was held later that same day.

Because Reb Mendel believed that his tight, financial state was arranged by Hashem (and he trusted in Hashem) and this turned everything around, and he had enough money for the *chasunah*.

day he will look back and realize that this problem was the root of his salvation.⁵

It states (*Shemos* 33:23), וראית את אחרי ופני לא תראו, "You will see my back, but you won't see my face." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that (וראית את אחרי) when we look back, we recognize that Hashem arranged everything and that it was all for the good. But (פני לא תראו) when the events are playing out, we don't recognize Hashem's hand, and we don't see His kindness.

It states (2:10), ויגדל הילד ותבארו לבת פרעה ויהי לה לבן, "The child grew up, and they brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he was like her son."

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 1:26) states, "Pharaoh's daughter would kiss and hug Moshe; she loved him like he was her own child... Moshe was so beautiful, whoever saw him couldn't take their eyes off him. Pharaoh would kiss and hug Moshe. Moshe would take the crown off Pharaoh's head and put it on his own, as this is what happened when Moshe became older... The Egyptian sorcerers said, 'We are afraid of this child who is taking off your crown and placing it on his head. Perhaps he is the child whom we predicted will one day take away your kingship.' [Because the sorcerers saw in the stars that a child would be born

who will redeem the Jewish nation.] Some of the sorcerers advised that they should kill the child by the sword; others advised to burn him. Yisro [Pharaoh's advisor] said, 'He is a child; he doesn't know what he is doing. Let's test him. Put gold and glowing coals on a dish, and place it before him. If he takes the gold, this means he has intelligence, and you should kill him. But if he takes the coal, he doesn't have intelligence, and doesn't deserve to die.' They immediately brought a tray with gold and hot coals before Pharaoh, and Moshe put out his hand to take the gold. Malach Gavriel came and pushed Moshe's hand away, and Moshe grabbed the coal. Still holding the hot coal in his hand, he quickly put his hand into his mouth, and burned his tongue. From then on, Moshe was כבד פה וכבד לשון, speech impaired.

This episode is an example of a problem becoming salvation. It seemed like a problem when Moshe grabbed the coal and damaged his speech. But this saved Moshe's life. If he had grabbed the gold, Moshe would have been killed, *r'l*.

We say in *Hallel* (*Tehillim* 118:13), דחה דחיתני, לנפול, "My enemies push me, and they want me to fall, but Hashem saves me." We can explain these words to mean that even when I thought I was falling Hashem was saving me. It was for my benefit.

5. One *erev Shabbos* the Toldos *zt'l* and Reb Nachman of Horedenka *zt'l* traveled to Mezhibuz, because they wanted to be with the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* for Shabbos. Their goal was to arrive early *erev Shabbos*, but a governor was traveling slowly in front of them. According to the laws of that time, they weren't permitted to pass the governor. The Toldos said, "I'm afraid that we won't make it in time for Shabbos."

Rebbe Nachman Horedenka replied, "Whenever there's an interference or a problem, I always strive to have *emunah* that this obstacle will be for our benefit. It will actually help us reach our goal and destination."

The Toldos replied, "*Halevay* you are correct!"

They arrived at a city that was having their market day. Generally, it would take a very long time to drive through this city, because of all the people and vendors on the road. But the governor was in the coach in front of them, and in honor of the governor, everyone moved their wares to the side. The governor drove through, and since the Toldos and Rebbe Nachman Horedenka were right behind the governor, they were also were able to drive through the city.

When they left the city, the governor turned left, the Toldos and Reb Nachman turned right, and they reached Mezhibuz well before Shabbos. As Rebbe Nachman Horedenka said, the problem proved to be their salvation.

It states in this week's *parashah* (6:13), וידבר, ה' אל משה ואל אהרן ויצום אל בני ישראל ואל פרעה מלך מצרים, "Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon, and he commanded them to...Pharaoh, the king of Mitzrayim." Rashi writes, צוים עליו להלוק לו כבוד, "Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon to honor Pharaoh in the manner that they speak to him." The Chasam Sofer writes, "It seems that Hashem commanded them that they shouldn't disgrace Pharaoh, because if they do, the shame will atone for Pharaoh's sins, and then he wouldn't be deserving of the *makos*." It is painful to be shamed and humiliated. But it would be for Pharaoh's benefit. His grave sins – enslaving an entire nation, killing Jewish children, etc. – may have been atoned for had he received some shame. How great is the atonement of shame!

The lesson we learn from here is that when we are humiliated by others, or when we undergo any other kind of hardship, we shouldn't consider it to be negative. We are gaining a lot more than we are losing.

It states (8:9), וימותו הצפרדעים מן הבתים מן החצרות, ומן השרות, "The frogs that were in the houses, courtyards, and fields died." The Daas Zekeinim MiBaalei HaTosfos writes, אבל אותם שבתנורים לא מתו לפי שבטחו בהקב"ה ונכנסו בתנור הם בצווי השם, "Those that were in the ovens didn't die because they trusted in Hakadosh Baruch

Hu and they entered the ovens, following Hashem's decree."

We can learn two lessons from this episode: (1) Trust in Hashem, and you will be saved. Even the frogs were saved because they trusted in Hashem. (2) When something seems bad, it is really for your benefit. The frogs destined to go into the ovens may have felt that they got a bad mission. But in retrospect, they were the ones who survived. In hindsight, they were more fortunate.⁶

Ahavas Yisrael

On the words (6:26-27), הוא אהרן ומשה... הוא משה, ואהרן, Rashi writes, "Sometimes the Torah writes Aharon's name first, before Moshe's name, and sometimes Moshe's name is written first. לומר לך ששקולין כאחד, this teaches us they were equal."

The Shlah HaKadosh asks, were Moshe and Aharon equal? The Torah testifies, לא קם, עור נביא כמשה שקולין, that Moshe Rabbeinu was the greatest *Navi*. So why does Rashi write שקולין כאחד, that they were on the same level?

The Ksav Sofer replies that although Moshe was greater, there were moments when Aharon and Moshe were on the same level. Now, when the two brothers approached Pharaoh to request that he free Bnei Yisrael, Aharon reached Moshe's level.

6. I heard from Reb Yosef Shwartz *shlita* the following episode that happened to his father, Reb Efraim, 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.

Before Moshe was chosen to be the *Navi* and the leader of Bnei Yisrael, Aharon, who was the older brother, filled those positions. For years, Pharaoh knew Aharon as the Jewish nation's leader, now he was coming to Pharaoh as Moshe's spokesman. This could have been very humiliating for Aharon, but Aharon didn't think about that. Instead, Aharon was happy that his brother was receiving so much honor. As Hashem told Moshe (*Shemos* 4:14), וראך ושמה בלבו, "Aharon will see [that you are receiving honor] and his heart will rejoice."

Rashi writes, "It isn't as you [Moshe] think, that Aharon is upset that you are getting this honor. [Aharon is very happy for you.] Therefore, Aharon merited to wear the ornaments of the *choshen* over his heart."¹⁷

In the merit of *ahavas Yisrael*, we were redeemed from Mitzrayim.

Hashem said (6:5), וגם אני שמעתי את נאקת בני ישראל, "I also heard Bnei Yisrael's shouts." The word גם, also, seems extra, because the pasuk is understood without it. What can we learn from גם, "also"?

Hashem was saying, "Just as you love your fellow man, and you listen to the shouts

of Bnei Yisrael, גם אני שמעתי, I also hear their shouts." The Yidden in Mitzrayim loved one another. When someone cried out from pain or troubles, his friends listened and tried to help him. Hashem said, "Since you listen to your fellow man's shouts, I will do the same. I will also listen to the shouts of Bnei Yisrael, and I will redeem them."¹⁸

The Baal HaTurim (*Bereishis* 41:34) points out that the words, ויפקד פקידים, "Appoint officials..." is written twice in Tanach. Once in *parashas Mikeitz* (*ibid.*) when Yosef told Pharaoh, יעשה פרעה ויפקד פקידים, that he should appoint officials to oversee the process of storing the crops for the hunger years. It also states, ויפקד פקידים is in *Megillas Esther*, as it states (2:3), ויפקד המלך פקידים לקבץ לו נשים, that Achashveirosh should appoint officials to gather all women so Achashveirosh can choose a wife.

The Baal HaTurim writes that Yosef's idea to appoint officials to gather and guard the crops brought in immense wealth. Achashveirosh's plan, on the other hand, resulted in poverty. As Chazal (*Megillah* 11.) teach from the *pasuk* (*Esther* 10:1), וישם המלך

7. 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.

It's true that many people would also think that way. They can't use one shoe, so they might as well give the finder the other shoe. But what is unique in this story is that Reb Yeruchem thought of giving away his other shoe immediately. It would take most people a few moments before they get over their disappointment or shock, until they realize that they might as well give away their remaining shoe. Had Reb Yeruchem delayed, the train would be far from the station and the finder wouldn't find the other shoe. But Reb Yeruchem always thought about his fellow man and therefore he immediately came up with the idea of helping his brethren by throwing out the other shoe.

8. 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*."

אחשורש מס על הארץ ואיי הים "Achashveirosh placed a tax on the land and the islands of the sea."

We can say that the difference lay in the intention. Yosef wanted to help the country; he wanted people to have food and *parnassah*. Achashveirosh's plan was for selfish reasons. The lesson we learn from this is that striving to help others is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. If you are only interested in yourself and your needs, you will end up in poverty.

Tefillah

The Sefer Ha'Ikrim (4:16) writes that everyone can daven, even the lowliest of people. He proves this from Menasheh, the king of Yehudah. He was a great *rasha*; nevertheless, it states (*Divrei HaYamim* 2, 32:12-13), ובהצר לו חילה את פני ה' אלויו ויכנע מאד מלפני, אליו ויתפלל אליו ויעתר לו ה' וישמע תחינתו וישיבהו אליו, "When he had a lot of *tzaros* he prayed to Hashem his G-d; he was very humble before the G-d of his forefathers; he prayed to Hashem and Hashem accepted his *tefillos*. Hashem heard his pleas and returned him to Yerushalayim and his kingship."

It states in this week's *parashah* (8:16), ויאמר ה' אל משה השכם בבוקר והתייצב לפני פרעה הנה יוצא המימה, "Hashem said to Moshe, rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh..."

Why did Moshe have to wake up early to go to Pharaoh?

The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 11:1) answers, פרעה רוצה לעסוק בתפלה ואמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה עד שלא יצא לך והתייצב לפניו, "Pharaoh wanted to engage in *tefillah*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe, "Before Pharaoh goes out to pray, stand before him..." From this Midrash, it seems that if Pharaoh had managed to daven early, before Moshe approached him, the plagues would not have occurred. Pharaoh's *tefillos* would have been answered, and Pharaoh and Mitzrayim would be protected because Hashem listens to תפילה כל פה, to whoever

turns to Him in prayer. Indeed, when we turn to Hashem in *tefillah*, Hashem will listen to our *tefillos*. Pharaoh enslaved an entire nation, killed many, etc. Menasheh, too, was a great *rasha*, influencing millions to worship *avodah zarah*. But Hashem listened to their *tefillos*. He will certainly listen to our *tefillos*, too.

Rashi (7:25) writes that each *makah* lasted for a month. Moshe warned Pharaoh for 3/4 of a month that the plague will come if he doesn't free Bnei Yisrael, and then, for 1/4 of a month, was the *makah*. According to another view in the Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 9:12), Moshe warned Pharaoh a quarter of a month, and the *makah* lasted three-quarters of a month. Either way, the *makos* had a set time when they began and when they left. So why did Moshe need to daven that the *makah* should cease? Several times the Torah tells us, ויצעק משה... ויעתר אל ה' etc. that Moshe prayed that the *makah* should end. It seems unnecessary since there was a set time for how long each *makah* would endure.

The answer is that everything depends on *tefillah*. All bounty and salvation come through *tefillah*. This is how Hashem created the world. So, although there was a set time for each *Makkah* to cease, it wouldn't end without Moshe's *tefillah*.⁹

Ten Makos

It states (*Yeshayah* 19:22), ונגף ה' את מצרים נגוף, ורפוא, "Hashem smote Mitzrayim, a plague, and a cure."

Were the *makos* plagues or cures?

The *Zohar* (Bo p.36.) explains, "They were plagues for the Egyptians and a cure for the Yidden."

An example of this contrast was *makas Dam*, the plague of blood. It was a deathly punishment unto the Mitzrim, and a cure for Yisrael, because through this plague, the

9. The Or HaChaim (ibid. 7:25) adds that sometimes Moshe davened that the *makah* should end before its set time, and that happened, too. Because everything can be accomplished with *tefillah*.

Yidden became wealthy. Similarly, all of the *makos* brought this about. Bnei Yisrael needed these cures because they were at the 49th gate of *tumah*. They required the *taharah* and the good that came from the ten *makos* to be worthy of *yetzias Mitzrayim*.

The Torah is eternal, which means that also today, just through learning these parshiyos which discuss the *makos*, Bnei Yisrael open channels of *chesed* and *taharah* just like in *Mitzrayim*.

The Arizal teaches that the ten *makos* correspond to the ten *sefiros*. The first *makah*, דם, corresponds to the tenth *sefirah*, מלכות, and יסוד corresponds to the ninth *sefirah*, יסוד, and so on. This helps us understand why three of the *makos* are listed in *parashas Bo*, while seven are in this week's *parashah*. This is because the *middos* are divided into two groups, three relate to the intellect (כתר הכמה) and seven correspond to the *middos* and emotions (חסד גבורה תפארת נצח הוד יסוד מלכות).

As we explained, the first *makah*, blood, corresponds to the tenth *sefirah*, *malchus*. The Zohar writes, מלכות פה, that *malchus* is associated with speech. Therefore, we understand that the first plague was brought to purify our speech.

Indeed, having a pure mouth, clean from *lashon hara* and other forbidden speech is the first step towards becoming holy before Hashem.

It states (*Bereishis* 39:12), ותתפששו בגדו לאמר, שכבה עמי "The wife of Photifar grabbed Yosef by his clothes, saying 'lie with me.'" The Vilna Gaon says that we should read the *pasuk* as follows, "The wife of Photifar

grabbed Yosef לאמר, her goal was for Yosef to say שכבה עמי." She wanted Yosef to be oiver on *nivul peh*, improper speech because she knew that after speaking profanity, she would be successful in convincing him to sin, *chalilah*.

It states in *Mishlei* (13:3), שומר פיו נוצר נפשו, "The one who guards his mouth guards his soul." Because guarding your speech will protect you from sinning, *chalilah*.

The Gr'a teaches (אבן שלמה פ"ז), וכל תשוקתו לדבר, מצוה מתבטל על ידי זה "Because of this sin [of being lax with one's words] one loses his desire to perform the mitzvos."

The second plague was מכת צפרדע, frogs. As we explained, this *Makkah* corresponds to the *sefirah* of יסוד, which is associated with *kedushah* (guarding one's mind against forbidden thoughts, protecting one's eyes against seeing what one shouldn't, and related aspects of *kedushah*).

During מכת צפרדע the frogs had *mesirus nefesh* when they jumped into the heated ovens to do Hashem's will. We don't find examples of *mesirus nefesh* by any of the other *makos*. The concept of *mesirus nefesh* is explicitly associated with צפרדע, the second plague because when it comes to *kedushah*, one must be ready to be *moser nefesh*. This means that one must be extremely diligent to guard his thoughts, his eyes, etc., that they should remain holy.¹⁰

Many people serve Hashem according to what they are accustomed. But if one can go beyond his limits and serve Hashem beyond his comfort zone, it is very precious to Hashem. The Be'er Mayim Chaim (*Noach* 8) says that for this, one merits miracles.

10. *Perek Shirah* lists the *pesukim* each creation says to praise Hashem. The צפרדע says, ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד. When we say these words in the Shema, we think of *mesirus nefesh*. As the Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah (4:5) writes, "After saying the *pasuk* Shema... say silently ועד שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד with all your concentration, just as you put all your strength into saying the *pasuk* Shema..." It is therefore appropriate that the צפרדע says these words, because in *Mitzrayim* the צפרדע demonstrated *mesirus nefesh*.

The Divrei Shmuel (*Va'eireh*) writes: How did the frogs (in *makas* צפרדע) enter a marble house? The Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 10:3) says that the frog said to the marble, "Make room for me, so I can do Hashem's will" and the marble split. Similarly, every Yid should tell his heart that is closed like a stone, "Open up so I can do Hashem's will."

Hashem will act with him *middah kneged middah*, and just like he goes beyond his natural abilities, Hashem will go beyond His rules of nature to save him.

Similarly, the Igra d'Pirka (24) writes, "The Magid Rebbe Yechiel Michel [of Zlotchev] *zt'l* taught: When a person has to accomplish something that is beyond nature, for example, if naturally, he can't have children [and he wants to merit bearing children], he should do a great mitzvah that

is beyond his nature, and then He will be able to perform miracles beyond nature."¹¹ So, when we are cautious with our *kedushah* up to the level of *mesirus nefesh*, we can expect that miracles will happen to us.

In the alef beis, the letters נ"ו and מ"ך are near each other. The Sefer Chassidim (196) says that this hints that when one is נם, runs away from an *aveirah*, a נם, miracle, will happen to him.¹²

11. The following story (heard from a renowned *shadchan*) is about a family who had a daughter in *shidduchim* for a very long time, until there were four children under her of marriageable age.

Finally, the oldest daughter became a *kallah*. The family rejoiced and they hoped the others in the family would soon get engaged, too.

But their happiness was short lived, because a couple of weeks after the engagement, the *chasan* broke off the *shidduch* for an invalid reason.

The *kallah* and her family were devastated. The shame and the disappointment were unbearable.

A few weeks later, the *bachur* (who broke the *shidduch*) found another *shidduch*, but the parents of that girl said that the *shidduch* can't be finalized before the *bachur* receives a *shtar mechilah*, certificate of forgiveness, from the previous *kallah*.

But the previous *kallah* refused to sign the *shtar*. The pain was too acute, too new, especially since the *chasan* broke the *shidduch* for an invalid reason.

People tried to convince the *kallah* to forgive her *ex-chasan*. "What will you gain from holding a grudge?" they asked her. But it was too painful for her to just let go and to forgive.

But then, with super inner-strength, she found a place in her heart to forgive her former fiancé. She signed the *shtar mechilah*, and the *bachur* was engaged to his new *shidduch*.

Three weeks later, the first *kallah* (who signed the *shtar mechilah*) became engaged to a very special *bachur*. Presently, they are building a *bayis ne'aman b'Yisrael* together.

The moral of the story: Go beyond your limits, and miracles will happen to you.

About *makas barad* (hailstones) the Torah writes (9:31-32). והפשתה והשעורה נכתה כי השערה אביב והפשתה גבעל, והחטה והכסמת לא. "The flax and the barley were smitten [because they were at their full height]... The wheat and the spelt weren't smitten..." Rashi explains that at the time of *מכת ברד*, flax and barley were fully grown. Therefore, they were stiff and hard, and they broke when the hail hit them. Whereas, wheat and spelt reach their full growth later in the season. They were flexible, so when the *barad* fell on them, they just turned to the side. They didn't break.

The message is: It is better in life to be soft, to let the other person have his way, to be *mevater*, etc. When you are tough and stiff, and everything must be your way, you break.

12. It states (6:12) וידבר משה לפני ה' לאמר הן בני ישראל לא שמעו אלי ואיך ישמעני פרעה "Moshe said to Hashem, 'Even Bnei Yisrael didn't listen to me [they weren't able to believe that Hashem will save them from Mitzrayim], so how will Pharaoh listen to me.'" The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 92:7, and Rashi *ibid.*) writes, והו' אחד מעשרה ק"ו שבתורה, "This is one of the ten *kal v'chomers* that are written in the Torah.

The *miforshim* ask: Bnei Yisrael didn't listen to Moshe because of the hard work. As it states (6:9) וידבר משה

A unique feature of *מכת צפרדע* which was not seen in any of the other *makos* is *ותבאש הארץ*. There were piles of dead frogs all around Mitzrayim, and Mitzrayim had a terrible odor. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that when one has evil temptations for adultery and the like, he should train himself to think of the sin as being smelly and disgusting, something that isn't good for him, something he doesn't want. Specifically, during *מכת צפרדע*, which represents *yesod*, which as explained is *kedushah*, there was a terrible stench, for that is the mindset we should have for such *aveiros*, and that will help us keep away from them.

Similarly, it states, *ולא יראה בך ערוות דבר ושב* מאחר־ך. The Sfas Emes (תרל"ט ד"ה ובמ"א) explains *לא יראה* means you shouldn't be interested in matters that oppose *kedushah* (נישט געפעלן ערות דבר). It shouldn't even draw you because you are disgusted from sin, and indeed, from all the chaos and trouble it can cause.

Moshe prayed for the *makos* to end, as the Torah writes, *ויעתר משה*. But by the frogs, Moshe employed a more intense kind of *tefillah*. As it states, *ויצעק משה אל ה' על דבר הצפרדעים*, "Moshe shouted to Hashem..." The Be'er Moshe of Ozrov *zt'l* explains that when it comes to matters of *kedushah*, it isn't enough to daven. One must shout and to place all his heart and soul into the *tefillos*.

Guard Your Children

The *pasuk* says (9:20), *הירא את דבר ה' מעבדי פרעה*, "Those of Pharaoh's

servants who feared Hashem escaped their slaves and cattle into the homes..." The Imrei Chaim *zt'l* said that this *pasuk* hints to the ways of the *יראי ה'*, those who fear Hashem: They keep their children at home to protect them from the negative influences of the street.

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 40:) states, *לך לך אמרינן*, "Go away! Go away!" we tell the *nazir*. "Keep away from the vineyard." A *nazir* is not allowed to eat grapes. Therefore, we advise the *nazir* to keep away from the vineyard. He shouldn't use a vineyard as a shortcut, or for any other reason. He should keep away, and thereby, he will be safeguarded from sin. This is the approach we should take regarding protecting our children. Keep them distant from a situation or a place that might lead them to sin, *chalilah*.

An example of this is technology. Sometimes, for *parnassah* purposes, people have a computer in their homes. Let's say you have a *heter*, permission, to have it. But what about your children? Is it healthy, spiritually, for the children to be so close to the internet? Or perhaps we should shout *לך לך*, "Keep it far away from home."

There was an old lady who was obsessed with touching every bag she saw. Once at a *chasunah* she was touching the bags that belonged to the *kallah*. The *kallah's* mother shouted at her. "These are the *kallah's* bags. Why are you touching them?"

The old woman was very embarrassed and ran home. The elderly woman's son,

Moshe spoke about these matters to Bnei Yisrael, but they didn't listen to Moshe because of their shortness of breath and the hard work." Pharaoh wasn't working hard, so why was it certain that Pharaoh wouldn't listen to Moshe?

We can explain this as follows:

According to the rules of nature, due to the hard labor, the Jewish nation wasn't able to believe that Hashem will save them. However, they should have gone beyond their level and attached themselves to belief in Hashem. Moshe was saying, "If Bnei Yisrael aren't believing me, that means they aren't serving You beyond the rules of nature. If so, we can't expect that miracles will happen to them. ואיך ישמעני פרעה, so why should we suspect that Pharaoh will listen to me and free the nation?"

Reb Shimshon, came to visit her, and he was shocked when he saw her crying.

She told him what happened. Shimshon replied, "Well, she's right. You shouldn't go around touching other people's bags."

The mother said, "Sit down for a moment, and I will tell you a story that I never told anyone before. It is about time that you know. When I was young, in Poland, the *resha'im* entered our city, and cruelly killed my husband in front of my eyes. Then the *resha'im* commanded us to leave our homes and go to a ghetto. Everyone had permission to take along two bags and nothing more.

"I gathered my precious belongings, gold and silver, and placed them into one bag. In the other bag, I put my son, Shimshon. I ran together with the crowds of people towards the ghetto. But then, suddenly, the *resha'im* changed the rules. Now only one bag was permitted. Naturally, I decided to drop the bag filled with precious items so I could remain with my son, Shimshon. I dropped the bag on the roadside, and I continued rushing along with the throngs of people.

But then I realized I made a grave mistake. I threw away the wrong bag. I was carrying the bag with gold and silver, and my Shimshon was tossed on the road, far behind! It was impossible to turn back. Whoever went back was shot. Since then, whenever I see a bag, I check it. I think, 'Perhaps my Shimshon is there.' This is the root of my obsession, which I can't control. Hashem saved me from the Holocaust, I came to Eretz Yisrael, and I adopted a son. I called him Shimshon - and that's you."

This story was publicized a few years ago. One of the lessons of this story is that there is a limit to how much we can take. We can't have everything. One has to choose between his children and his technology. If he wants good children, he has to be ready to drop the matters that can ruin the *chinuch* of the home.

Review until the Ideas Penetrate

Reb Shalom Shwadron *zt'l* gave a weekly, Friday night *mussar drashah* in the renowned Zichron Moshe beis medresh, in Yerushalayim. Once, a *bachur* asked his friend whether he is planning to go to the *drashah*. The *bachur* replied, "No. I heard his *drashos* many times, and he repeats himself. I know all the *drashos* by heart."

After saying this, they noticed that Reb Shalom Shwadron was behind them, listening to their conversation.

That Friday night, as Reb Shwadron said his *drashah* in Zichron Moshe, he noticed that those two *bachurim* had come after all. So in his *mussar drashah*, he told the following *mashal*:

Someone stopped his car in the middle of the road and began reading the newspaper. The cars behind him were honking, urging him to drive on because he was blocking traffic, but he ignored them. Soon, many cars were lined up. They were all honking, but he just sat there, reading the paper, and not paying attention to the trouble he was causing.

At one point, he got out of his car and shouted, "Why are you honking so much? I heard you already. Enough! Why do you keep repeating the same honks, over and over again?"

They replied, "We will continue honking until you get our message."

Reb Shalom Shwadron explained that the goal of *mussar* isn't just to know the ideas. If it doesn't cause you to improve, you have to hear them repeatedly until they make an impression.

In a letter, the Imrei Chaim *zt'l* writes the following to his grandson:

"You requested that I write to you about *yiras Hashem*. Behold [Hashem advised the Mitzrim to bring their slaves and cattle into their homes so the *barad*/hail won't kill them.] It states (9:20-21), הִירָא אֶת דְּבַר ה' מֵעַבְדֵי פִרְעָה, הַיָּנִים אֶת עַבְדָּו וְאֶת מִקְנֵהוּ אֶל הַבָּתִּים וְאִשֶּׁר לֹא שָׁם לָבוּ לְדַבֵּר ה'

שם על לב, "Those of Pharaoh's servants who feared Hashem's word quickly drove their slaves and cattle into their homes. But those who didn't put to heart Hashem's word, they left their slaves and cattle in the field.' We see from this *pasuk* that the difference between those who fear Hashem and those who don't is whether one is שם על לב, takes the matters to heart..."

It is really very difficult to comprehend why the Mitzrim left their animals and their slaves in the field. Six *makos* had already passed; all of Moshe's warnings transpired. Why weren't they at least cautious and bring their slaves and animals into their homes?

The question is even greater when we consider the Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 12:2), which states that Iyov was the only person in Mitzrayim who was הירא את דבר ה', who feared

Hashem. Pharaoh and all his servants didn't take any precautions at all. How can we understand this?

The answer is that if one doesn't think, he will do the most foolish things.

The Mesilas Yescharim (ch.2) writes, "Someone who walks in this world without thinking whether his ways are correct or not is like a blind person walking along the riverside, whose danger is certainly very great. The tragedy that can happen to him is greater than the chances of his survival."

It states (*Devarim* 4:39), וידעת היום והשבות אל לבבך, "Know today, and bring it into your heart..." The Torah is urging us to review concepts of *emunah*. Without review, these ideas remain in the superficial layers of the mind and don't influence one's deeds.¹³

13. It states, ראשית גוים עמלק. This hints that Amalek keeps all good ideas in his ראש - ראשית, head, but he doesn't bring it to his heart.