

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

יאמר אליו משה כצאתי את העיר אפרש את כפי אל ה' הקלות יהולון והברר לא יהיה עוד למען תדע כי לה' הארץ ... (ב-מ)
An elderly *Yerushalmi* recounted how his family had originally made its way from Poland to Jerusalem. When the grandfather of the old Jew was a young man, he was a *shochet* in the town where **R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin zt"l** was the *Rav*. Unfortunately, the town was too small for him to eke out a proper living to support his growing family. He was in financial straits. Finally, in desperation, he went to see R' Yehoshua Leib, with whom he was close.

R' Yehoshua Leib was reading his mail when the young *shochet* arrived. One of these letters contained a plea for a *shochet* from a town in America that lacked one. Putting his correspondence aside, R' Yehoshua Leib engaged his visitor in conversation. In the course of their conversation, R' Yehoshua Leib mentioned the contents of the letter he had just read. "What shall I answer them?" R' Yehoshua Leib asked. "Where can I find them a *shochet*?" The young man did not respond. A short while later, the conversation concluded and the young man left. He did not return home, however.

Later that day, the *shochet's* children came to the *Rav's* home in tears. They had searched the entire town for their father, but could find no trace of him. Not knowing what else to do, they turned to R' Yehoshua Leib to *daven* that their missing father return as soon as possible. Pondering for a moment, the *Rav* recalled his conversation with the *shochet*.

"Oy!" he exclaimed in great consternation, "I suspect he might have decided to go to America." He then told the *shochet's* children how he had unthinkingly mentioned to his visitor who had been sitting with him, that a town in America was looking for a *shochet*. The family received this news in shock and dismay. The state of *Yiddishkeit* in America at the time was so bleak that most people in Europe considered it a foregone conclusion that any Jew who moved there would totally abandon his religion. Families mourned over any relative who set sail for America.

Needless to say, R' Yehoshua Leib was beside himself with fear and regret over the possibility that he might have carelessly caused this *shochet* to set off for America. He took it upon himself to *daven* every day that the *shochet* did not suffer spiritual ruin in America.

About a year later, the *shochet* sent a letter from a city in America containing visas and tickets for his wife and children, asking them to join him. The wife's father was unwilling to allow his daughter and grandchildren to leave, and indeed the family themselves had no desire to settle in America. They did not respond to the first letter. Eventually a second letter arrived from the *shochet*, in which he wrote that he had no interest in returning to Europe and to his former town. If his wife was not prepared to join him, he would send her a *get* and they could go their separate ways. She brought the letter to R' Yehoshua Leib, who told her that she had no choice other than to take her children to America to be with her husband. And eventually, this is what she did. From that day onward, R' Yehoshua Leib began *davening* for the entire family.

Many years later, when the aged R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin had already moved to *Eretz Yisroel*, and was living in Jerusalem, the *shochet* decided to bring his entire family - all of whom had remained steadfast in their faith - to come live in Jerusalem. He had done well financially in America and now, he wanted to cement his family's *ruchniyus*, as well. Upon his arrival to the Holy City, he went immediately to visit the *Gaon* with whom he had once been so close.

R' Yehoshua Leib's dwelling in Jerusalem consisted of one single room, which was divided into two parts by a wooden partition. The *Rav* sat in the inner section all day learning *Torah*. On the day the *shochet* came to visit, his wife, Rebbetzin Sonia, answered the *shochet's* knock at the door. Taking one look, she practically swooned in shock and recognized him immediately. Leaving him standing at the door, she ran quickly to the partition and banged on it, saying, "*Du bist shoin potur fon dein achrayus, Yehoshua Leib, zei zeinen angekommen in Yerushalayim* - You're finally released from your responsibility, **Yehoshua Leib, they've come to Jerusalem!**" The *Rav* and the *shochet* embraced warmly and remained close.

יהודה ארץ מצרים לשממה וחרבה ויהיו בני אמי ה' ... (יהושע ב-ב)
A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN

Pharaoh and the mighty Egyptians felt invincible and firm in the belief that nothing could ever bring them down from their elevated status in society. This week marks the beginning of their downfall and *Yechezkel HaNavi* prophecies about another time in history where the mighty Egyptian empire was once again brought to their knees. But what was it about the Egyptians that made them deserve to endure so much suffering and pain throughout the ages?

R' Elazar Menachem Mann Shach zt"l (Machsheves Mussar) gives a penetrating insight. *Chazal* say that one of Egypt's main flaws was their incredible arrogance and refusal to accept *Hashem's* sovereignty over the world as opposed to attributing their success to the deified Nile River.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

In particular, the many Pharaohs who ruled over Egypt exhibited their own personal arrogance and defiance of the true Master of the World, *Hashem*, and they stuck to their fallacy even in the face of clear, incontrovertible evidence.

Says *Rav Shach*, *Chazal* say that when a person commits a sin or does a *mitzvah*, he automatically creates the possibility to either recommit that sin or do more *mitzvos*. However, it is all based on whether he desires to continue on either path.

Thus, Pharaoh and the Egyptians who had ample opportunity to rectify their behavior and yet they chose not to, deserved every bit of the punishment and retribution they received, and it behooves us to remember that rectifying a sin requires one to desire the rectification – at the very least.

ויקרא פרעה למשה ולאהרן ויאמר העתידו אל ה' ויסר הצפרדעים ממני ומעמי ... (ח-ד)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT"L

מחשבת הלב

With the *makkos* afflicting his people and himself, Pharaoh pleaded with *Moshe Rabbeinu* to *daven* to *Hashem* to remove the צפרדע. He used an expression of "vaye'etar" - עתר. Why this form of expression, over all others? Additionally, when Moshe actually *davened*, the *Torah* then changes the terminology to merely "vayitz'ak" - צעק. Why the change?

The *Gemara (Yevamos 64A)* explains why *tefillah* is sometimes referred to as עתר. An עתר is a type of agricultural tool used to process and turn over the grain. *Tefillah*, too, has the power to totally alter *Hashem's* anger to mercy.

The **Ben Yehoyada (Binayahu, Sukkah 14A)** elaborates and explains that the nature of עתר is a complete transformation and reversal of the original and intended plan. It can reverse לענע גע, גע לנפן, and נפן פשע to שפע. That was Pharaoh's objective. He actually knew the power of עתר and wished to unleash its strength to his own benefit. He hoped to reprocess the plague of צפרדע from a נעע to an ענע, and his sins, פשע, into an abundance of שפע instead.

However, as a result of the צפרדעים - frogs, remaining in the land even after they were dead, their stench w"reek"ing havoc on people's senses, the transformation wasn't complete. Thus Moshe only *davened* through צעקה. (Based on the **Chasam Sofer** with some expounding.) The question, though, is: Why did their stench remain altogether to permeate the environment? There's a crucial principle in *tefillah* which aptly resolves this query. *Hashem* responds to the exact wording used. Pharaoh requested the צפרדע to be removed "ממני ומעמי". He didn't request that they be banished from מצרים completely. *Hashem*, therefore, killed them and left them there! This *machshava* can be a source of *chizuk* and inspiration when we *daven*. We realize the unbelievable potency of *tefillah* - how it can change a נעע to an ענע and גע לנפן. And we should be expressive in our language when we *daven*, not *chas v'shalom*, limiting *Hashem's* reflective response to us!

משל למה הדבר דומה

הנה יד ה' הויה במקנך אשר בשדה כסוסים בחמרים כנמלים ... (ב-ג)
משל: When things got hard for a wheelchair bound man living alone, he decided it would be a good idea to get a pet. After a series of mini-strokes and suffering from osteoporosis, he was not in good health. So he brought home Tommy, an orange tabby cat that would soon become his best friend.

Because of his significant health issues, he always kept the phone in the living room on the floor. The phone had a speed dial button programmed to call 911. He spent some time training Tommy how to use that button in case of emergency, but his furry friend never really seemed that interested.

Then one day, he had a seizure which caused him to fall out of his wheelchair and onto the floor. Due to the pain caused from his osteoporosis and the poor balance from the mini-strokes, he was unable to get up off of the floor. He lay there,

helpless, wondering how he was going to get out of this mess.

Meanwhile, police received a call from Tommy's home. The line was silent, and then disconnected. The dispatcher called back, hoping to get an answer but the phone just rang and rang. Police were sent to investigate. Officer Daugherty entered the home, which was empty except for the man and his faithful cat. Tommy was lying next to the phone in the living room, while he was on the floor in his bedroom. If it weren't for the call that was made to 911, there's no telling how long he would have been stuck on the floor. It just goes to show that while *Hashem* calls us to care for animals, they can care for us too...and even sometimes save a life!

נימל: The *Makkos* in Egypt demonstrated how *Hashem* used animals to do His bidding. Through frogs, lice, wild beasts and locust, these G-d-fearing creatures were emissaries of Heaven to torture the Egyptians and bring *geula* to *Bnei Yisroel*.

אמר אל אהרן קח כמך תמה יד על מימי מצרים על נהרותם על יאריהם ... (ט-ו)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

When *Hashem* tells *Moshe Rabbeinu* to go to Pharaoh and turn all the water in *Mitzrayim* to blood, He tells him to send Aharon, to hit the water. **Rashi** explains that the water protected Moshe when he was a baby and was put in a casket so he could not hit the water. How could he hit the water if it did something good for him? It was the reason he remained alive.

The *Medrash* tells us that the astrologers and magicians in Egypt kept telling Pharaoh that the *Moshian shel Yisroel*, the great savior of the Jewish people, was still alive. Pharaoh decreed that all baby boys in Egypt should be thrown into the river because they saw that a baby boy would be born who would redeem the Jews. And no matter how many babies were thrown into the Nile, they still saw in the stars that the one they were after was still alive. But when Miriam placed Moshe in a basket on the water, the magicians saw that this savior, too, was in the water, and they thought he was surely killed. They rejoiced that their great plan had succeeded. But meanwhile, Moshe was very much alive ON the water rather than UNDER the water. As long as they saw he was in the water, they assumed they had gotten rid of him. So the water itself had saved his life, and therefore, for both *Makas Dam* and *Tzefardaya*, *Hashem* told Moshe to tell Aharon to hit the water instead of doing it himself.

Hakaras HaTov is a constant learning and growing experience. *Hakaras HaTov* really means to recognize the *tov*, the good One Who only bestows goodness on His creations. The more you are grateful to everyone and everything good that happens in your life, the more you will recognize and see that it is all *Hashem*. Recognizing the good is really recognizing the G-d who makes everything happen in your life for the good. So, when you say something nice to someone who does something nice for you, you are really saying "Thank you, *Hashem*." And when you don't say anything to someone who does something not nice to you, you are also saying, "Thank you, *Hashem*" - for giving me this opportunity to grow.