



GENESIS

Bereishit
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Lech Lecha
Vayeira
Chayei Sarah
Toldot
Vayeitzei
Vayishlach
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EXODUS

Shemot

Vaeira (14) **וַאֲרָא**

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Mishpatim
Terumah
Tetzaveh
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LEVITICUS

Vayikra
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14 וַאֲנִי Vaeira

Overview

*P*arashat *Vaeira* encompasses the first seven of the ten plagues, the cataclysms God utilized to demonstrate to the Jews, the Egyptians, and the whole world that He is the sole master over creation and all its forces. In this context, the term *Vaeira* (“And I appeared”) is quite applicable to the content of the *parashah*: God “comes out of hiding,” as it were, and manifests His supernatural, miraculous power before all humanity.

However, let us recall that the opening words of this *parashah* are part of God’s answer to Moses’ incriminating question at the end of the previous *parashah*: “O God, why have You mistreated this people?” Although we have seen that, in the larger perspective, Moses *did not* question God’s justice with these words, their contextual meaning is that he *did*. In this context, the *parashah*’s opening words are God’s rebuke to Moses; God takes Moses to task for questioning His justice. This is certainly interesting, but it must also be relevant; the Torah would not have recorded an incident that apparently reflects so disparagingly on Moses unless there was some lesson for us in it.

That lesson emerges when we consider the background of Moses’ question. Moses was raised in the home of Amram, the most illustrious Jew in his generation, the eldest son of Kehot, the son of Levi, whose tribe selflessly devoted itself to preserving the teachings and traditions the nation received from the patriarchs. Thus, Moses was certainly well-schooled in his youth regarding the patriarchs and matriarchs and their devoted, unquestioning faith in God, which they retained even when that faith had been severely tested.

But he also knew that God is supposed to be kind and merciful, that the Jews are His chosen people, and that their unbearable suffering had exceeded any rational justification. He therefore candidly cried out, screamed, and pleaded: “O God, why have You mistreated this people?!”

The fact that God immortalized this outcry by recording it in the Torah implies that Moses’ mistake was not complaining against God *per se*, but rather something else.

God tells Moses what that missing “something else” was by beginning His rebuke with the words: “I am God, *and I appeared*,” or literally, “and I *was seen*.” Of course, it is impossible to see God, for God has no physical form that can be captured by our sense of sight. But by couching His revelation in these terms, God is saying that it is possible to be as certain of His reality as we are certain about what we have seen with our own eyes.

Seeing something makes a deep impression on us; we trust the truth of what we see

OVERVIEW OF VAEIRA

implicitly. For this reason, someone who witnesses an incident that is later brought to court cannot serve as a judge for that case. His memory of what he saw renders him impervious to the arguments of the litigants, which cannot sway his version of the events.¹ (In contrast, when we simply *hear* about something from someone else, a third party *can* contest the veracity of what we heard and even succeed in convincing us otherwise.)

Thus, God told Moses: “Of course you believe in Me. You have absorbed the teachings of your family and do not doubt Me. But you must nurture your faith further, until it becomes so concrete that you virtually *see* Me in creation—that you are so sure of My reality that nothing can sway your conviction of it. Then, you will not be troubled by the contradiction between your faith and what your intellect tells you.”

Yes, God wants us to use our rational intellect to relate to the world and to Him, and when this intellect tells us that something seems amiss in the way God is running the world, we must not suppress the truth as we see it; we must shout at God: “Why have You mistreated this people?! Why do You allow us to suffer? Are we not your chosen people, your firstborn son? Where is your compassion? Where is your justice?!”

But at the same time, these questions cannot and must not assault in the slightest our absolute and unshakable faith in God’s reality and goodness. More to the point, they must not interfere in the slightest with our business of fulfilling all our obligations in terms of God’s will for us and our mission on earth. Our impassioned, anguished cry and the accusations we hurl at God must coexist with our enthusiastic alacrity in doing His will and our profound gratitude for the opportunity to perform it.

It is thus significant that this *parashah*, throughout which the Jewish people are immersed in the depths of the Egyptian exile, is entitled *Vaeira*—“I was seen.” The lesson we are to take from it is that we must simultaneously stubbornly refuse to reconcile ourselves to remaining even one more minute in exile, while at the same time stubbornly refusing to let the fact that we *are* in exile—in the meantime—interfere with what we have to accomplish right now.

From where, then, are we to draw the power to believe in God so thoroughly that we virtually see Him, even in the darkest moments of exile? God answers this question in His following words: “I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” The patriarchs possessed this unshakable faith, and as their progeny, we inherit it directly from them. According to the Torah’s laws of inheritance, the inheritor need not possess any particular or special qualities in order to inherit. He inherits fully and completely just by virtue of being an inheritor.

Our implicit and infinite faith in God is our inheritance to claim. All we must do is nurture it—“shepherd faith”²—and we, too, will virtually “see” God. This faith will enable us to live out the final moments of our exile yearning for and demanding its end while maximizing our use of the remaining time. In this merit, we will witness the fulfillment of God’s promise: “The glory of God will be revealed, and all flesh *will see* it together,”³ with the final Redemption ushered in by the Messiah.⁴

1. *Rosh HaShanah* 26a. 2. Psalms 37:3. 3. Isaiah 40:5. 4. *Hitva'aduyot* 5743, vol. 2, pp. 823-830.

ONKELOS
6:2 ומליל יי עם משה ואמר לה
אנא יי: 3 ואתגלית לי לאברהם
ליצחק וליעקב באל שדי ושמי יי
לא אודעית להון:

6:2 וידבר אלהים אל־משה ויאמר אליו אני יהוה:
3 וארא אל־אברהם אל־יצחק ואל־יעקב באל שדי
ושמי יהוה לא נודעתי להם:

RASHI

ה"י. וכשהוא אמור אצל קיום מצות, כגון: "ושמרתם מצותי ועשיתם אתם, אני ה'". — נאמן לתן שָׁכָר: 3 וּאֲרָא. אל האבות: באל שדי. הבטחתים הבטחות, ובכללן אמרתי להם "אני אל שדי": ושמי ה' לא נודעתי להם. "לא הודעתי" אין בתיב כאן, אלא "לא נודעתי" — לא נברתי להם במדת אמתות שלי, שעלִיה נקרא שמי ה' — נאמן לאמת דברי, שהרי הבטחתים ולא קימתי:

2 וידבר אלהים אל־משה. דבר אתו משפט, על שהקשה לדבר ולומר: "למה הרעתה לעם הוזה": ויאמר אליו אני ה'. נאמן לשלם שָׁכָר טוב למתהלכים לפני. ולא לחנם שלחתיך, כי אם לקדם דברי שדברתי לאבות הראשונים. ובלשון הוזה מצינו שהוא נדרש בכמה מקומות: "אני ה'" — נאמן להפָרַע, בשהוא אמור אצל עֲנֵשׁ, כגון: "וחללת את־שם אלהיך, אני

1. שמות ה, כב. 2. ויקרא יט, יב. 3. ויקרא כב, לא.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

In this context, God's answer to Moses was: "I had to subject them to the exile because I want them to rise to the level of Divine consciousness of the Name *Havayah*. In order for them to want this, I had to first show them what life is like without it."¹¹

Even though God created the world with the Name *Havayah*—as evidenced by the verse, "By the word of God the heavens were made"¹²—this Name was hidden within the Name *Elokim*, which is the only Name used in the account of creation. Similarly, although the Name *Havayah* was revealed to the patriarchs, it was still garbed in the Name *Elokim*. Overall, God revealed Himself in the patriarchal age as the God of nature.

Here, however, "God [*Elokim*] spoke to Moses and said to him: 'I am God.'" The Name *Elokim*, so to speak, declared openly that it, too, is really the Name *Havayah*. Nature "admitted" that there is no such thing as nature, that the world does not run on "automatic pilot." God Himself, as He transcends nature, is the sole force in reality; even what appears to be "nature" is simply His power choosing to manifest itself *through* nature.

In this sense, God's purpose in giving the Torah was to bring us to the awareness that the Name *Elokim* is one with the Name *Havayah*.¹³

3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob: God chides Moses: "Even though I did not fulfill My promises to the patriarchs, they did not complain. You, however, do complain."

We explained above that Moses complained because his relationship with God was chiefly intellectual, whereas the patriarchs' relationship with God was chiefly emotional. Here, God responds to Moses' complaint by saying that the redemption from Egypt will reveal God's transcendence. This implies that the natural mutual exclusivity of intellect and emotions will

be overridden, making it possible for someone who is predominantly intellectual—such as Moses—to internalize the advantages of emotionality, as well. This new reality will have two implications for Moses:

1. God's behavior will no longer challenge Moses' faith in Him, and therefore he will not question it. As we will see, this super-rational relationship with God is a fundamental aspect of the bond forged between God and the Jewish people through the Torah.
2. Moses will develop a greater appreciation for applying the insights and understanding gleaned from intellectual inquiry to the real world. The nature of intellectual inquiry is such that it absorbs us in what we are thinking about, removing us somewhat from reality. We become less sensitive to other people's needs and less concerned with concretizing our ideals. By integrating the advantages of emotionality, Moses will overcome this drawback of intellectualism. Inasmuch as the purpose of the Torah is to bring Divine consciousness down to earth, this concern with the real world is also a fundamental aspect of the bond forged between God and the Jewish people through the Torah.

These lessons apply to us, as well. Those of us who are of a more intellectual bent must integrate the patriarchs' emotional surrender to God, taking care that our intellectualism not distract us from the needs of others or the exigencies of reality. On the other hand, those of us who are of a more emotional bent must try to emulate the intellectualism of Moses, setting aside daily time to study even the most abstract and seemingly irrelevant aspects of the Torah.

Just as this inter-inclusion of intellect and emotion set the stage for the exodus from Egypt, so will it hasten the coming Redemption.¹⁴

11. *Torah Or* 50bc; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5655, pp. 18-26; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5712, pp. 150, 154; *Ma'amarei Admor HaZaken, Parashiot*, vol. 1, pp. 241 ff; *Addenda to Ma'amarei Admor HaZaken, Parashiot* (ed. 5749), pp. 26 ff. 12. Psalms 33:6. 13. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5738, pp. 147-8; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5669, pp. 133 ff; *Torah Or* 56c. 14. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 3, pp. 854-860.

God Rebukes Moses, continued

6:2 **God rebuked**¹ **Moses** for having asked him “why have You mistreated this people?”² **by saying to him: “I am God**; this is My proper Name, which indicates that I can be relied upon to reward those faithful to Me.

3 Yet, **I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** only as *El Shadai* [“God Almighty”], which is just an appellation indicating My omnipotence, when I promised them the Land of Israel.³ Since I did not fulfill these promises in their lifetimes, **I was not manifest to them by My Name God**, which indicates My trustworthiness, even though they were aware of this Name.

✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

2 I am God: This statement is God’s preface to His announcement that He is about to redeem His people. It informs us that the reason He exiled us to Egypt was in order to bring us to the level of Divine consciousness signified by the Name *Havayah*.

The Name *Havayah* connotes God’s trustworthiness because it indicates His transcendence, i.e., that He is not limited by the laws of the world He created. In order to make us fully aware of His transcendence, God had to put us in a context of seemingly inescapable limitation and then remove us from it. Egypt was the perfect venue for this demonstration—as we have seen, its very name means “limitation.”

Even though the forefathers reached sublime levels of Divine consciousness, they did not experience God’s absolute transcendence. God therefore contrasts His revelation to them with the revelation the Jewish people are now ripe to experience by virtue of having endured slavery to Egypt—that is, slavery to limitation.

This preface is thus God’s response to the complaint Moses had just voiced: “Why have you mistreated this people?” The exile and redemption from Egypt are a lesson in life that the Jewish people had to learn in order to become God’s nation, and it is a lesson we must all internalize if we are ever to rise above the enervating routine and vacuity of mundane life. Our personal redemption is not complete until we have reached the transcendence implied by the Name *Havayah*, that is to say, until all that we are and do is permeated by consummate Divine consciousness that absorbs us totally into His essence.²

On another level, the exile was necessary in order to make the people *desire* freedom. Specifically, their subjugation to the nature-worshipping Egyptians was necessary in order to make them desire the freedom from this limited consciousness that is available only through the Torah.

✧ INNER DIMENSIONS ✧

[2] I am God: On yet a deeper level, in order for a new level of Divinity to be revealed, the previous level of Divine revelation must be withdrawn; otherwise it will interfere with the new revelation. Therefore, before the revelation embodied in the Giving of the Torah could take place, the Godliness that permeated the world during the patriarchal age had to be withdrawn, and this withdrawal of Divine beneficence resulted in the Egyptian exile.

Furthermore, the greater the upcoming revelation, the greater must be the withdrawal of Divinity that precedes it. Because the Divine revelation that accompanied the Giving of the Torah was so great, the Egyptian exile had to last for a relatively long time.

By the same token, the present exile has lasted so long because the Divine revelations that are to accompany the messianic redemption will be greater than any the world has yet seen.⁵

According to the Midrash,⁶ Moses said to God: “The generation of the dispersion deserved to be punished because they rebelled against You. But this generation has not rebelled against you, so why do you subject them to such oppression?” According to Rabbi Yitzchak Luria,⁷ God answered: “Indeed, this generation is the reincarnation of the generation of the dispersion. Because that generation sinned by building a tower out of bricks and mortar,⁸ I am rectifying their souls by forcing this generation to make mortar and bricks.”⁹

In this sense, the phrase “God said, I am God” means that God’s attribute of justice (indicated by the Name *Elokim*), meting out punishment in kind, is really just a disguised form of His attribute of mercy (indicated by the Name *Havayah*). By subjecting the people to this servitude, God was rectifying and healing them of their past sins.¹⁰

1. As evidenced by the unusual use of the Name *Elokim*, rather than the Name *Havayah*, in this verse. 2. Above, 5:22. 3. To Abraham: Genesis 17:1,8; to Isaac: *ibid.* 26:3; to Jacob: *ibid.* 35:9-12. 4. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 31, pp. 23 ff. 5. *Torah Or* 56a ff. 6. *Shemot Rabbah* 5:22. 7. *Sha’ar HaKavanot, Derushhei Pesach 1; Sha’ar HaPesukim, Shemot*. 8. Genesis 11:3. 9. Exodus 1:14. 10. *Pelach HaRimon*, vol. 2, pp. 32, 35-36.

— ONKELOS —
 4 ואף אקיימית ית קימי עמהון למתן להון ית ארעא דכנען ית ארע תותביתיהון די אתותבו בה: 5 ואף קדמי שמיע ית קבילת בני ישראל די מצראי מפלחין בהון ודכינא ית קימי: 6 בכן אימר לבני ישראל אנא יי ואפיק יתכון מגו דחוק פלחן מצראי ואשיזיב יתכון מפלחניהון ואפרוק יתכון בדרע מרמא ובדינין רבדינין: 7 ואקריב יתכון קדמי לעמא ואהוי לכון לאלהא ותדעון ארי אנא יי אלהכון דאפיק יתכון מגו דחוק פלחן מצראי: 8 ואעיל יתכון לארעא די קיימית במימרי למתן יתה לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב ואתן יתה לכון ירתא אנא יי:

4 וְגַם הִקְמַתִי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם לְתַתּ לָהֶם אֶת־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֶת אֶרֶץ מִגְרֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר־גָּרוּ בָּהּ: 5 וְגַם אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־נְאֻקַּת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר מִצְרַיִם מַעֲבָדִים אַתֶּם וְאֶזְכֹּר אֶת־בְּרִיתִי: 6 לָכֵן אֹמֵר לְבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי יְהוָה וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם סִבְלַת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעֲבֹדְתָם וְנָאֲלַתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזֵרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְשַׁפְטִים גְּדוּלִים: 7 וְלִקְחַתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם: 8 וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הָאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יְדֵי לְתַתּ אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלְיַעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי אֹתָהּ לָכֶם מוֹרְשָׁה אֲנִי יְהוָה:

— RASHI —

לקום ולא קיימתי: 5 וגם אני. כמו שהצבתי והעמדת את הברית, יש עלי לקום. לפיכך "שמעתי את־נאקת בני ישראל" הנואקים: אשר מצרים מעבדים אתם ואזכור. אותו הברית. כי בברית בין הבריתים אמרתי לו: "וגם את־הגוי אשר יעבדו דן אנכי": 6 לכן. על־פי אותה השבועה: אמר לבני־ישראל אני ה'. הנאמן בהבטחתי: והוצאתי אתכם. כי כן הבטחתי: "ואחרי־כן יצאו ברכש גדול": סבלת מצרים. טורח משא מצרים: 8 נשאתי את־ידי. הרימוזיה להשבוע בכסאי:

4 וגם הקמתי את־בריתי וגו'. וגם פשנראיתי וגו'. ב"אל שדי" הצבתי והעמדת בריתי ביני וביניהם: לתת להם את־ארץ כנען. לאברהם בפרשת מילה נאמר: "אני־אל שדי וגו' ונתתי לך ולזרעך אחריו את ארץ מגריר". ליצחק: "כילך ולזרעך אתן את־כל־הארצות האל, והקמתי את־השבועה אשר נשבעתי לאברהם". ואותה שבועה שנשבעתי לאברהם ב"אל שדי", אמרתי ליעקב: "אני אל שדי פרה ורבה וגו' ואת־הארץ אשר וגו'". הרי שנדרתי

4. בראשית יז, אח. 5. שם כו, ג. 6. בראשית לה, יאיב. 7. בראשית טו, ד. 8. שם.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

nature's laws.²¹

I was not known to them by My Name God: Another way of expressing the idea that the patriarchs did not experience a true manifestation of the Name *Havayah*, even though they were aware of it, is to say that there are two such Names, one that is manifest within nature and one that transcends it.²² The patriarchs experienced the former but not the latter.²³

6-8 I am God... The repeated use of the Name *Havayah* here—and especially the explicit statement, "you shall know that I am God"—illustrates the point made above: that the purpose of the exile was that we reach the Divine consciousness signified by this Name.

6-7 I will free you...save you from their servitude...redeem you...I will take you to Myself: The four verbs in this passage allude to four ascending levels in our relationship with God:

- ♦ *I will free you:* This refers to shunning evil. By shunning evil, we become free agents, unencumbered by its oppressive grip on us.
- ♦ *I will save you from their servitude:* This refers to doing good, i.e., actively performing God's commandments. Only by actively engaging in good deeds can we be saved from backsliding into enslavement to evil.
- ♦ *I will redeem you:* This refers to studying the Torah, since the Torah is the means by which we access God's infinity even while in this finite world, and thereby are redeemed from the limitations of nature.
- ♦ *I will take you to Myself:* This refers to clinging to God Himself, whose essence transcends all categorization, both the finite and the infinite.²⁴

Melukat, vol. 5, pp. 137 ff. 22. This is alluded to by the fact that the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy (below, 34:6) begin with two instances of the Name *Havayah*. 23. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5729, pp. 99-100; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5714, p. 56. 24. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5678, p. 145.

4 Nonetheless, they did not question My trustworthiness. The proof is that when I appeared to them as *El Shadai*, **I also made My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojourning in which they stayed.** But when Abraham had to bury Sarah and pay an exorbitant price for a gravesite,¹⁵ and when Isaac had to defend his rights to the wells he dug,¹⁶ and when Jacob had to pay for a field in which to camp,¹⁷ none of them questioned My justice. In contrast, the first thing *you* asked Me when I approached you for this mission was ‘When they ask me, “what is His Name?” — when they ask me what kind of God is it that fails to fulfill His promises — what shall I tell them?’¹⁸ You suspected Me of sending you on a doomed venture. And now, at the first setback in your mission, you have questioned My justice!’¹⁹

These same words contain the instructions God gave to Moses after rebuking him: [2] **He said to him, “I am GOD;** this is My proper Name, which indicates that I can be relied upon to reward those faithful to Me, for because of My transcendence, nothing can prevent Me from fulfilling My promises. This, then, is why I have sent you: [3] **I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,** when I made promises to them, only as *El Shadai*, which indicates My omnipotence, **but was not known to them by the Name** indicating My trustworthiness — **GOD** — for I did not fulfill these promises to them. They knew of this Name, but did not experience its full significance firsthand. [4] On these occasions, **I also made My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojourning in which they stayed.**

5 **I have therefore heard the Israelites’ groaning, complaining that the Egyptians are enslaving them, and I have recalled My covenant** to punish the nation that enslaves them.²⁰

6 **“Therefore, in accordance with these promises, convey to the Israelites: ‘I am GOD,** who can be relied upon to reward those faithful to Him. **I will therefore free you from the burdens of the Egyptians, as I promised, save you from their servitude, and redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great chastisements.**

7 **I will take you to Myself as a nation, and I will be your God. And thus you shall know that I am GOD, your God, who is freeing you from the burdens of the Egyptians.**

8 **I will bring you to the land regarding which I raised My hand to swear that I would give it to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you as a heritage; I am GOD.”**

❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as *El Shadai* [“God Almighty”]: Even though this Divine Name does not appear in the Torah until the history of the patriarchs, we are taught that it was already revealed in the world at creation. *Shadai* means “who is enough,” referring to how God halted the process of creation by saying “enough!” as it were, once it had proceeded exactly as far as He intended.

However, the word *Shadai* can also mean “who has

enough,” i.e., that God’s power is sufficient to supply His creation with all its needs. This aspect of God is the source of all the miracles that take place without openly overriding the laws of nature. This is the additional aspect of this Name that was revealed to the patriarchs.

With the Giving of the Torah, the Name *Havayah* was revealed in the world; this Name is the source of a higher order of miracles, those that openly defy

15. Genesis 23. 16. Genesis 26:15-22. 17. Genesis 33:19. 18. Above, 3:13. 19. Rashi on 6:9, below. *Liktuei Sichot*, vol. 12, pp. 85-86; vol. 21, pp. 34-35. 20. Genesis 15:14. 21. *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5629, p. 49; *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5630, p. 62; *Sefer HaMa’amarim*

ONKELOS

9 ומליל משה כן עם בני ישראל ולא קבילו מן משה מעיק רוח ומפלוחא דהיה קשי עליהון: 10 ומליל יי עם משה למימר: 11 עול מליל עם פרעה מלכא דמצרים וישלח ית בני ישראל מארעה: 12 ומליל משה קדם יי למימר הא בני ישראל לא קבילו מני ואיכדין קבל מני פרעה ואנא יקיר ממלל: 13 ומליל יי עם משה ועם אהרן ופקידנון לות בני ישראל ולות פרעה מלכא דמצרים לאפקא ית בני ישראל מארעא דמצרים:

9 וידבר משה בן אל-בני ישראל ולא שמעו אל-משה מקצר רוח ומעבדה קשה: פ
10 וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: 11 בא דבר אל-פרעה מלך מצרים וישלח את-בני-ישראל מארעו: 12 וידבר משה לפני יהוה לאמר הן בני-ישראל לא-שמעו אלי ואיך ישמעני פרעה ואני ערל שפתיים: פ
13 וידבר יהוה אל-משה ואל-אהרן ויצו אל-בני ישראל ואל-פרעה מלך מצרים להוציא את-בני ישראל מארץ מצרים: ס

RASHI

שהוא סומך לכאן: "וגם אני שמעתי וגו' לכן אמר לבני-ישראל". לכך אני אומר, יתישב המקרא על פשוטו דבר דבור על אפניו והדרשה תדרש, שגאמר: "הלוא כה דברי כאש נאם-ה', וכפטיש יפצץ סלע"¹⁵ — מתחלק לכמה ניצוצות: 12 ואיך ישמעני פרעה. זה אחד מעשרה קל וחמר שבתורה: ערל שפתיים. אטום שפתיים. וכן בל-לשון "ערלה", אני אומר שהוא אטום: "ערלה אונם"¹⁶ — אטומה משמוע. "ערלי-לב"¹⁷ — אטומים מהבין. "שטה גם-אתה והערל"¹⁸ — והאטם משכרות כוס הקללה. "ערלת בשר"¹⁹ — שהגיד אטום ומכסה בה. "וערלתם ערלתו"²⁰ — עשו לו אטם וכסוי, אסור שיבדיל בפני אכילתו. "שלש שנים יהיה להם ערלים"²¹ — אטום ומכסה ומבדיל מלאכול: 13 וידבר ה' אל-משה ואל-אהרן. לפי שאמר משה: "ואני ערל שפתיים"²², צרף לו הקדוש ברוך-הוא את אהרן, להיות לו לפה ולמליץ: ויצו אל-בני ישראל. צום עליהם להנהיגם בנחת ולקבל אותם: ואל-פרעה מלך מצרים. צום עליו לחלוק לו כבוד בדבריהם. והו מדרשו. ופשוטו: צום על דבר ישראל ועל שליחותו אל פרעה. ודבר הצווי מהו? מפרש בפרשה שניה, לאחר סדר היחס. אלא, מתוך שהופיר משה ואהרן, הפסיק הענין ב"אלה ראשי בית אבותם", לקדמוני היאך נולדו משה ואהרן, ובמי נתיחסו:

9 ולא שמעו אל-משה. לא קבלו תנחומין: מקצר רוח. בל-מי שהוא מצר, רוחו וגשימתו קצרה ואינו יכול להאריך בנשימתו. קרוב לענין זה שמעתי בפרשה זו מרבי רוח ברבי אליעזר, והביא לי ראייה ממקרא זה: "בפעם הזאת אודיעם את-ידי ואת-גבורתי, וידעו כי-שמי ה'". למדנו, בשהקדוש ברוך-הוא מאמן את דבריו אפלו לפרענות, מודיע ששמו "ה'", וכל-שכן האמנה לטובה. ורבותינו דרשוהו²³ לענין של מעלה, שאמר משה: "למה הרעתה-י", אמר לו הקדוש ברוך-הוא: חבל על דאבדין ולא משתבחין, יש-לי להתאוונן על מיתת האבות, הרבה פעמים נגליתי אליהם ב"אל שדי" ולא אמרו לי מה-שמוך, ואתה אמרת: "מה-שמוך, מה אמר אלהים"²⁴: וגם הקמתי וגו'. וכשבקש אברהם לקבר את שרה, לא מצא קבר, עד שקנה בדמים מרבים. וכן ביצחק, ערערו עליו על הבארות אשר חפר. וכן ביעקב: "ויקן את-חלקת השדה אשר נטה-שם אהלו"²⁵, ולא הרירו אחר מדותי, ואתה אמרת: "למה הרעתה". ואין המדרש מתישב אחר המקרא, מפני כמה דברים: אחת, שלא נאמר "ושמי ה' לא שאלו לי". ואם תאמר: לא הודיעם ששמו. הרי תחלה בשנגלה לאברהם בין הבתרים נאמר: "אני ה' אשר הוצאתיך מאור כשדים"²⁶. ועוד, היאך הסמיכה נמשכת בדברים

9. ירמיה טו, כא. 10. סנהדרין קיא, א. 11. שמות ה, כב. 12. שמות ג, יג. 13. בראשית לג, יט. 14. בראשית טו, ז. 15. ירמיה כג, כט. 16. ירמיהו ו, י. 17. ירמיה ט, כה. 18. חבקוק ב, טו. 19. ע"פ בראשית יז, יאכה; ויקרא יב, ג; יחזקאל מד, ז, ט. 20. ויקרא יט, כג. 21. שם. 22. לעיל פסוק יב.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

In order to overcome these two obstacles: God charged Moses and Aaron regarding the Israelites: i.e., He connected³⁴ them to the people and, through them, to the physical world.

And Pharaoh: He connected them to Pharaoh, forcing Pharaoh to hold on to the Jews and to refuse to let them go. And all this was—
In order to take the Israelites out of Egypt.³⁵

HaMa'amarim 5627, pp. 95, 104. 34. The verb "to command" also means "to connect." 35. Likutei Amarim (the Maggid) 178; Or HaTorah, Shemot, vol. 1, p. 209.

9 When things got worse after Moses announced the redemption, the scoffers and skeptics again²⁵ succeeded in demoralizing the people and making them despair of being redeemed.²⁶ So **Moses related** God's message via Aaron **to the Israelites, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their anguish of spirit** evinced by their shortness of breath, which had made them despair of being redeemed, **and** because of the **harsh labor**, which had made them skeptical of Moses' promises.²⁷

10 **God** then **spoke to Moses, saying,**

11 **"Come and speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so that he will send the Israelites out of his land."**

12 **But Moses spoke before God, saying, "Even the Israelites have not listened to me, so how will Pharaoh listen to me? For it is clear now that not only do I stammer and have a slow tongue; even when I addressed the people via Aaron I was so inept at transmitting Your message that I may as well be a man of blocked lips, who cannot speak altogether. Now answer me; tell me if you plan to redeem the Jews or not."**²⁸

13 **God** therefore **spoke to both Moses and to Aaron**, giving them specific instructions regarding how they were to address Pharaoh.²⁹ In addition, **He made them** His emissaries³⁰ **to the Israelites and to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, charging them** to speak patiently to the former and respectfully to the latter, **in order to successfully take the Israelites out of Egypt.**

∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

9 **But they did not listen to Moses, because of their anguish of spirit and harsh labor:** Each one of us possesses an "inner Moses," which is our awareness and knowledge of God.³¹ The reason why we often do not sense it or hear its voice is because of the "anguish of spirit and harsh labor," that is, because of the travails of our exile. But it is present nonetheless.³²

12-13 **"Even the Israelites have not listened to me, so how will Pharaoh listen to me?"...God spoke to Moses and to Aaron...He commanded them to speak to the Israelites...in order to take the Israelites out of Egypt:** The people by this point had all but given up hope. God therefore told Moses to enlist Aaron's help in buoying up their spirits. Moses, the transmitter of the Torah, personified the descent of Divinity into the world. In contrast, Aaron, who was to become the progenitor of the priestly line, personified the ascent of the world into Divinity that occurred through the priestly rites. It was therefore necessary for him to be involved in uplifting the people so they could leave Egypt.

Allegorically, the Israelites signify the Divine soul within each of us, while Pharaoh signifies the human soul (with its animal drives) within us. Egypt, as we know, signifies the constricted consciousness of the material world. Moses' question to God, in this context, was: "If, because of its suffering in exile, the Divine soul—which is by nature foreign to the physi-

cal world—has despaired of being liberated from the constrictions of materiality, how can I hope to inspire the human-animal soul to want to leave? The material world is its natural habitat!"

To this, God replied, "Indeed, you and your approach are not able to inspire the human/animal soul in this way. This aspect of the personality cannot relate directly to pure, Divine concepts and values. For this, you must enlist the help of Aaron, someone who is able to speak to individuals on their level."

We, too, must find and enlist the Aaron within us when we seek to inspire the human/animal side of ourselves (or others) to reorient itself toward Divinity.³³

13 **God spoke to Moses and to Aaron:** According to Rabbi Dovber, the Maggid of Mezeritch, there were two obstacles preventing the redemption from Egypt from happening the way God wanted it to:

- ♦ Moses and Aaron at this point were too absorbed in the spiritual dimension of life to be capable of serving as channels for God's revelations to the world.
- ♦ Pharaoh, the arch-opponent to Godly revelation, knew that the impending plagues would unequivocally demonstrate God's existence and omnipotence. He was willing to do anything—even release the Israelites from slavery—rather than allow the great revelations of God attending the plagues to occur.

25. See above, 4:31. 26. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5705, pp. 134-135. 27. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5705, p. 21. 28. Rashi on Numbers 12:13. 29. These are specified later, in 7:1-2. 30. Rashi on Genesis 50:16. 31. *Tanya*, chapter 42. 32. *Sefer HaSichot* 5703, p. 66. 33. *Sefer*

— ONKELOS —

14 אלין רישי בית אבהתהון
בני ראובן ובכרא דישראל
חנוף ופלוא חצרון וכרמי אלין
זרעית ראובן: 15 ובני שמעון
ימואל וימין ואהד ויכין ויצחר
ושאול בר פנעניתא אלין זרעית
שמעון: 16 ואלין שמחת בני לוי
לתולדתהון גרשון וקהת ומררי
ושני חיי לוי מאה ותלתין ושבע
שנין: 17 בני גרשון לבני ושמעי
לזרעיתיהון: 18 ובני קהת עמרם
ויצחר ויחברון ועזיאל וימין
קהת מאה ותלתין ותלת שנין:
19 ובני מררי מחלי ומושי אלין
זרעית לוי לתולדתהון: 20 ונסיב
עמרם ית יוכבד אחת אבותי
לה לאתו וילידת לה ית אהרן
ות משה ושני חיי עמרם מאה
ותלתין ושבע שנין: 21 ובני יצחר
קרח ונפג וזכרי: 22 ובני עזיאל
מישאל ואלצפן וסתרי: 23 ונסיב
אהרן ית אלישבע בת עמינדב
אחמה דנחשון לה לאתו וילידת
לה ית נדב וית אביהוא ית אלעזר
ות איתמר: 24 ובני קרח אסיר
ואלקנה ואביאסף אלין זרעית
קרח:

◆ שני 14 אלה ראשי בית-אבתם בני ראובן בכר
ישראל חנוף ופלוא חצרון וכרמי אלה משפחת ראובן:
15 ובני שמעון ימואל וימין ואהד ויכין ויצחר ושואל
בן-הפנענית אלה משפחת שמעון: 16 ואלה שמות
בני-לוי לתלדתם גרשון וקהת ומררי ושני חיי לוי
שבע ושלושים ומאת שנה: 17 בני גרשון לבני ושמעי
למשפחתם: 18 ובני קהת עמרם ויצחר ויחברון ועזיאל
ושני חיי קהת שלש ושלושים ומאת שנה: 19 ובני מררי
מחלי ומושי אלה משפחת הלוי לתלדתם: 20 ויקח
עמרם את-יוכבד דדתו לו לאשה ותלד לו את-אהרן
ואת-משה ושני חיי עמרם שבע ושלושים ומאת שנה:
21 ובני יצחר קרח ונפג וזכרי: 22 ובני עזיאל מישאל
ואלצפן וסתרי: 23 ויקח אהרן את-אלישבע בת-
עמינדב אחות נחשון לו לאשה ותלד לו את-נדב
ואת-אביהוא את-אלעזר ואת-איתמר: 24 ובני קרח
אסיר ואלקנה ואביאסף אלה משפחת הקרחי:

— RASHI —

ושני חיי עמרם וגו'. מושבון זה אנו למדים על מושב
בני ישראל "ארבע מאות שנה" שאמר הכתוב⁴⁶, שלא
בארץ מצרים לבדה היו, אלא מיום שנולד יצחק;
שהרי קהת מיורדי מצרים היה, חשב כל-שנותיו
ושנות עמרם ושמונים של משה, לא תמצאם ארבע
מאות שנה, והרבה שנים נבלעים לבנים בשני האבות:
20 יוכבד דדתו. "אחת אבותי" — בת לוי אחות קהת:
23 אחות נחשון. מכאן למדנו: הנושא אשה צריך
לבדוק באחיה:

14 אלה ראשי בית-אבתם. מתוך שהזקק ליחס שבטו
של לוי עד משה ואהרן בשביל משה ואהרן, התחיל
ליחסם דרך תולדותם מראובן. ובפסיקתא הגדולה⁴⁷
ראיתי: לפי שקנטרם יעקב אביהם לשלשה שבטים
הללו, בשעת מותו, חזר הכתוב ויחסם כאן לבדם,
לומר שחשובים הם: 16 ושני חיי לוי וגו'. למה נמנו
שנותיו של לוי? להודיע כמה ימי השעבוד, שכל-זמן
שאחד מן השבטים קים, לא היה שעבוד, שנאמר:
"וימת יוסף וכל-אחיו"⁴⁸, ואחר כך: "ויקם מלך"
חדש⁴⁹. ולוי האריך ימים על בלם: 18 ושני חיי קהת...

23. פסיקתא רבתי פרשה ו. 24. שמות א, ו. 25. פסוק ח. 26. בראשית טו, יג.

◀ A CLOSER LOOK ▶

[20] Amram's aunt: The Torah prohibits a man from marrying his father's sister.⁴⁷ However, as we have seen,⁴⁸ before the Torah was formally given, only the Torah's for non-Jews were legally binding,

and non-Jews are permitted to marry paternal relatives,⁴⁹ so Amram was permitted to marry his father's sister.⁵⁰

47. Leviticus 18:12. 48. Genesis 43:16. 49. Rashi on Genesis 20:12. 50. Likutei Sichot, vol. 6, p. 43, note 15.

Moses' and Aaron's Lineage

- ◆ *Second Reading 14* Moses' and Aaron's lineage was an important factor contributing to the esteem the people accorded them as leaders. They were members of the most respected tribe, Levi, and of the most respected Levite family, that of Amram. The Torah therefore now articulates Moses' and Aaron's lineage. In order to highlight their place amongst the descendants of Jacob, the Torah lists Jacob's descendants in order as far back as Levi, in order to establish Moses and Aaron as descendants of Jacob's third son. By emphasizing how they were the sons of Amram and Yocheved, the Torah further highlights how they were born and raised in an environment of dedication to ideals and bravery: Yocheved fearlessly defied Pharaoh's order to murder the newborn Jewish boys, and Amram remarried his wife despite Pharaoh's order.³⁶ Finally, since Jacob had reprimanded Reuben, Simeon, and Levi,³⁷ the progeny of these sons are now listed again, indicating that their status as Jacob's sons was not compromised by his rebuke.

The following are the heads of the paternal clans of the first three tribes:³⁸

The sons of Reuben, Israel's—i.e., Jacob's—firstborn, were Chanoch, Palu, Chetzron, and Karmi; those are the families of Reuben.

15 The sons of Simeon were Yemuel, Yamin, Ohad, Yachin, Tzochar, and Shaul, the son of Dinah, who was considered the Canaanite woman;³⁹ those are the families of Simeon.

16 These are the names of the sons of Levi in their order of birth: Gershon, Kehot, and Merari. The years of Levi's life came to 137 when he died, in the year 2332.⁴⁰

17 The sons of Gershon were Livni and Shimi, with their respective families.

18 The sons of Kehot were Amram, Yitzhar, Chevron, and Uziel. The years of Kehot's life came to 133 when he died, in the year 2370 or a year or two before.⁴¹

19 The sons of Merari were Machli and Mushi. The above are the families of Levi, in their order of birth.

20 Amram married Yocheved, who was both the daughter of Levi⁴²—having the same father as Kehot, and Amram's aunt—having the same mother as Kehot. She was thus a woman of nobility.⁴³ She bore him Aaron and Moses. The years of Amram's life came to 137 when he died, some time before the year 2399.⁴⁴

21 The sons of Yitzhar were Korach, Nefeg, and Zichri.

22 The sons of Uziel were Mishael, Eltzafan, and Sitri.

23 Aaron married Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav and sister of Nachshon, the prince of the tribe of Judah⁴⁵—from her mention as Nachshon's sister we see that when someone is considering marrying a certain woman he should examine her brothers⁴⁶—and she bore him Nadav, Avihu, Eleazar, and Itamar.

24 The sons of Korach were Asir, Elkanah, and Aviasaf; those are the families of the clan of Korach.

36. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 16, pp. 63-64. 37. Genesis 49:3-7. 38. Genesis 46:8-11. 39. See on Genesis 46:10. 40. See above, 1:6. 41. *Seder HaDorot* 2369. 42. See above, 2:1. 43. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, pp. 42-45. 44. *Seder HaDorot* 2255, 2261, 2392. 45. Numbers 1:7. 46. See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, p. 44, note 18.

— ONKELOS —

25 וְאֶלְעָזָר בֶּר אַהֲרֹן נְסִיב לָהּ מִבְּנֵי פוֹטִיָאֵל לָהּ לְאִתּוּ וְיִלְיִדֵת לָהּ יֵת פִּינְחָס אֶלֶיךָ רִישֵׁי אֲבֹתָהּ לִיֹּאֵי לְזִרְעֵי־הָהוּן: 26 הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה דִּי אָמַר יְיָ לְהוֹן אֶפִּיקוּ יֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם עַל חִילֵיהוֹן: 27 אַנּוֹן דְּמִמְלִלִין עִם פִּרְעֹה מִלְכָּא דְּמִצְרַיִם לְאַפְקָא יֵת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם הוּא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן: 28 וְהוּא בְּיוֹמָא דְּמִלִּיל יְיָ עִם מֹשֶׁה בְּאַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם:

25 וְאֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־אַהֲרֹן לְקַח־לּוֹ מִבְּנֵי פוֹטִיָאֵל לְוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וּתְלִד לּוֹ אֶת־פִּינְחָס אֱלֹהֵי רָאשֵׁי אֲבוֹת הַלְוִיִּם לְמִשְׁפַּחְתָּם: 26 הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה לָהֶם הוֹצִיאוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַל־צָבָאתָם: 27 הֵם הַמְּדַבְּרִים אֶל־פִּרְעֹה מִלֶּךְ־מִצְרַיִם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם הוּא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן: 28 וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם דָּבַר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: ׀

— RASHI —

יש "על" שאינו אלא במקום אות אַחַת: "על־חֲרָבךָ תְּחִיָּה"²⁷ — כְּמוֹ "בְּחֲרָבְךָ". "עַמְדָתְּם עַל־חֲרָבְכֶם"²⁸ — כְּמוֹ "בְּחֲרָבְכֶם": 27 הֵם הַמְּדַבְּרִים וְגו'. הֵם שֶׁנִּצְטַוּ, הֵם שֶׁקִּיְמוּ: הוּא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן. הֵם בְּשִׁלְיֹחוֹתָם וּבְצִדְקָתָם, מִתְחַלְּה וְעַד סוֹף: 28 וַיְהִי בַּיּוֹם דָּבַר וְגו'. מִזְכָּר לְמִקְרָא שְׁלֵאֲחֲרֵיו:

25 מִבְּנֵי פוֹטִיָאֵל. מְזַרְע וְתָרוּ, שִׁפְטִים עֲגָלִים לְעִבּוּדָה וְרָה. וּמְזַרְע יוֹסֵף, שִׁפְטִפֹּט בִּיִצְרוֹ: 26 הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה. אֵלוֹ שְׁהוֹכְרוּ לְמַעַלָּה, שְׁיִלְדָה יוֹכְבֵד לְעַמְרָם. "הוּא אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה", יש מקומות שמקדים אהרן למשה, ויש מקומות שמקדים משה לאהרן, לומר לך ששקולין באחד: על צבאתם. בצבאותם, כל־צבאם לשבטיהם.

27. בראשית כז, מ. 28. יחזקאל לג, כו.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

In terms of our daily lives, Moses, the transmitter of the Torah, signifies the study of the Torah and performing its commandments, while Aaron signifies prayer, inasmuch as the daily prayers correspond to the sacrificial rites performed by the priests, Aaron's descendants. Just as, in these verses, Moses sometimes precedes Aaron and Aaron sometimes precedes Moses, so must the study of the Torah sometimes precede prayer while sometimes prayer must precede the study of the Torah.

In some instances, we may need to study the Torah or fulfill some commandment first in order to be properly prepared to express our love for God through prayer. Other times, we might need first to connect ourselves to God through prayer in order to study the Torah and fulfill its commandments out of proper, selfless devotion to God.⁵⁶

From another perspective, Aaron signifies our intellectual bond with God, while Moses signifies our supra-intellectual bond with God. In this context, "the Israelites" signify our Divine nature while "Pharaoh" signifies our human/animal nature.

Therefore, when discussing how to speak to the Israelites, Aaron is given precedence, since it is usually enough to use the intellect to rouse our inner Divinity and generate feelings of love for God. Our Divine side responds well to logic and philosophical demonstrations. But when discussing how to speak to Pharaoh, Moses is given precedence, for in order to get the human/animal side of our personalities to answer God's calling, the force of intellect and logic is not enough. We must therefore emulate Moses and excite it with supra-intellectual revelations of God. Chief among these techniques is recounting how God has performed miracles through the sages of the Torah throughout history, up to our present time.⁵⁷

From still another perspective, Moses personified the descent of Divinity into the world, while Aaron personified the ascent of the world into Divinity.⁵⁸ Since the Exodus from Egypt was the ascent of the world toward Divinity, Aaron is mentioned first in this context. And since it was necessary to break Pharaoh's evil with a direct revelation of Divinity—intentionally without regard to his inability to withstand such a revelation—Moses is mentioned first in this context.⁵⁹

56. *Likutei Torah* 3:83c. 57. *Or HaTorah, Shemot*, vol. 1, pp. 225-230; cf. *Sha'ar HaYichud VeHaEmunah*, chapter 5 (79b-80a). 58. Above, on vv. 12-13. 59. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5744, pp. 283 ff; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5730, pp. 91 ff; *Ma'amarei Admor HaZaken* 5563, vol. 1, pp. 122 ff; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5655, pp. 62 ff; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5680, pp. 231 ff.

25 Eleazar, the son of Aaron, married one of the daughters of Putiel—i.e., a descendant of Jethro, who fattened [*pitem*] calves to sacrifice them to idols, and of Joseph, who talked [*pitpeit*] his evil inclination out of making him sin with Potiphar’s wife—and she bore him Pinchas. The above are the heads of the paternal clans of the Levites, by their families.

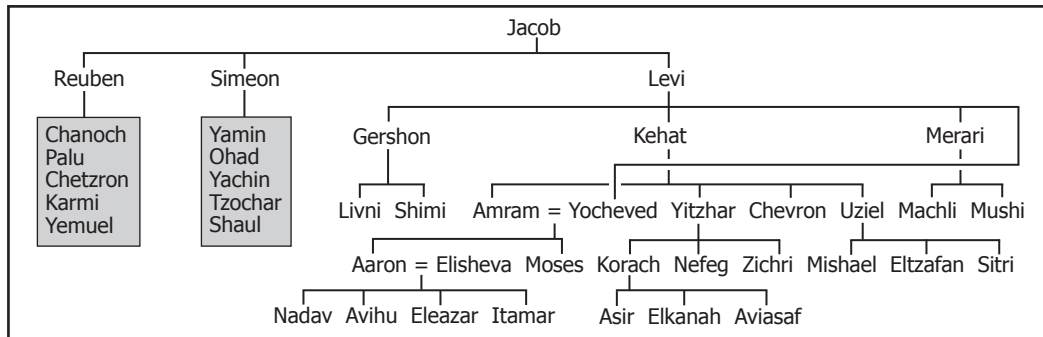


Figure 1: Moses' and Aaron's lineage

Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh

Having now established the lineage of Moses and Aaron, the Torah finishes describing how Moses and Aaron were suited for their mission:

26 These are the same Aaron and Moses to whom God said, “Bring the Israelites out of Egypt according to their tribal groups.” They both played integral roles in this mission; in this sense, they were both equal.

27 They are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, in order to take the Israelites out of Egypt. They were selected for this mission because they were raised in an environment of selfless dedication and bravery,⁵¹ and they lived up to these expectations. **They were Moses and Aaron:** each accepted and fulfilled God’s mission in accordance with his unique qualities, and both were consistent in their dedication and integrity throughout their mission.⁵²

28 The Torah now resumes the narrative: On the day that God had spoken to Moses in the land of Egypt,...

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

26 Aaron and Moses...Moses and Aaron: In Kabbalah, Moses and Aaron personify the two Divine Names *Havayah* and *Elokim*, respectively.⁵³ The Name *Havayah* signifies God’s transcendence, while the Name *Elokim* signifies His immanence hidden within creation. The allusion to these two Names in both orders refers to the union of these two Names, i.e., the awareness that God’s transcendence informs His immanence.

There are two ways we can experience this consciousness: as a gift from God, or as a result of our own efforts. The former experience is more transcendent,

but the latter permeates our consciousness more thoroughly and permanently.⁵⁴ Both ways are necessary and are an inherent part of the Giving of the Torah.

The phrase “Aaron and Moses”—the “natural” way we would expect the two brothers to be listed, in their order of birth—alludes to the way God confers this consciousness upon us, descending “naturally.” The phrase “Moses and Aaron”—referring to their consistency—alludes to the permanence of Divine consciousness that we attain on our own.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Above, 6:14. ⁵² *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 16, pp. 58-67. ⁵³ *Zohar* 2:26b; *Or HaTorah, Vaeira*, p. 145, p. 226 ff. ⁵⁴ These two facets of the union of these two Names are alluded to by the repetition of the phrase “God is God” in 1 Kings 18:39 and in the two juxtaposed verses Deuteronomy 4:35 and 4:39. ⁵⁵ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 16, pp. 67-68.

ONKELOS

29 ומליל יי עם משה למימור
אנא יי מליל עם פרעה מלכא
דמצרים ית כל די אנא ממליל
עמך: 30 ואמר משה קדם יי הא
אנא יקר ממלל ואיכדין יקביל
מני פרעה: 71 ואמר יי למשה
חזי דמניתיך רב לפרעה ואהרן
אחור יהי מתרגמןך: 2 את תמליל
ית כל די אפקדנך ואהרן אחור
ימליל עם פרעה וישלח ית בני
ישראל מארעה:

◆ שלישי 29 וידבר יהוה אל משה לאמר אני יהוה דבר אל פרעה מלך מצרים את כל אשר אני דבר אליה: 30 ויאמר משה לפני יהוה הן אני ערל שפתים ואיך ישמע אלי פרעה: פ
7:1 ויאמר יהוה אל משה ראה נתתיך אלהים לפרעה ואהרן אחיך יהיה נביאך: 2 אתה תדבר את כל אשר אצונו ואהרן אחיך ידבר אל פרעה ושלח את בני ישראל מארצו:

RASHI

שופט ורודה לרדותו במכות ויסורין: יהיה נביאך. כתר גומו: "מתרגמןך". וכן כל לשון נבואה, אדם המכריז ומשמיע לעם דברי תוכחות, והוא מגזרת: "ניב שפתים"³¹, "יגוב חקמה"³², "ויכל מהתנבות" דשמואל³³. ובלעז קוראין לו פריידיור³⁴: 2 אתה תדבר. פעם אחת, כל שליחות ושליחות כפי ששמעתו מפי, ואהרן אחיך ימליצנו ויטעימנו באוני פרעה:

29 וידבר ה'. הוא הדבור עצמו האמור למעלה: "בא דבר אל פרעה מלך מצרים"²⁹. אלא, מתוך שהפסיק הענין בדי ליחסם, חזר הענין עליו להתחיל בו: אני ה'. כדאי אני לשלחך, ולקדם דברי שליחותי: 30 ויאמר משה לפני ה'. היא האמירה שאמר למעלה: "הן בני ישראל לא שמעו אלי"³⁰. ושנה הכתוב כאן, כיון שהפסיק הענין. וכך היא השיטה, כאדם האומר נחזור על הראשונות: 1 נתתיך אלהים לפרעה.

29. פסוק י. 30. פסוק יב. 31. ישעיה נו, יט. 32. משלי י, לא. 33. א, יג. 34. פרקליט, הטוען לפני בית הדין.

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

ing his own gifts to accomplish his mission. Once he was void of all ego and pretension, he could serve as a transparent conduit for God's power.

Similarly, there are times in our lives when our animal nature seems to have the upper hand. At such times, the best way to overcome it is to rage against it, insult it, and humiliate it. Exposing it for what it is breaks its power over us. We derive this power to brazenly oppose the forces of darkness from the "spark" of Moses within each of us.

The same is true regarding our mission to oppose the forces of darkness in the world at large. In this effort, we are all emissaries of the leader, the "Moses" of our generation. Of course, we must always convey God's message in a pleasant and peaceful way, just as God commanded Moses to address Pharaoh respectfully. But at the same time, we must approach our "Pharaohs" fearlessly and forcefully. If we remain true to the Divine message "Moses" communicates to us—just as Moses had to convey God's message to Pharaoh without embellishment—we can break the power of darkness and help bring God's redemptive light to the world.⁶⁴

You shall repeat before Pharaoh everything that I

shall command you: The people heard God's message to Moses only indirectly, through Aaron, while Pharaoh was privileged to hear it directly from Moses. Is this fair? Why should Pharaoh be so highly rewarded for his evil?

The answer to this question lies in the way the Torah describes Aaron's role in each context. To the people, he simply transmitted Moses' message, acting as his "mouth"⁶⁵ both in regard to the language of the message (Hebrew) and its content. His function was simply to compensate for Moses' speech impediment. Thus, there was no deficiency in the Divine message the people heard from Aaron—in fact, they heard it more clearly through him than they would have had they heard it directly from Moses.

To Pharaoh, however, Aaron was Moses' "prophet." He translated the message into Egyptian and garbed it in his own words, using his understanding of Pharaoh's psychology to phrase the message in what he considered to be the most effective way. This was necessary because the Divine message Pharaoh heard from Moses was totally incomprehensible to him.

Thus, although Pharaoh heard God's message verbatim, in the final analysis, the people heard it more directly.⁶⁶

64. Likutei Sichot, vol. 16, pp. 74-76. 65. Above, 4:16. 66. Likutei Sichot, vol. 16, pp. 76-77.

- ◆ *Third Reading 29 ...when God had spoken to Moses, saying, “I am God; tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, all that I am saying to you,”*⁶⁰

30 **Moses had replied,** “The people themselves did not listen to me, even though I spoke to them via Aaron. It is clear now that not only do I stammer and have a slow tongue; I am so unskilled in transmitting Your message that I may as well be a man of blocked lips, so how will Pharaoh ever listen to me?”⁶¹

7:1 To this, **God now replied to Moses:** “Observe! I have made you a master over Pharaoh. You will rebuke him forcefully and afflict him with plagues and suffering. **Your brother Aaron shall be your spokesman.** Specifically, despite your speech impediment and inarticulateness, I will give you the ability to speak authoritatively:

2 **You shall repeat before Pharaoh everything that I shall command you,** exactly as you heard it from Me, in Hebrew. Pharaoh does not understand Hebrew, but that does not matter—the purpose of your oratory will be to establish you as ‘a master over Pharaoh,’ and repeating My exact words in a stern tone will have this effect. Afterwards, **your brother Aaron shall repeat it to Pharaoh,** translating it into his language and articulating it eloquently so that he be convinced to **send forth the Israelites from his land.**⁶²

— ❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧ —

2 **You shall repeat before Pharaoh everything that I shall command you, exactly as you heard it from Me, in Hebrew:** At this point, Pharaoh, the embodiment of evil in his day, was at the height of his power. No human power could resist him; only God Himself. This is why God told Moses, “Observe! I have made you a *master* [*Elokim*, literally, ‘God’] over Pharaoh.” He channeled His own Divine power through Moses.

This is why God told Moses to repeat verbatim—in Hebrew!—what he heard from Him. The purpose of his pronouncements was to break the power of evil

even while it was at its greatest power. Moses, as a human being, was not involved in this at all; he was simply the channel through which God’s power could attack Pharaoh. Only after this power had been broken was there place for Aaron to speak to Pharaoh on a human level.

Moses was able to serve as a conduit for this Divine power two reasons: first, because he was the Divinely-appointed leader of his generation, through whom God’s blessing flows into the world in any case; and second, because Moses had already despaired of us-

❧ INNER DIMENSIONS ❧

[1] **I have made you a master over Pharaoh:** Literally, this reads, “I have made you God over Pharaoh.” In other words, God here assured Moses that he would be able to invoke God’s power to overcome Pharaoh.

This was necessary because Pharaoh was then at the height of his power. The origin of evil is the world of Tohu, which is higher on the rung of Divinity than the world of Tikun, the origin of holiness. This does not mean that evil is better than holiness, only that it possesses more innate power. Indeed, the major challenge of life is to harness the power inherent in evil for the purpose of goodness and holiness. But when evil manifests its source—that is, it asserts its perceived independence from

God—it is too powerful for the forces of holiness within creation to overcome.

In such instances, only God Himself can help. God’s essence transcends both Tohu and Tikun and can break the otherwise invincible power of evil. For this reason, God had to assure Moses that He would come to his aid.

The same holds true in every generation. The leaders of each generation, who are worthy to stand in Moses’ stead due to their complete self-abnegation before God, are able to invoke God’s Divine power to overcome the forces of evil. We, as individuals, can partake of this power when we are properly connected and devoted to the generation’s leaders.⁶³

60. Above, 6:11. 61. Above, 6:12. 62. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 16, pp. 69-74. 63. *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5715, pp. 225 ff; *Sefer HaMa’amarim* 5722, pp. 190 ff.

— ONKELOS —

3 ואנא אקשי ית לבא דפרעה
 ואסגיית אתותי וית מופתי בארעא
 דמצרים: 4 ולא יקבל מנכון פרעה
 ואתן ית מחת גבורתי במצרים
 ואפיק ית חילי ית עמי בני ישראל
 מארעא דמצרים בדינין רבבין:
 5 וידעון מצראי ארי אנא ?? כד
 ארם ית מחת גבורתי על מצרים
 ואפיק ית בני ישראל מביניהון:
 6 ועבד משה ואהרן כמא דפקיד
 ?? יתהון כן עבדו:

3 ואני אקשה את לב פרעה והרביתי את אתתי ואת
 מופתי בארץ מצרים: 4 ולא ישמע אלכם פרעה ונתתי
 את ידי במצרים והוצאתי את צבאתי את עמי בני
 ישראל מארץ מצרים בשפטים גדלים: 5 וידעו מצרים
 כי אני יהוה בנטתי את ידי על מצרים והוצאתי את
 בני ישראל מתוכם: 6 ויעש משה ואהרן כאשר צוה
 יהוה אתם כן עשו:

— RASHI —

על האמות, כדי שישמעו ישראל וייראו, שנאמר:
 "הכרתי גוים נשמו פנותם וגו' אמרתי ארתיראי אותי
 תקחי מוסר"³⁵. ואף על פי כן, בהמש מכות הראשונות
 לא נאמר "ויחזק ה' את לב פרעה", אלא "ויחזק לב
 פרעה": 4 את ידי. יד ממש, להכות בהם:

3 ואני אקשה. מאחר שהרשיע והתריס בנגדי, וגלוי
 לפני שאין נחת רוח באמות לתת לב שלם לשוב, טוב לי
 שיתקשה לבו, למען הרבות בו אותותי ותכירו אתם את
 גבורתי. וכן מדתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא מביא פרענות

35. צפניה ג, וז.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

all that happens is for our sakes, despite the fact that God certainly orchestrates humanity's affairs with an eye to the needs of every creature, person, and nation. Therefore, we should never succumb to fear in the face of world events,⁷⁷ but rather strengthen our commitment to studying the Torah and fulfilling its commandments in preparation for the imminent, ultimate, messianic redemption.⁷⁸

I will harden Pharaoh's heart: Evil itself possesses no desire to do evil; indeed, it possesses no free choice at all. It is only because God desires that some evil occur that it happens.

We should therefore always remember that any manifestation of "Egypt"—that is, some limitation in our Divine mission or obstacle to it—has no intrinsic reality; there is no independent entity here that we have to contend with. The "Pharaoh" opposing us is just God's way of challenging us to summon deeper powers and determination to overcome them, thereby revealing deeper levels of our bond with Him.⁷⁹

The Egyptians will recognize that I am God: The Name of God used here is the Name *Havayah*, which, as we have seen, indicates God's attribute of mercy, the opposite of judgment. In this context, the purpose of the plagues was to introduce God's *mercy* to the Egyptians. As worshippers of nature, the Egyptians were fully acquainted with God's power of blind judgment, by which survival belongs to the fittest, but they did not yet know that God is *greater* than nature, and can override the laws of unforgiving nature when He sees fit.

Thus, we will see that what impressed Pharaoh most was Moses' ability to *stop* the plagues, rather than to initiate them. The necromancers of Pharaoh's court were indeed able to duplicate some of the plagues, for they knew how to manipulate nature to an extent, and were thus able to summon the forces of nature to wreak destruction. But they could not *reverse* or *check* these forces. Only Moses, by invoking God's mercy through prayer, could do so.⁸⁰

— INNER DIMENSIONS —

[3-5] **The Egyptians will recognize that I am God:** As we have seen,⁸¹ when the world of *Tohu* collapsed, 288 general sparks of Divine energy ("light") fell into the realm of evil. In order to liberate the fallen sparks of *Tohu*, it is necessary to break through the hard shells encasing them. The hard shell is the façade of materialism the conceals the true Divine reality of all things.

Of these 288 general fallen sparks, 202 became embedded in Egypt.⁸² The purpose of the ten plagues, in this context, was to break the stubborn materialistic outlook of Egypt so the Divine sparks embedded in it could be released. This is why there had to be *ten* plagues: Just as there are ten *sefirot* of holiness, so are there ten parallel *sefirot* of evil. Each plague broke⁸³ another façade of nature.⁸⁴

80. *Torat Chaim*, *Shemot* 396b-397a; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5678, p. 240; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5705, p. 139; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5706, p. 71. 81. On Genesis 1:2. 82. See below, on 12:38. 83. In this context, the verb "to know" (לדעת) in the phrase "the Egyptians will recognize [lit., know] that I am God" means "to break" (a meaning it has in Judges 8:16), rendering the phrase, "the Egyptians will be broken, knowing that I am God." 84. *Torah Or* 56d ff; *Or HaTorah*, *Vaeira*, pp. 2606 ff; *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5741, pp. 113 ff.

3 Nonetheless, I will harden Pharaoh's heart. He refused to listen to Me, brazenly asserting that he can do as he pleases.⁶⁷ Measure for measure, I will punish him for this by limiting his free choice. At first I will harden his heart indirectly, by allowing him to think that you are performing witchcraft and the like. If he persists in refusing to submit to Me, I will then harden his heart directly, as a punishment for his own obstinacy.⁶⁸ **I will thereby** have cause to **increase My miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt.** This will impress the people with My power and bolster their faith in Me. Nonetheless, even though I will harden his heart, if he truly wishes he will still be able to repent.⁶⁹

4 Pharaoh will not listen to you. I will then stretch forth My arm over Egypt and bring forth My hosts—My people, the Israelites—from the land of Egypt, bringing great chastisements upon Egypt.

5 The Egyptians, too, will recognize that I am God, when I raise My hand over Egypt and bring out the Israelites from their midst."

6 Moses and Aaron did exactly as God had instructed them, as will be described presently.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

3-5 I will harden Pharaoh's heart...Pharaoh will not listen to you...The Egyptians will recognize that I am God: In many instances,⁷⁰ the Torah states that the purpose of the plagues was to convince Pharaoh and the Egyptians of God's reality and power in order that they release the Jewish people as He had commanded.

On the other hand, God promised Abraham that He would punish the Egyptians for enslaving the Jewish people,⁷¹ and He fulfilled this promise with the plagues.⁷² This being the case, God would have had to inflict the plagues on the Egyptians whether or not they acknowledged His existence and power, and even if Pharaoh had agreed to release the Jews when Moses first asked him to.

Similar reasons are given for why God took away Pharaoh's free choice. In the basic, contextual sense of the Torah, God did this in order to punish Pharaoh for brazenly boasting that he was a totally free agent and did not have to listen to God.

But there are other reasons, as well. According to some opinions,⁷³ God made Pharaoh stubborn as a punishment for having enslaved the Jewish people. By making him stubborn, God forced him to endure punishment commensurate with his crime of oppressing the Jews. Making Pharaoh stubborn was thus God's way of fulfilling His promise to Abraham that He would punish the nation who enslaved the Jewish people.

According to yet other opinions,⁷⁴ God made Pharaoh stubborn in order to make him witness a sufficient

number of plagues to convince him of God's existence and omnipotence and inspire him to finally submit to God's request of his own accord.

We could attempt to reconcile these two opinions regarding the purpose for the plagues by assuming that God had to convince the Egyptians of His reality and power so they could realize it was *He* who was punishing them for enslaving the Jews. But elsewhere,⁷⁵ the Torah implies that convincing the Egyptians was an end in and of itself, as well.

Rather, the solution is that convincing the Egyptians was *itself* their punishment. Since the entire civilization of Egypt was based on the denial of God (i.e., either of His existence or of His presence), demonstrating His existence and omnipotence exposed the sham of their culture and demoralized them completely.

But in still other places,⁷⁶ the Torah implies that the plagues were meant to impress *the Jews* and educate them regarding God's mastery over nature.

This can be explained by recalling that, in essence, the purpose of everything that happens in the world—including the creation of the world altogether—is for the sake of the Jews, to better enable them to fulfill their Divine mission. Even when there is also some other purpose behind what happens, its *ultimate* purpose is for the Jews' benefit.

This is the lesson here for us. No matter how insignificant the Jewish people seem to be in the scheme of world affairs, we must always recall that *ultimately*,

67. Above, 5:2. 68. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, pp. 62-63; vol. 31, p. 31, from *Nachalat Yaakov*. 69. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, pp. 64-65. 70. Exodus 7:17, 8:6, 8:18, 9:14, 9:29, 11:7. The same is said of the Splitting of the Sea: Exodus 14:4, 14:18. 71. Genesis 15:14. 72. Rashi *ad loc.* 73. *Mishneh Torah*, *Teshuvah* 6:3; Commentary to *Avot*, Introduction, ch. 8. 74. *Seforno* and others. 75. Exodus 9:16. 76. Exodus 10:2; Rashi on Exodus 7:3. 77. See *Yalkut Shimoni*, Isaiah 499. 78. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, pp. 33-37. 79. Address of *Motzaei Shabbat Vaeira* 5738.

— ONKELOS —

7 ומשה בר תמנין שנין ואהרן בר תמנין ותלת שנין במלכותיהון עם פרעה: 8 ואמר יי למשה ולאהרן למימר: 9 ארי זמליל עמכון פרעה למימר הבו לבון אתא ותימר לאהרן סב ית חוטרך ורמי קדם פרעה יהי לתנינא: 10 ועל משה ואהרן לות פרעה ועבדו כו כמא דפקיד יי ורמא אהרן ית חוטרך קדם פרעה וקדם עבדוהי והנה לתנינא: 11 וקרא אף פרעה לחכימא ולקחשיא ועבדו אף אנון חרשי מצרים בלחשיהון כן: 12 ורמו גבר חוטרך והיו לתנינא ובלע חוטרך דאהרן ית חוטרך והיו: 13 ואתקף לבא דפרעה ולא קביל מנהון כמא דמליל יי:

7 ומשה בן־שמונים שנה ואהרן בן־שלוש ושמנים שנה בדרבם אל־פרעה: פ

◆ רביעי 8 ויאמר יהוה אל־משה ואל־אהרן לאמר: 9 כי ידבר אלכם פרעה לאמר תנו לכם מופת ואמרת אל־אהרן קח את־מטה והשלך לפני־פרעה יהי לתנין: 10 ויבא משה ואהרן אל־פרעה ויעשו־כן כאשר צוה יהוה וישלך אהרן את־מטהו לפני פרעה ולפני עבדיו ויהי לתנין: 11 ויקרא גם־פרעה לחכמים ולמכשפים ויעשו גם־הם חרטימי מצרים בלהטיהם כן: 12 וישליכו איש מטהו ויהיו לתנינם ויבלע מטה־אהרן את־מטתם: 13 ויחזק לב פרעה ולא שמע אליהם כאשר דבר יהוה: ם

— RASHI —

9 מופת. אות, להודיע שיש צורך במי ששולח אתכם: 10 לתנין. נחש: 11 בלהטיהם. "בלחשיהון", ואין לו דמיון במקרא. ויש לדמות לו: "להט החרב

המתהפכת"³⁶ — דומה שהיא מתהפכת על ידי לחש: 12 ויבלע מטה־אהרן. מאחר שחורר ונעשה מטה, בלע את בלן:

36. בראשית ג, כד.

~ A CLOSER LOOK ~

[10] After a short while it reverted back into its former state, a staff: The purpose of transforming Aaron's staff into a snake was to demonstrate God's mastery over nature. Once that had been demonstrated, the Divine energy that was miraculously keeping the staff in snake-form was spent, and the staff simply reverted back to its natural state. No additional act or miracle was required.

In contrast, when God had earlier changed Moses' staff into a serpent,⁹³ it was in order to show him that he had figuratively "become a serpent" by slandering the Jewish people. The nature of the miracle was not that the staff was being held in an unnatural state; it had actually been transformed into a serpent and this had become its new natural state. Therefore, a specific, deliberate act (Moses' grabbing it by the tail) was required to change it back to a staff.⁹⁴ [12] Even though it was once again a staff: Had Aaron's staff remained a serpent and

then swallowed the necromancers' staves/serpents, it would still have been a miracle, because although it is natural for serpents to swallow other serpents, it is not natural for one serpent to swallow many, one after the other. But such a miracle, impressive though it may have been, would not have demonstrated God's dominion over the Egyptians as clearly as the miracle of a staff swallowing a slew of serpents, for it is totally unnatural for a staff to swallow a serpent. The message of such a feat could only be God's dominion, for a staff is a symbol of authority.

Therefore it was necessary for Aaron's serpent to revert to being a staff before it swallowed the necromancers' serpents, for the very purpose of this miracle—which was a prelude to the ten plagues—was to demonstrate God's absolute dominion over the Egyptians.⁹⁵

93. Above, 4:2-5. 94. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 26, pp. 51-52. 95. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

7 **Moses was ten months short of 80 years old⁸⁵ and Aaron was 83 years old when they spoke to Pharaoh in the year 2447.**

◆ **Fourth Reading 8** In addition, **GOD said to Moses and Aaron as follows:**

9 **“When Pharaoh speaks to you and says, ‘Produce a marvel for yourselves, to prove that God, who sent you, is powerful enough that I should listen to you,’ Moses shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your⁸⁶ staff and throw it down in front of Pharaoh. It will become a serpent.’”** God knew that this would not overly impress the Egyptians, but it would enable a further miracle to occur that would demonstrate His dominion over Egypt.

10 **So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did exactly as God had commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and in front of his courtiers, and it became a serpent.** Once the staff had turned into a serpent, this miracle had fulfilled its purpose, so after a short while it reverted back into its former state, a staff.

11 **Pharaoh too summoned his wise men and magicians, and the necromancers⁸⁷ also did likewise with their incantations:**

12 **Each of them threw down his staff and the staves turned into serpents. But Aaron’s staff—even though it was once again a staff—swallowed up their staffs, but did not become any thicker because of this.** Since a staff is a symbol of power and dominion, this miracle demonstrated God’s power and dominion over Egypt.⁸⁸

13 **But despite this, Pharaoh’s heart stiffened and he paid no heed to Moses and Aaron, just as God had said.⁸⁹**

☞ INNER DIMENSIONS ☞

[8] Take your staff...it will become a serpent: God did not merely change Aaron’s staff into another inanimate object; He transformed it from a lifeless staff into a living animal.

Changing something into something else can only be accomplished by changing the letters of God’s speech that are enlivening the object. It was necessary to do this for a number of the plagues.⁹⁰

Allegorically, a staff signifies the direct, orderly descent of God’s beneficence into reality, which creates and sustains the many levels of creation as it proceeds further “down” the hierarchy of reality. A serpent, in contrast, signifies the evil of Egypt, which is simply a reincarnation of the primordial snake of the Garden of Eden, the embodiment of exaggeratedly self-assertive ego.

By changing Aaron’s staff into a serpent, God proved to Pharaoh that even *he* owes his existence to God’s creative energy. The fact that Pharaoh did not sense this, and even brazenly asserted that he himself was a god,⁹¹ demonstrates that Pharaoh’s spiritual source is the very bottom of God’s “staff,” i.e., the lowest point of Divine revelation, where its intensity is so dimmed that the creatures created by it sense only *their* reality, and not God’s.

When the serpent reverted to a staff and Aaron’s staff swallowed the Egyptian serpents, it showed that not only is God’s creative energy the original source of Egypt’s life force, it is also the source of Egypt’s continuous existence from minute to minute. At any moment God can change the serpent back to a staff, annihilating evil and making it disappear without a trace.⁹²

85. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 20, p. 26, note 25. 86. See *Sichot Kodesh 5734*, vol. 1, pp. 270-271, 274-276; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 26, p. 53, note 38. 87. See on Genesis 41:8. 88. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 26, pp. 49-56. 89. Above, v. 3. 90. *Sefer HaMa’amarim 5679*, pp. 323-324; *Sefer HaMa’amarim 5700*, p. 20 (in second numbering sequence). 91. Below, 7:14. This endemically Egyptian attitude resurfaced again, later on in history, when a later Pharaoh said, “My Nile is mine, and I have made myself” (Ezekiel 29:3). 92. *Torah Or 57b*; *Or HaTorah, Vaeira* pp. 2607-2608; *Sefer HaMa’amarim 5741*, pp. 115 ff.

— ONKELOS —
 14 ואמר יי למשה יקיר לבא
 דפרעה סריב לשלחא עמא:
 15 איזיל לות פרעה בעפרא הא
 נפיק למיא ותתעתד לקדמותה
 על ביי נהרא וחוטרא די אתהפיך
 לחויא תסב בידך: 16 ותימר לה
 יי אלהא דיהודאי שלחני לוקר
 למימר שלח ית עמי ויפלחון
 קדמי במדברא והא לא קבילתא
 עד בען:

14 ויאמר יהוה אל־משה כְּבֹד לֵב פְּרַעַה מֵאֵן לְשַׁלַּח
 הָעָם: 15 לֵךְ אֶל־פְּרַעַה בַּבֶּקֶר הַיּוֹם יֵצֵא הַמִּיּוֹמָה וְנִצַּבְתָּ
 לְקִרְאָתוֹ עַל־שַׁפַּת הַיַּאֲר וְהַמַּטָּה אֲשֶׁר־נִהְפְּךָ לְנַחֵשׁ
 תִּקַּח בְּיָדְךָ: 16 וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי הָעִבְרִים
 שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֶיךָ לֵאמֹר שְׁלַח אֶת־עַמִּי וְיַעֲבֹדְנִי בַּמִּדְבָּר
 וְהִנֵּה לֹא־שָׁמַעַתָּ עַד־כֹּה:

— RASHI —

לנִקְבִי, ומשכים ויוצא לנילוס ועושה שם צרכיו: 16 עֲדָ־
 כֹּה. עַד הַנֶּהָ. ומדרשו⁹⁸: עַד שֶׁתִּשְׁמַע מִמֶּנִּי מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת,
 שְׁאִפְתָּה בָּהּ בְּ"כֹה" — "כֹּה אָמַר ה' בְּחֻצַּת הַלַּיְלָה"⁹⁹:

14 כְּבֹד. תרגומו "יקיר" ולא "אתיקר", מפני שהוא שם
 דָּבָר, כְּמוֹ: "כִּי־כְבֹד מִמֶּךָ הַדָּבָר"⁹⁷: 15 הִנֵּה יֵצֵא הַמִּיּוֹמָה.
 לנִקְבִי, שְׁהִיָּה עוֹשֶׂה עֲצֻמוֹ אֵלוֹהַ וְאֹמֵר שְׁאִינוּ צָרִיךְ

37. שמות יח, יח. 38. פסיקתא זוטרתא. ועיין "תורה שלמה" סעיף טו. 39. שמות יא, ד.

— A CLOSER LOOK —

[continued...] Nile, (2) warning him in the palace, and (3) no recorded warning. With regard to the lessons, Moses mentions lessons only before the first of each set of three. As we will see later, the first nine plagues were intended to teach the Egyptians certain truths about God's existence and providence. The purpose of the tenth plague was not didactic in nature at all; its purpose was rather to actualize the redemption (i.e., to finally separate and withdraw the Jews from the Egyptians). Specifically, the first set of three plagues was in-

tended to demonstrate God's *existence*, the second set His *providence*, and the third set His *power*. These three lessons are alluded to in God's words to Pharaoh: "that I am God [i.e., that I exist],"⁹⁶ "that I am God in the midst of the earth [i.e., that My providence pervades all creation]"⁹⁷ and "that there is none like Me [i.e., as powerful as I am] in all the earth."⁹⁸ This explains why the lessons are given only for the first plague of each set of three and why the warnings follow a pattern repeated for each set of three.⁹⁹

— INNER DIMENSIONS —

[14] **Pharaoh's heart is unmoved:** Until this point, the Torah has used the verb "to harden" (לחזק)¹⁰⁰ to refer to Pharaoh's stubborn heart. In contrast, the adjective used in this verse to describe Pharaoh's heart is "heavy" or "unmoved" (כבד). This word also means "liver," so the phrase in this verse can be read, "Pharaoh's heart became a liver."

One meaning of this is that Pharaoh's heart had been emptied of all emotion, and had become as unfeeling as his liver.¹⁰¹

Another meaning is that Pharaoh's heart, rather than constantly pumping blood out of itself, as the

heart normally does, now became filled with blood constantly, as is the liver. As we will see,¹⁰² warm blood allegorically signifies enthusiasm for the material side of life. The heart turning into a liver thus signifies replacing the normal, healthy balance between the spiritual and material pursuits—signified by how the heart periodically empties itself of its blood—with a total absorption with materiality.

Thus, it was no surprise that when he was confronted with God's message, Pharaoh chose to ignore its validity and instead identify fully with the one-sided perspective of gross materialism.¹⁰³

96. 7:17. 97. 8:18. 98. 9:14. 99. Abarbanel on Exodus 7:15-8:12; cited in *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, p. 34. 100. Above, 4:21, 7:13. 101. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5697, p. 268. 102. Below, on v. 17. 103. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5702, p. 79.

The First Plague: Blood

14 So **God** told Moses and Aaron to announce the first plague. On Sivan 15, 2447, He **said to Moses**, “Although I indirectly hardened Pharaoh’s heart by allowing the necromancers to make him think that your demonstration was simply magic, he did not pay attention to the fact that Aaron’s serpent swallowed their staffs. He hardened his heart on his own beyond what I did to harden it. **Pharaoh’s heart is therefore unmoved; he refuses to send the people forth** and deserves to be punished.

15 **Go to Pharaoh in the morning, for that is when he goes out to the water** to relieve himself privately, so he can pretend to be a god the rest of the day. **Station yourself opposite him on the bank of the Nile River.** Tell Aaron: “**Take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent.**”

16 **You shall have Aaron say to him: ‘God, God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you to say, ‘Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness!’ Until now you have not paid attention, and I know that you will not pay attention until the tenth plague, the slaughtering of the firstborn.**

❧ A CLOSER LOOK ❧

The Ten Plagues: If we examine the literary structure of the Torah’s description of the ten plagues, a clear pattern emerges:

| | plague | warning or announcement | lesson for Pharaoh |
|----|-----------------|--|--|
| 1 | Blood | “Go to Pharaoh in the morning... Station yourself...” | “Through this you will recognize that I am God” |
| 2 | Frogs | “Come to Pharaoh...” | none articulated |
| 3 | Lice | no warning articulated | none articulated |
| 4 | The Mixed Horde | “Rise early...Station yourself...” | “Thus you will realize that I am God in the midst of the land.” |
| 5 | Epidemic | “Come to Pharaoh...” | none articulated |
| 6 | Inflammation | no warning articulated | none articulated |
| 7 | Hail | “Rise early...Station yourself...” | “So that you will know that there is none like Me in all the world.” |
| 8 | Locusts | “Come to Pharaoh...” | none articulated |
| 9 | Darkness | no warning articulated | none articulated |
| 10 | The Firstborn | given while Moses and Aaron were already in Pharaoh’s presence | “In order that you may know that God is differentiating between the Egyptians and Israel.” |

We see here that the ten plagues are subdivided into three sets of three, followed by the single, tenth plague. With regard to the warnings, there are three cycles of (1) warning Pharaoh at the

— ONKELOS —

17 כִּדְנָן אָמַר יי בְּדָא תִּדְע אַרְי אָנָא יי הָא אָנָא מַחֵי בְּחוּטְרָא דִּי בִידֵי עַל מֵיָא דִּי בְּנִהְרָא וְיִתְהַפְכוּן לְדָמָא: 18 וְנוּנֵי דִּי בְּנִהְרָא יְמוּתוּן וְסָרֵי נִהְרָא וְלֵאנוּן מִצְרָאֵי לְמִשְׁתֵּי מֵיָא מִן נִהְרָא: 19 וְאָמַר יי לְמִשְׁה אָמַר לְאַהֲרֹן סַב חוּטְרָךְ וְאַרְם יִדְךָ עַל מֵיָא דְמִצְרָאֵי עַל נִהְרִיחוּן עַל אֲרִיתִיחוּן וְעַל אֲנִמִּיחוּן וְעַל כָּל־בֵּית פְּגִישַׁת מִימִיחוּן וְיִהוּן דְּמָא וְיִהָא דְּמָא בְּכָל־אַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם וּבְמִנֵּי אַעָא וּבְמִנֵּי אֲבָנָא: 20 וְעַבְדוּ כֵּן מִשְׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כְּמָא דְּפָקִיד יי וְאַרְם בְּחוּטְרָא וּמִחָא יֵת מֵיָא דִּי בְּנִהְרָא לְעֵינֵי פְּרַעָה וּלְעֵינֵי עַבְדוּחֵי וְאַתְהִיפוּ כֵּן־מֵיָא דִּי בְּנִהְרָא לְדָמָא: 21 וְנוּנֵי דִּי בְּנִהְרָא מִיתוּ וְסָרֵי נִהְרָא וְלֵא יִכִּילוּ מִצְרָאֵי לְמִשְׁתֵּי מֵיָא מִן נִהְרָא וְהוּהוּ דְּמָא בְּכָל־אַרְעָא דְּמִצְרַיִם: 22 וְעַבְדוּ כֵּן חֲרָשֵׁי מִצְרַיִם בְּלַחְשִׁיחוּן וְאַתְקַף לְבָא דְּפְרַעָה וְלֵא קְבִיל מִנְחוּן כְּמָא דְּמִלִּיל יי:

17 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה בְּזֹאת תִּדְעַ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה הֵנָּה אֲנֹכִי מִכָּה | בַּמַּטֵּה אֲשֶׁר־בְּיָדִי עַל־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּאֵר וְנִהְפְּכוּ לְדָם: 18 וְהִדְגָּה אֲשֶׁר־בַּיָּאֵר תִּמּוֹת וּבְאֵשׁ הַיָּאֵר וְנִלְאֵוּ מִצְרַיִם לַשָּׂתוֹת מַיִם מִן־הַיָּאֵר: ס
19 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן קַח מַטְנֶךָ וְנִטְהֵ־יָדְךָ עַל־מִימֵי מִצְרַיִם עַל־נִהְרֹתָם | עַל־יִאֲרִיהֶם וְעַל־אֲנִמִּיהֶם וְעַל כָּל־מִקְוֵה מִימֵיהֶם וְיִהְיוּ־דָם וְהָיָה דָם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וּבַעֲצִים וּבְאֲבָנִים: 20 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כֵן מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן כַּאֲשֶׁר | צִוָּה יְהוָה וַיָּרֶם בַּמַּטֵּה וַיַּךְ אֶת־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּאֵר לְעֵינֵי פְּרַעָה וּלְעֵינֵי עַבְדָּיו וַיִּהְפְּכוּ כָל־הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר־בַּיָּאֵר לְדָם: 21 וְהִדְגָּה אֲשֶׁר־בַּיָּאֵר מִתֵּהוּ וַיִּבְאֵשׁ הַיָּאֵר וְלֹא־יָכִלוּ מִצְרַיִם לַשָּׂתוֹת מַיִם מִן־הַיָּאֵר וְיָהִי תִדָם בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: 22 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־כֵן חֲרָטְמֵי מִצְרַיִם בְּלִטְיֵיהֶם וַיִּתְחַזַּק לִב־פְּרַעָה וְלֹא־שָׁמַע אֶל־הֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה:

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הַיָּאֲוִרִים וּמִשְׁקַה הַשְּׂדוּת: אֲנִמִּיָּהֶם. קְבוּצַת מַיִם שְׂאִינָן נוֹבְעִין וְאִינָן מוֹשְׁכִין אֱלָא עוֹמְדִין בְּמִקּוּם אַחַד, וְקוֹרִין לוֹ אִישְׁטַנ"ק⁴⁰: בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. אִף בְּמִן־חֲצָאוֹת וּבְאֲמִבְטָאוֹת שְׁבֻבְתֵיהֶם: וּבַעֲצִים וּבְאֲבָנִים. מַיִם שְׁבֻבְלֵי עֵץ וּבִכְלֵי אֶבֶן: 22 בְּלִטְיָהֶם. לַחֵשׁ שְׂאוּמְרִין אוֹתוֹ בְּלִט וּבְחֲשָׂאֵי. וְרִבּוּתֵיהֶם אֲמָרוּ: "בְּלִטְיָהֶם" — מַעֲשֵׂה שָׂדִים. "בְּלִטְיָהֶם" — מַעֲשֵׂה כְּשָׁפִים: וַיִּתְחַזַּק לִב־פְּרַעָה. לוֹמַר, עַל יְדֵי מְכַשְׁפוֹת אֲתָם עוֹשִׂים כֵּן, תִּכְן אֲתָם מְכַנְיָסִים לְעַפְרַיִם — עִיר שְׁבֻלָה תִּכְן. אִף אֲתָם מִבֵּיאִין מְכַשְׁפוֹת לְמִצְרַיִם שְׁבֻלָה כְּשָׁפִים:

17 וְנִהְפְּכוּ לְדָם. לְפִי שְׂאִין גְּשָׁמִים יוֹרְדִים בְּמִצְרַיִם, וְנִילוּס עוֹלָה וּמִשְׁקָה אֶת הָאֶרֶץ, וּמִצְרַיִם עוֹבְדִים לְנִילוּס, לְפִיקַף הַלְקָה אֶת יִרְאָתָם וְאַחַר כֵּף הַלְקָה אוֹתָם: 18 וְנִלְאוּ מִצְרַיִם. לְבַקֵּשׁ רְפוּאָה לְמִי הַיָּאֲוִר, שִׁיחֵיו רְאוּיִין לַשָּׂתוֹת: 19 אָמַר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן. לְפִי שְׂהִיגֵן הַיָּאֲוִר עַל מֹשֶׁה כְּשִׁנְשַׁלְף לְתוֹכוֹ, לְפִיקַף לֹא לְקָה עַל יְדוֹ, לֹא בְּדָם וְלֹא בְּצַפְרֻדָּעִים, וְלְקָה עַל יְדֵי אַהֲרֹן: נִהְרָתָם. הֵם נִהְרוֹת הַמוֹשְׁכִים, כְּעֵין נִהְרוֹת שְׁלָנוּ: יִאֲרִיהֶם. הֵם בְּרִיכוֹת נִגְרִים, הַעֲשׂוּיוֹת בִּידֵי אֲדָם מִשְׁפַּת הַנֶּהָר לַשְּׂדוּת. וְנִילוּס — מִימֵיו מִתְבָּרְכִים וְעוֹלָה דְרָךְ

40. אגס. 41. סנהדרין סז, ב.

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ence to Divinity into warm enthusiasm for it. This had to be the first step because indifference can quickly lead to a drastic decline in commitment. Once this was precluded, the path was open to additional, more specific stages through which God's reality could be impressed on Egypt's (and the world's) awareness.

A similar lesson applies to anyone striving to leave the slavery of Egypt—the tyranny of his or her material drives and bodily desires. Our first step in this pro-

cess must be to replace our *a priori* cold indifference to all things Jewish and holy with warm enthusiasm for God, His Torah, and its commandments. We should not delude ourselves into thinking that it is possible to remain aloof and neutral, indifferent to both spirituality and materiality. If we neglect our responsibility to cultivate an energetic and enthusiastic attitude toward the Torah and its commandments, we face the specter of a swift decline into the decadence of Egypt.¹⁰⁸

17 Now this is what God has said: "Through this you will recognize that I am God." I am now going to strike the water in the river with the staff in my hand, and it will turn into blood.

18 The fish in the river will die and the river will become putrid, and the Egyptians will grow weary of trying ways to treat the river in order to drink water from it." Since the Egyptians worshipped the Nile as their source of life-giving and irrigating water, God struck it first, in order to demonstrate its vulnerability. This demoralized the Egyptians. Aaron continued to warn Pharaoh for three weeks.¹⁰⁴

19 On the 8th of Tamuz, God said to Moses, "Since the Nile served to protect you when you were a baby, you should not strike it yourself. Instead, say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and raise your hand over the waters of Egypt—over their rivers, their canals, their ponds, and all their bodies of water—and they shall turn into blood. There will be blood even in the bathhouses and private baths throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and stone, for the water in them will also turn to blood.'"

20 Moses and Aaron did exactly as God had commanded: Aaron raised the staff and struck the water in the Nile River in the sight of Pharaoh and his courtiers, and all the water in the river turned into blood.

21 The fish in the river died and the river became putrid, so that the Egyptians were unable to drink water from the river. There was blood everywhere in Egypt, wherever the river water was drawn. The plague also affected the river in Goshen, where the Jews lived, in order that Pharaoh not have the opportunity to say that the Nile, the Egyptian's deity, was immune to God's plague there.¹⁰⁵ The people were, however, able to dig wells that provided fresh water. This made it clear that the object of the plague was only the Egyptians' deity.¹⁰⁶

22 The necromancers of Egypt then did likewise, changing some of the well water into blood with their demon-conjuring incantations.¹⁰⁷ So Pharaoh rationalized that Moses and Aaron were just performing magic, which was commonplace in Egypt. **His heart stiffened and he paid no heed to Moses and Aaron, just as God had said.**

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17 I am now going to strike the water...and it will turn into blood: Water is cold, whereas blood is warm. There are two types of coldness and two types of warmth: a person whose primary orientation in life is material will be cold to spiritual concerns and warm to material concerns; a person whose primary orientation is spiritual will be cold to material concerns and warm to spiritual concerns.

River water—particularly the water of the Nile—signifies the coldness of materiality toward spiritual concerns. As we have noted, the annual flooding of the Nile gave the Egyptians the impression that their sustenance was due simply to the regular, orderly functioning of nature, without any need of recourse

to a supernatural God. Such an environment fostered indifference to the notion that there is a Divine force that surpasses and controls nature.

In contrast, rainwater signifies the coldness of spirituality toward material concerns. The Land of Israel's dependence upon rainwater was conducive to keeping its inhabitants aware of their dependence on God's good graces for their sustenance. This awareness of God bred a healthy indifference toward the façade of the laws of nature's stranglehold over life.

The very first of the ten plagues, the ten stages by which Egypt was subdued, was transforming the coldness of its water into the heat of blood. Allegorically, this signifies the transformation of cold indiffer-

¹⁰⁴ Rashi on 7:25. ¹⁰⁵ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 11, p. 31-32. ¹⁰⁶ *Hitva'aduyot 5747*, vol. 2, p. 342. ¹⁰⁷ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 31, pp. 36-37, and notes 30-31. ¹⁰⁸ *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 121.

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23 ואתפני פרעה ועל לביתו
ולא שני לבה אף לך: 24 והפרו
כל־מצראי סחרני נהרא מיא
למשתני ארי לא יכילו למשתני
ממיא דבנהרא: 25 ושלימו
שבקא יומין בתר דמחא יי ית
נהרא: 26 ואמר יי למשה עול
לות פרעה ותימר לה כדנן אמר
יי שלח ית עמי ויפלחון קדמי:
27 ואם מסרב את לשלחא הא אנא
מחי ית כל־תחומך בעורד עניא:
28 וירבי נהרא עורד עניא
ויסקון ויעלון בביתך ובאידרון
בית משכבך ועל ערסתך
ובבית עבדיך ובעמך ובתנוריך
ובאצותיך: 29 וקר ובעמך
ובכל־עבדיך יסקון עורד עניא:
8:1 ואמר יי למשה אמר לאהרן
ארים ית ירך בחוטרך על נהרא
על ארתיא ועל אנמיא ואסיק ית
עורד עניא על ארעא דמצרים:

23 ויפן פרעה ויבא אל־ביתו ולא־שָׁת לבו גַם־לְזֹאת:
24 ויחפרו כל־מצרים סביבת היאר מים לשָׁתוֹת כִּי
לֹא יָכִלוּ לְשָׁתוֹת מִמֵּי הַיָּאֵר: 25 ויִמְלֹא שְׁבַעַת יָמִים
אַחֲרֵי הַכּוֹת־יְהוָה אֶת־הַיָּאֵר: פ
26 ויאמר יהוה אל־משה בא אל־פרעה ואמרת
אליו כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה שְׁלַח אֶת־עַמִּי ויעבדני:
27 ואם־מֵאֵן אַתָּה לְשַׁלַּח הַנֵּה אֲנֹכִי נֹגֵף אֶת־כָּל־גְּבוּלְךָ
בְּצַפְרֹדָעִים: 28 ושרץ היאר צַפְרֹדָעִים וְעָלוּ וּבָאוּ
בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבַתְּחִר מִשְׁכַּבְךָ וְעַל־מִטְתְּךָ וּבְבֵית עַבְדֶּיךָ
וּבְעִמְךָ וּבַתְּנוּרֶיךָ וּבְמִשְׁאֲרוֹתֶיךָ: 29 וּבַכָּה וּבַעֲמֹךָ
וּבְכָל־עַבְדֶּיךָ יַעֲלוּ הַצַּפְרֹדָעִים: 8:1 ויאמר יהוה אל־
משה אָמַר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן נִטְהַר אֶת־יָרְדֵךָ בְּמִטְפֶּךָ עַל־הַנְּהָרוֹת
עַל־הַיָּאֲרִים וְעַל־הָאֲנָמִים וְהֵעַל אֶת־הַצַּפְרֹדָעִים עַל־
אָרְצוֹ מִצְרַיִם:

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23 "מגפה" אינו לשון מיתה אלא לשון מכה. וכן: "ונגפו
אשה הרה"⁴⁴, אינו לשון מיתה. וכן: "ובטרים יתנגפו
רגליכם"⁴⁵, "פון־תגף באבן רגלך"⁴⁶, "ולאבן נגף"⁴⁷.
28 ועלו. מן היאור: בביתך. ואחר כך בבית עבדיך.
הוא התחיל בעצה תחלה — "ויאמר אל־עמו"⁴⁸, וממנו
התחילה הפרענות: 29 ובכה ובעמך. בתוך מעיהם
נכנסין ומקרקרין:

23 גַם־לְזֹאת. למופת המטה שנהפך לתנין, ולא לזה
של דם: 25 ויִמְלֹא. מנין שבעת ימים שלא שב היאור
לקדמותו, שהיתה המכה משמשת רביע חדש, ושלושה
חלקים היה מעיד ומתרה בהם: 27 ואם־מֵאֵן אַתָּה.
ואם סרבן אתה. "מאן" — כמו "ממאן" "מסרב", אלא
בנוי האדם על שם המופעל, כמו: "שלו"⁴², "שקט",
"סר וזעף"⁴³. נגף את־כָּל־גְּבוּלְךָ. מכה, וכן כל־לשון

42. יחזקאל כג, מב. איוב טו, יב. 43. מלכים א, כ, מג. 44. שמות כא, כב. 45. ירמיה יג, טו. 46. תהלים צא, יב. 47. ישעיה ח, יד. 48. שמות א, ט.

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for us, so to speak, to invite the king into his palace until it has been scrubbed clean. But when God takes the initiative, as He did here, He can begin by "doing good." When He reveals His presence, the revelation itself automatically drives out the evil.

Yet, we do not necessarily have to wait for God to take the initiative in order to take advantage of the second method. We can ourselves elicit intense Divine revelations that can dispel and displace negative influences, obviating the need for struggling with them. The advantage of this method is that we are spared the danger of sullyng ourselves by contending directly with negativity. In the words of the *Tanya*, "he who wrestles

with a filthy person is bound to become soiled himself."¹¹⁴

One sure way of eliciting such Divine revelations is by studying the inner dimension of the Torah. This study has the added advantage of enabling us to replace our inborn cold indifference to Divinity with warm enthusiasm.¹¹⁵

A frog's natural habitat is water; for a frog to jump into a piping hot oven is an act of self-sacrifice. God did not let this selfless act of obedience to His will go unrewarded: when it was time to end this plague, "the frogs in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields died"¹¹⁶—but those in the ovens remained alive.¹¹⁷

114. *Tanya*, chapter 28 (35b). 115. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, pp. 123-125. 116. Below, 8:8. 117. *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Vaeira* 182.

23 Pharaoh turned and went into his palace, paying no attention even to this, just as he paid no attention to how Aaron's staff turned into a serpent. In the both cases, he convinced himself that Moses and Aaron were just performing magic.¹⁰⁹

24 All the Egyptians dug around the river for water to drink, since they could not drink any water from the river.

25 Seven full days passed from the time God struck the river until the blood reverted to water, but Pharaoh did not relent.

Each plague lasted a month: Moses and Aaron spent three quarters of the month informing Pharaoh about what was going to happen and warning him of the consequences of his obstinacy,¹¹⁰ and the plague itself lasted a week. Thus, the ten plagues spanned a time-period of ten months.

The Second Plague: Frogs

26 On the 15th of Tamuz, immediately after the first plague ended, God told Moses to announce the second plague: frogs. He said to Moses, "Come to Pharaoh and say to him: This is what God has said: 'Let My people go so they may serve Me.

27 If you refuse to let them leave, I will plague all your territory with frogs.

28 The river will swarm with frogs, and when they emerge, they will go first into your palace and your bedroom and on to your bed, and then into the homes of your courtiers and among your people, and into your ovens and kneading bowls. Since you were the first to propose oppressing the people, you will be the first to suffer.

29 The frogs will enter alive into you, your people, and all your courtiers and croak from within your stomachs."

8:1 After three weeks, on the 8th of Av, God said to Moses, "This plague involves the Nile river, as well, so you will not initiate it, either. Instead, say to Aaron, 'Raise your hand with your staff over the rivers, the canals, and the ponds, and make the frogs come up over the land of Egypt.'"

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

28 Into your ovens: As explained above,¹¹¹ the plague of blood signified how Egypt's cold indifference toward God must be replaced with warm enthusiasm for it. Once this has been accomplished, the second stage is to replace the erstwhile Egyptian enthusiasm for materiality with cold indifference to it. Inasmuch as frogs are cold creatures, their invasion of the Egyptians' ovens signified how the heat of Egyptian materialism was taken over by cold apathy.¹¹²

When we set out to welcome God into any particular aspect of our lives, the normal, logical procedure is to first rid ourselves of those elements of our lives that

are antithetical to Divinity and only then to do whatever it is that we hope will raise our (or the world's) Divine consciousness. In the words of the Psalms, "turn from evil, and [only then] do good."¹¹³

Yet here, we see the opposite course was followed. First the evil (the cold Nile river) was turned into good (the hot blood), and only then was the evil (the hot Egyptian ovens) neutralized (by the cold frogs).

The difference lies in who is taking the initiative. When *we* take the initiative and work using our own, limited resources, we must first "turn from evil" before we "do good," for it is simply not appropriate

^{109.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 26, p. 54, note 43. ^{110.} See *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, pp. 58-60, vol. 31, p. 39. ^{111.} On v. 17. ^{112.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 1, p. 123. ^{113.} Psalms 34:15.

— ONKELOS —

2 וארים אהרן ית ידה על מִשָּׁא דמִצְרַיִם וסִלְקוּ עוֹרְדֵעֲנִיא וּחְפוּ ית אַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם: 3 ועבדו כן תרשיא בלחשיהון ואסיקו ית עוֹרְדֵעֲנִיא על אַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם: 4 וקרא פרעה למִשֶׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן וְאָמַר צְלוּ קָדָם יי ויעדי עוֹרְדֵעֲנִיא מני ומעמי ואשלח ית עֲמָא וידבֹּחֹן קָדָם יי: 5 ואמר מִשֶׁה לפרעה שאַל לך גְּבוּרָא וְהֵב לִי זֶמֶן לְאִמְתִּי אֲצַלִּי עִלְּהּ וְעַל עֲבָדֶיהָ וְעַל עַמֶּךָ לְשִׁיבָאָה עוֹרְדֵעֲנִיא מִנְּךָ וּמִבְּתֵיךָ לְחֹדֶר דְּבִנְהָרָא יִשְׁתַּאֲרֹן: 6 ואמר למִחֹר וְאָמַר בְּפִתְגָמְךָ בְּדִיל דְּתִדַּע אָרִי לִית כִּי אֶלְהֵנָּא: 7 ויעדון עוֹרְדֵעֲנִיא מִנְּךָ וּמִבְּתֵיךָ וּמִעֲבָדֶיהָ וּמִעַמֶּךָ לְחֹדֶר דְּבִנְהָרָא יִשְׁתַּאֲרֹן: 8 ונפק מִשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן מִלּוֹת פְּרַעֲה וְצַלִּי מִשֶׁה קָדָם יי עַל עֵיסַק עוֹרְדֵעֲנִיא דִּי שׁוּי לְפִרְעָה: 9 ועבד יי בְּפִתְגָמָא דְּמִשֶׁה וּמִיתו עוֹרְדֵעֲנִיא מִן בְּתֵיא מִן דְּרֵתָא וּמִן חֻקְלָתָא: 10 וכנשו יתהון דגורין דגורין וסריאו על אַרְעָא:

2 וַיֵּט אֶהָרֶן אֶת־יָדוֹ עַל מִיַּמֵּי מִצְרַיִם וַתַּעַל הַצְּפֹרֶדַּע וַתִּכַּס אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: 3 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ־בֶן הַחֶרְטָמִּים בְּלִמְיָהֶם וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת־הַצְּפֹרֶדַּעִים עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: 4 וַיִּקְרָא פְּרַעֲה לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר הֲעִתִּירוּ אֵלַי יְהוָה וַיִּסַּר הַצְּפֹרֶדַּעִים מִפְּנֵי וּמִעַמִּי וְאֲשַׁלְּחָה אֶת־הָעָם וַיִּזְבְּחוּ לַיהוָה: 5 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְפְרַעֲה הֲתִפְאָר עָלַי לְמַתִּי א אֲעִתִּיר לָךְ וְלַעֲבָדֶיךָ וְלַעַמְּךָ לְהַכְרִית הַצְּפֹרֶדַּעִים מִמֶּךָ וּמִבְּתֵיךָ רַק בִּיאֵר תִּשְׁאֲרָנָה: 6 וַיֹּאמֶר לְמַחֵר וַיֹּאמֶר כְּדָבְרְךָ לְמַעַן תִּדַּע בִּי־אִין כִּי־הוּא אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

◆ חמישי 7 וסרו הצפֹרֶדַעִים מִמֶּךָ וּמִבְּתֵיךָ וּמִעֲבָדֶיךָ וּמִעַמְּךָ רַק בִּיאֵר תִּשְׁאֲרָנָה: 8 ויצא מִשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן מִעַם פְּרַעֲה וַיַּצַּעַק מִשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה עַל־דְּבַר הַצְּפֹרֶדַּעִים אֲשֶׁר־שָׂם לְפְרַעֲה: 9 ויעש יְהוָה כְּדָבַר מֹשֶׁה וַיָּמַתוּ הַצְּפֹרֶדַּעִים מִן־הַבְּתִים מִן־הַחֲצֹרֹת וּמִן־הַשָּׂדֶת: 10 וַיַּצְּבֵרוּ אֹתָם חֲמָרִם חֲמָרִם וַתִּבְאֵשׁ הָאֶרֶץ:

— RASHI —

אֶתְפַּלֵּל. עֲבָשׁוּ שְׁנָאֲמַר "לְמַתִּי" — מִשְׁמַע, אֲנִי הַיּוֹם אֶתְפַּלֵּל עֲלֶיךָ שְׂיִכְרְתוּ הַצְּפֹרֶדַּעִים לְזִמְן שְׁתִּקְבַּע עָלַי, אָמַר לְאַיִזָּה יוֹם תִּרְצֶה שְׂיִכְרְתוּ. "אֲעִתִּיר" "הֲעִתִּירוּ" "וְהֲעִתְרֵתִי", וְלֹא נֶאֱמַר "אֲעִתֵּר" "עִתְרוּ" וְ"עִתְרֵתִי", מִפְּנֵי שְׂכָל לְשׁוֹן "עִתֵּר" הַרְבוֹת פְּלֵל הוּא, וְכַאֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר "הַרְבוּ" "אֲרַבָּה" "וְהַרְבִּיתִי" לְשׁוֹן מִפְּעִיל, כִּי יֹאמַר "אֲעִתִּיר" "הֲעִתִּירוּ" "וְהֲעִתְרֵתִי" — דְּבָרִים. וְאֵב לְכֻלָּם: "וְהֲעִתְרֵתֶם עָלַי דְּבָרֵיכֶם"⁵⁴ — הַרְבִּיתֶם: 6 וַיֹּאמֶר לְמַחֵר. הַתְּפַלֵּל הַיּוֹם שְׂיִכְרְתוּ לְמַחֵר: 8 וַיַּצַּא... וַיַּצַּעַק. מִיָּד, שְׂיִכְרְתוּ לְמַחֵר: 10 חֲמָרִם חֲמָרִם. צְבוּרִים צְבוּרִים, כְּתִרְגוּמוֹ: "דְּגוּרִין" — גְּלִין:

2 וַתַּעַל הַצְּפֹרֶדַּע. צְפֹרֶדַּע אַחַת הֵיחָדָה, וְהָיוּ מִכִּין אוֹתָהּ וְהָיָא מִתְּזוֹת נְחִילִים נְחִילִים. זְהוּ מִדְּרָשׁוֹ. וּפְשׁוּטוֹ, יֵשׁ לוֹמַר שְׂרוּץ הַצְּפֹרֶדַּעִים קוֹרָא לְשׁוֹן יְחִידוֹת. וְכֵן: "וַתְּהִי הַכֶּסֶם"⁵⁵ — הִרְחִישָׁה, פִּידוּלִייר "א בְּלַעֲוִי"⁵⁶. אִף "וַתַּעַל הַצְּפֹרֶדַּע" — גְּרִינוּלִייר "א בְּלַעֲוִי": 5 הַתִּפְאָר עָלַי. כְּמוֹ: "הִתְפָּאֵר הַגִּרְוֹן עַל הַחוּצָב בּוֹ"⁵⁷, מִשְׁתַּבַּח לּוֹמַר: אֲנִי גְדוֹל מִמֶּךָ, וְנִטִּיר בְּלַעֲוִי"⁵⁸. וְכֵן "הַתִּפְאָר עָלַי" — הַשְׁתַּבַּח לְהַתְחַכֵּם וְלִשְׂאוֹל דְּכַר גְּדוֹל וְלוֹמַר שְׂלֹא אוֹכַל לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ: לְמַתִּי אֲעִתִּיר לָךְ. אֶת־אֲשֶׁר אֲעִתִּיר לָךְ הַיּוֹם עַל הַכְּרַתַּת הַצְּפֹרֶדַּעִים, לְמַתִּי תִרְצֶה שְׂיִכְרְתוּ, וְתִרְאֶה אִם אֲשַׁלְּמִם דְּכַרִּי לְמוֹעֵד שְׁתִּקְבַּע לִי. אֵלוּ נֶאֱמַר "מַתִּי אֲעִתִּיר" הִיָּה מִשְׁמַע מַתִּי

49. שמוות ח, יג. 50. קבוצת כנים. 51. קבוצת צפֹרֶדַעִים. 52. ישעיה י, טו. 53. להתפאר, להשתבח. 54. יחזקאל לה, יג.

God...," which implies exerting oneself in prayer. 121. *Sichot Kodesh* 5740, vol. 1, pp. 816, 826. 122. *Hitva'aduyot* 5744, vol. 2, pp. 795-796, 824-830. 123. *Sichot Kodesh* 5740, vol. 1, p. 826. 124. Numbers 12:3, cf. Exodus 16:7-8. 125. *Sefer HaMa'amarim* 5709, p.

2 Aaron raised his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the swarm of frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt in the following way: one frog emerged from the water, but when the Egyptians struck it, it miraculously split into many swarms. Frogs also swarmed out of the river in Goshen, where the Jews lived, again, in order that Pharaoh not have the opportunity to say that the river—which was the Egyptian’s deity—was immune to God’s plague there.¹¹⁸

3 The necromancers did the same with their incantations: they too made a frog that split into many swarms¹¹⁹ of frogs come up over the land of Egypt. So Pharaoh could again rationalize that Moses and Aaron were performing magic.

4 Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Entreat God to remove the frogs from me and my people, and I will let the people leave so that they may sacrifice to God!”

5 Moses replied to Pharaoh, “Try and pride yourself over me by daring me to do something you don’t think I can do: have God remove the frogs at a specific time. **For what time shall I pray—for you and your courtiers and your people—to eradicate the frogs from you and your homes so that they remain only in the river?”**

6 Pharaoh would have preferred to be rid of the frogs immediately. But he still thought that Moses and Aaron were just practicing magic, and that if God was involved in this plague at all, it was because Moses and Aaron were using magical means to conjure Him into doing their bidding. He therefore assumed it would take them some time to perform the rites necessary to end the plague.¹²⁰ With this in mind, **he replied, “Pray now that they disappear at least by tomorrow.”¹²¹ So Moses said, “It will be as you say, so that you will recognize that there is none like God, our God.**

- ◆ **Fifth Reading 7 “The frogs will depart from you, as well as from your houses and your courtiers and your people, and they will remain only in the river,** as a constant reminder of how this plague proved your deity to be powerless against God.”¹²²

8 Moses and Aaron then left Pharaoh’s presence, and Moses cried out to God concerning the frogs that He had brought upon Pharaoh, that He should remove them the next day, which happened to be the seventh day of the plague in any case.¹²³

9 God did as Moses asked, and the frogs in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields died.

10 The Egyptians piled them into heaps, and the land stank.

— ❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧ —

5 Pride yourself over me: Moses, the humblest of all people,¹²⁴ certainly did not intend to boast, even before Pharaoh. Rather, his total lack of ego made him a transparent vehicle for fulfilling God’s purposes, and

he always identified fully with God, who was acting through him. It was in this sense that he dared Pharaoh to “pride yourself over me.”¹²⁵

^{118.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 11, p. 31-32. ^{119.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 16, p. 82, note 21. ^{120.} This is why he said (v. 4, above), “entreat

— ONKELOS —
 11 וְחָזָא פְּרַעָה אַרְי הוּת רַחֲמָא
 וְיָקַר ית לְבָה וְלֹא קַבֵּל מִנְהוֹן
 בְּמֵא דְמִלִּיל יִי? 12 וְאָמַר יִי לְמִשָּׁה
 אָמַר לְאַהֲרֹן אָרַם ית חוּטְרָף
 וּמְחִי ית עֶפְרָא דְאַרְעָא וְיַהִי
 לְקַלְמָתָא בְּכַל-אַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם:
 13 וְעַבְדוּ כֵן וְאַרְם אַהֲרֹן ית
 יְדָה בְּחוּטְרָה וּמְחָא ית עֶפְרָא
 דְאַרְעָא וְהוּת קַלְמָתָא בְּאַנְשָׁא
 וּבְבַעֲרִיא כְּל-עֶפְרָא דְאַרְעָא הוּת
 קַלְמָתָא בְּכַל-אַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם:
 14 וְעַבְדוּ כֵן חֲרָשִׂיא בְּלִחְשִׁיהוֹן
 לְאַפְקָא ית קַלְמָתָא וְלֹא יִכִּילוּ
 וְהוּת קַלְמָתָא בְּאַנְשָׁא וּבְבַעֲרִיא:
 15 וְאָמְרוּ חֲרָשִׂיא לְפְרַעָה מְחָא מִן
 קָדָם יִי הִיא וְאַתְקַף לְבָא דְפְרַעָה
 וְלֹא קַבֵּיל מִנְהוֹן בְּמֵא דְמִלִּיל יִי?

11 וַיֵּרָא פְּרַעָה כִּי הִיָּתְהָל הַרְוֹחָהּ וְהִכְבִּד אֶת-לְבָבוֹ וְלֹא
 שָׁמַע אֱלֹהִים כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה: ם
 12 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה אָמַר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן נִטָּה אֶת-
 מִטְּיָךְ וְהָד אֶת-עַפְרַת הָאָרֶץ וְהִיָּה לְכֹנֶם בְּכַל-אַרְץ
 מִצְרַיִם: 13 וַיַּעֲשׂוּכֵן וַיִּטְּ אַהֲרֹן אֶת-יָדוֹ בְּמִטְהוֹ וַיִּד
 אֶת-עַפְרַת הָאָרֶץ וְתַהִי הַכֹּנֶם בְּאָדָם וּבְבַהֲמָה כָּל-
 עַפְרַת הָאָרֶץ הִיָּה כֹנֵם בְּכַל-אַרְץ מִצְרַיִם: 14 וַיַּעֲשׂוּ
 כֵן הַחֲרָטְמִים בְּלִטְיָהֶם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת-הַכֹּנֵם וְלֹא יִכְלוּ
 וְתַהִי הַכֹּנֶם בְּאָדָם וּבְבַהֲמָה: 15 וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַחֲרָטְמִים אֶל-
 פְּרַעָה אַצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים הוּא וַיַּחֲזֹק לָב-פְּרַעָה וְלֹא-שָׁמַע
 אֱלֹהִים כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה: ם

— RASHI —

אֶהָרֹן: 13 וְתַהִי הַכֹּנֶם. הַרְחִישָׁה, פִּידוּלִירִיא בְּלַעְזוֹ?
 14 לְהוֹצִיא אֶת-הַכֹּנֵם. לְבִרְאָתָם וְלְהוֹצִיאֵם מִמְּקוֹם
 אַחֵר: וְלֹא יִכְלוּ. שְׂאִין הַשֵּׁד שׁוֹלֵט עַל בְּרִיָּה פְּחוּתָה
 מִכְּשֶׁעוֹרָה: 15 אַצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים הוּא. מִכָּה זֶה אֵינָה עַל
 יְדֵי כְּשָׁפִים, מֵאֵת הַמְּקוֹם הַיָּא: כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה'. "וְלֹא-
 יִשְׁמַע אֶלְכֶם פְּרַעָה"⁶².

11 וְהִכְבִּד אֶת-לְבָבוֹ. לְשׁוֹן פְּעוּל הוּא, כְּמוֹ: "הִלּוֹךְ
 וְנִטְוֵע"⁵⁵. וְכֵן: "וְהִכּוֹת אֶת-מוֹאֲב"⁵⁶, "וְשָׂאוֹל לוֹ
 בְּאֱלֹהִים"⁵⁷, "הִכָּה וּפְצַע"⁵⁸: כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה'. וְהִיָּכֵן דִּבְרֵי?
 — "וְלֹא יִשְׁמַע אֶלְכֶם פְּרַעָה"⁵⁹: 12 אָמַר אֶל-אַהֲרֹן. לֹא
 הִיָּה הָעֶפְרַת כְּדַאי לְלָקוֹת עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה, לְפִי שֶׁהִגֵּן עָלָיו
 כְּשֶׁהֲרַג אֶת הַמִּצְרִי — "וַיִּטְמְנְהוּ בַחֹל"⁶⁰, וְלָקַה עַל יְדֵי

55. בראשית יב, ט. 56. מלכים ב, כד. 57. שמואל א, כב, יג. 58. מלכים א, לו. 59. שמואל א, ד. 60. שמואל ב, יב. 61. קבוצת כנים. 62. שמואל א, ד.

INNER DIMENSIONS

[12] **It will turn into lice:** The Hebrew word for "louse" (כִּינָה) is akin to the word for "appellation" or "descriptive name" (כִּינוֹי). Addressing or referring to someone by a descriptive name or nickname is one step removed from using the person's proper name.

The Torah in fact will later place great emphasis on "destroying the names" of idols, and inform us that the way this is done is by refraining from referring to these false gods by their proper names.¹³³

With regard to God, the use of appellations alludes to the process whereby the Divinity within God's proper Names is diminished or "stepped-down" by altering these Names or by referring to God by other names altogether. This process is, as we have seen, the spiritual essence of exile, and is alluded to in the verse that opens the Book of Exodus: "These

are the names...who came to Egypt," Egypt being synonymous with constriction and contraction. It is only through the dimming of Divine light and consciousness that created beings can suffer the delusion of thinking that they exist independently and owe nothing to God.

Specifically, the numerical value of the word for "lice" (כִּינִים) is 120, the number of permutations of the Name *Elokim* (אלהים),¹³⁴ which, among all of God's Names, indicates the contraction of Divinity into the guise of nature, as has been explained previously.

Smiting Egypt with lice, then, was turning the very essence of evil against itself. God responded to evil's reliance on diminished Divine consciousness by diminishing the Divinity sustaining it even further, thereby cutting off its life force altogether.¹³⁵

133. Deuteronomy 12:3; Rashi *ad loc.* 134. *Pri Etz Chaim, Chag HaMatzot* 7. 135. *Or HaTorah, Bereishit*, pp. 124b-125a, 444ab.

11 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he continued to harden his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as God had said,¹²⁶ since his necromancers had also produced swarms of frogs, allowing him to rationalize that this plague, too, was just magic.¹²⁷

The Third Plague: Lice

12 So, on the 15th of Av, God told Moses to announce the third plague—lice—and to warn Pharaoh about it. But Pharaoh did not listen, so, after warning Pharaoh for three weeks, on the 8th of Elul, God said to Moses, “This plague involves the dirt, which you used to hide the Egyptian you slew.¹²⁸ Therefore, in recognition of its help, you shall not initiate this plague, either. Instead, say to Aaron, ‘Raise your staff and strike the dust of the earth, and it will turn into lice throughout the land of Egypt.’ ”

13 They did this. Aaron raised his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and the swarm of lice came upon man and beast. All the dust of the earth turned into lice throughout the land of Egypt. This plague, too, struck the Jews in Goshen, for it was necessary to demonstrate to Pharaoh’s necromancers that it affected *all* of Egypt and therefore could only be an act of God, rather than affecting only a *part* of Egypt, which could allow them to think that Moses and Aaron produced it by means of magic.¹²⁹

14 The necromancers tried likewise to bring forth lice from some other source with their demon-conjuring incantations, but they could not, for the demons had no power over anything smaller than a barleycorn, the minimum size a bone from a corpse must be to carry defilement. **The swarm of lice remained on man and beast.**

15 The necromancers said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God, and not magic, for we cannot imitate it.” But nevertheless, since this plague was produced by something Aaron did, Pharaoh rationalized that it *was* done by some kind of magic, but that Moses and Aaron were more skilled magicians than his necromancers.¹³⁰ So Pharaoh’s heart stiffened and he paid no heed to Moses and Aaron, just as God had said.¹³¹

CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

12 It will turn into lice: The louse is a parasite; it lives off animals and people without contributing anything to their lives (except, perhaps, a reminder to improve their hygiene!). It is therefore seen as a metaphor for evil, inasmuch as evil thrives by sucking the life force out of holiness rather than by its own merits.

Just as a louse can attach itself to a person only if his hygiene is lax, evil can only suck vitality out of holiness when we allow our Divine consciousness to lapse and either fall into misdeed or the apathy towards ho-

liness that leaves us vulnerable to the enticements of materialism.

By infesting the Egyptians with lice, God was in effect showing them what their own philosophy of life makes them into. Their indifference to Divinity made them into “parasites”; all their achievements in literature, art, architecture, science, and so on, served only to aggrandize themselves and enhance the material aspect of life. As such, they were siphoning vitality off of the forces of holiness in the world rather than aiding them.¹³²

^{126.} Above, 7:4. ^{127.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, p. 31. ^{128.} Above, 2:12. ^{129.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 11, p. 31-32. ^{130.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, p. 31. ^{131.} Above, 7:4. ^{132.} *Or HaTorah, Bereishit*, pp. 124b-125a, 444ab.

— ONKELOS —

16 ואמר ?? למשה אקדם בצפרא ואתעתד קדם פרעה הא נפיק למיא ותימר לה פדנן אמר ?? שלח עמי ויפלחון קדמי: 17 ארי אם ליתך משלח ית עמי הא אגא משלח בך ובעבדיך ובעמך ובבתיך ית ערובא ויתמלון בתי מצראי ית ערובא ואף ארעא דאגון עלה: 18 ואפריש ביומא ההוא ית ארעא דגשן די עמי שרי עלה בדיל דלא למחוי תמן ערובא בדיל דתדע ארי אגא ?? שליט בגו ארעא: 19 ואשוי פרקן לעמי ועל עמך איתי מחא למחר יהי אתא הדין: 20 ועבד ?? פן ואתא ערובא תקוף לבית פרעה ולבית עבדוהי ובכל-ארעא דמצרים אתחבלת ארעא מן קדם ערובא: 21 ויקרא פרעה למשה ולאהרן ואמר איזילו דבחו קדם אלהכון בארעא: 22 ואמר משה לא תקון למעבד פן ארי בעירא דמצראי דחלין לה מנה אנחנא נסבין לדבחה קדם ?? אלהנא הא נדבח ית בעירא דמצראי דחלין לה ואגון יהון חון הלא ימרון למרגמנא:

16 ויאמר יהוה אל־משה השכם בבקר והתייצב לפני פרעה הנה יוצא המיזמה ואמרת אליו כה אמר יהוה שלח עמי ויעבדני: 17 כי אם־אינך משלח את־עמי הנני משליח בך ובעבדיך ובעמך ובבתיך את־הערב ומלאו בתי מצרים את־הערב וגם האדמה אשר־הם עליה: 18 והפליתי ביום ההוא את־ארץ גשן אשר עמי עמד עליה לבלתי היות־שם ערב למען תדע כי אני יהוה בקרב הארץ:

◆ שישי 19 ושמתו פדת בין עמי ובין עמך למחר יהיה האת הזה: 20 ויעש יהוה כן ויבא ערב כבד ביתה פרעה ובית עבדיו ובכל־ארץ מצרים תשחת הארץ מפני הערב: 21 ויקרא פרעה אל־משה ולאהרן ויאמר לכו זבחו לאלהיכם בארץ: 22 ויאמר משה לא נכון לעשות כן כי תועבת מצרים נזבחה ליהוה אלהינו הן נזבחה את־תועבת מצרים לעיניהם ולא יסקלנו:

— RASHI —

מפך: למען תדע כי אני ה' בקרב הארץ. אף־על־פי ששכינתי בשמים, גורתי מתקימת בתחתונים: 19 ושמתו פדת. שיבדיל בין עמי ובין עמך: 20 תשחת הארץ. נשחתה הארץ — "אתחבלת ארעא": 21 זבחו לאלהיכם בארץ. במקומכם, ולא תלכו במדבר: 22 תועבת מצרים. יראת מצרים, כמו: "וילמלכם תועבת בני־עמון"⁶⁶. ואצל ישראל קורא אותה "תועבה". ועוד יש לומר בלשון אחר: "תועבת מצרים" — דבר שנאוי הוא למצרים, וביחה שאגנו זבחים, שהרי יראתם אנו זבחים: ולא יסקלנו. בתמיה:

17 משליח בך. מגרה בך. וכן: "ושן־בהמות אשלח בם"⁶³ — לשון שסוי, אינטיצייר"ר בלעז: את־הערב. כל־מיני חיות רעות ונחשים ועקרבים בערבוביא, והיו משחיתים בהם. ויש טעם בדבר באגדה, בכל־מקד ומקד למה זו ולמה זו. בטכסיסי מלחמות מלכים בא עליהם, כסדר מלכות בשצרה על עיר, בתחלה מקלקל מעינוגותיה, ואחר כך תוקעין עליהם ומריעין בשופרות ליראם ולבהלם. וכן הצפרדעים מקרקרים והומים וכו', כדאיתא במדרש רבי תנחומא⁶⁵: 18 והפליתי. והפרשתי, וכן "והפלה ה"⁶⁶, וכן "לא נפלאה היא ממך"⁶⁷ — לא מבדלת ומפרשת היא

63. דברים לב, כד. 64. לדרבן, לשש"ת. 65. מרשת בא סימן ד. 66. שמות ט, ד. 67. דברים ל, יא.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

tically Jewish can we properly evaluate each element of non-Jewish culture and choose what to co-opt and what to reject.

By the same token, it is imperative for us—in such times, especially—to delineate clearly who is a Jew and who is not. As we will see,¹³⁹ Jewish identity is not simply a matter of a preference of faith, but is determined by a person's spiritual anatomy. Thus, when the dominant culture celebrates the cause of absolute

equivalence it becomes especially crucial for us to educate ourselves regarding what it means to be a Jew and what Jewish values are.

Since Jews and non-Jews are distinguished by their spiritual anatomy, this inherent distinction is part of their essence, and not a function of their behavior—or even their beliefs. In Egypt, there were Jews who were so immersed in Egyptian culture and society that they preferred not to leave. Nonetheless, these Jews, were

The Fourth Plague: The Mixed Horde

16 So, on the 15th of Elul, God told Moses to announce the fourth plague—the mixed horde—and warn Pharaoh about it. **God said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and station yourself before Pharaoh as he is going out to the water, and you shall say to him: This is what God has said: ‘Let My people go so that they may serve Me.**

17 **For if you do not let My people leave, I will incite a mixed horde of wild beasts, snakes, and scorpions against you, your courtiers, your people, and your homes.** I will incite them to be especially vicious, and they will harm you and wreak destruction throughout your land. I will bring them into Egypt from the surrounding areas, and they will miraculously come in a chaotic mixture. This will be more terrifying than if they were to have come naturally, species by species.¹³⁶ **The houses of the Egyptians will be filled with the mixed horde of wild beasts, as will the ground upon which they stand be filled with snakes and scorpions.**

18 **On that day, unlike the first three plagues,¹³⁷ I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people dwell, so that there will not be any mixed horde there. Thus you will realize that I am God not only in heaven but also on earth, in the midst of the land.**

- ◆ *Sixth Reading* 19 **“I will make a redemptive distinction between My people and your people. This miraculous sign will come about tomorrow.”**

20 But Pharaoh did not heed Moses’ warning, so, on Tishrei 8, 2448, **God did this, and a huge mixed horde of wild beasts came upon the homes of Pharaoh and of his courtiers; throughout the land of Egypt the land was devastated by the mixed horde of wild beasts.** Since Moses and Aaron did not perform a specific act to cause this plague, the necromancers had no illusions that it was performed by magic, and therefore did not try to imitate it.¹³⁸

21 **Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Go and sacrifice to your God in this land.** You can serve him here and there is no need for you to make a journey into the desert.”

22 **Moses said, “It would not be proper to do so, for it is the deity of Egypt that we would sacrifice to God, our God.** We are going to sacrifice sheep, one of the animals you worship as an idol. **If we were to sacrifice the deity of the Egyptians before their very eyes, would they not stone us?!**

✧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ✧

19 **I will make a redemptive distinction between My people and your people:** The simple reason for this distinction is that unlike the first three plagues, there was no reason this time to afflict the Jews along with the Egyptians, so God spared them from this plague.

On a deeper level, however, there is a lesson here for us, too. The main miracle of this plague and its most frightening facet was that the horde attacked as a wild, anarchic mixture rather than species by species. Similarly, it is specifically when the established boundaries that have always kept society intact are challenged

and defied that we must strengthen the conceptual boundaries between Jewish and non-Jewish values, attitudes, and behavior.

Sometimes, the spirit of the times fosters the impression that boundaries are a bad thing, that the best way of exercising our freedom is by doing away with restraint and convention. Although there may sometimes be value in questioning the entrenched mores of secular society, this must be done from a stance of deep commitment to the Divine values of the Torah. Only when we are clear about what values are authen-

136. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 11, p. 28. 137. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 11, p. 31-32. 138. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, p. 31. 139. Below, on 19:5.

— ONKELOS —

23 מהלך תלתא יומין גזיל במדברא ונדבח קדם יי אלהנא כמא דיימר לנא: 24 ואמר פרעה אנא אשלח יתכון ותדבחון קדם יי אלהכון במדברא לחוד ארקקא לא תרקון למיזל עלו עלי: 25 ואמר משה הא אנא נפיק מעמך ואצלי קדם יי ויעדי ערובא מפרעה מעבדוהי ומעמה מחר לחוד לא יוסף פרעה לשקרא בדיל דלא לשלחא ית עמא לדבחא קדם יי: 26 ונפק משה מן קדם פרעה וצלי קדם יי: 27 ועבד יי כפתגמא דמשה ואעדי ערובא מפרעה מעבדוהי ומעמה לא אשתאר חד: 28 ויקר פרעה ית לבה אף בזמנא הקא ולא שלח ית עמא: 9:1 ואמר יי למשה עול לות פרעה ותמליל עמה כדנן אמר יי אלהא דיהודאי שלח ית עמי ויפלוהון קדמי: 2 ארי אם מסרב את לשלחא ועד כען את מתקף בהון: 3 הא מוזא מן קדם יי הויה בבעיך די בחקלא בססותא בחמרי בגמלי בתורי ובענא מותא סגי לחדא: 4 ויפרש יי בין בעירא דישראל ובין בעירא דמצראי ולא ימות מכלא דבני ישראל מדעם: 5 ושווי יי זמנא למימר מחר יעביד יי פתגמא הדין בארעא: 6 ועבד יי ית פתגמא הדין ביומא דבתרוהי ומית בל בעירא דמצראי ומבעירא דבני ישראל לא מית חד:

23 דרך שלשת ימים נלך במדבר ונדבח קדם יי אלהינו אתכם ונדבחתם ליהוה אלהיכם במדבר רק תרחק לא תרחיקו ללכת העתירו בעדי: 25 ויאמר משה הנה אנכי יוצא מעמד והעתרתי אליהוה וסר הערב מפרעה מעבדיו ומעמו מחר רק אליסף פרעה התל לבלתי שלח אתהעם לזבח ליהוה: 26 ויצא משה מעם פרעה ויעתר אליהוה: 27 ויעש יהוה כדבר משה ויסר הערב מפרעה מעבדיו ומעמו לא נשאר אחד: 28 ויכבד פרעה את לבו גם בפעם הזאת ולא שלח אתהעם: 9:1 ויאמר יהוה אל משה בא אל פרעה ודברת אליו כה אמר יהוה אלהי העברים שלח את עמי ויעבדני: 2 כי אם מאן אתה לשלח ועודך מחזיק בם: 3 הנה יד יהוה הויה במקנך אשר בשדה בסוסים בחמרים בגמלים בפקר ובצאן דבר כבד מאד: 4 והפלה יהוה בין מקנה ישראל ובין מקנה מצרים ולא ימות מכל לבני ישראל דבר: 5 וישם יהוה מועד לאמר מחר יעשה יהוה הדבר הזה בארץ: 6 ויעש יהוה את הדבר הזה מכות וימת כל מקנה מצרים וממקנה בני ישראל לא ימת אחד:

— RASHI —

25 התל. כמו להתל: 26 ויעתר אליה. נתאמץ בתפלה. וכן אם בא לומר "ויעתיר", היה יכול לומר, ומשמע וירבה בתפלה. עכשיו כשהוא אומר בלשון "ויפעל", משמע וירבה להתפלל: 27 ויסר הערב. ולא מתו כמו שמתו הצפרדעים, שאם מתו היה להם הנאה בעורותם: 28 גם בפעם הזאת. אף על-

פי שאמר: "אנכי אשלח אתכם", לא קים הבטחתו: 2 מחזיק בם. אוהו בם, כמו: "והקווקה במבשיו": 3 הנה יד יהוה הויה. לשון הויה, כי כן יאמר בלשון נקבה: על שעבר — "היתה", ועל העתיד — "תהיה", ועל העומד — "הויה", כמו: "עושה" "רוצה" "רוצה": 4 והפלה. והבדיל:

68. מלכיסב כג, יג. 69. שמות ח, כד. 70. דברים כה, יא.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

also distinguished from their Egyptian neighbors in the plague of the wild horde.

When we all accept this intrinsic difference between Jew and non-Jew, we will all be able to understand our true identity and be who we really are. This will make

it easier for all us to connect with God, and when we all re-connect with God, this will remove all the obstacles in the way of the whole world's true and final Redemption.¹⁴²

23 We must make a three-day journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to God, our God, according to what He will tell us.”

24 Pharaoh said, “Very well; I will let you leave so that you can sacrifice to God, your God, in the wilderness, but you must not travel far. And pray for me!”

25 Moses answered, “I am now going to leave your presence and I will pray to God, and tomorrow the horde of wild beasts will go away from Pharaoh and his courtiers and his people. But let Pharaoh never again deceive us by not allowing the people to leave and sacrifice to God!”

26 Moses then left Pharaoh’s presence and prayed to God.

27 God did as Moses asked and removed the mixed horde of wild beasts from Pharaoh and his courtiers and his people. They went back to where they came from and not one remained. They did not simply die, as did the frogs, for then the Egyptians could have made use of their hides.

28 But this time, too, Pharaoh hardened his heart, and he did not let the people leave.

The Fifth Plague: Epidemic

9:1 So, on the 15th of Tishrei, God told Moses to announce the fifth plague—an epidemic—and warn Pharaoh about it. On the last day of the warning, God said to Moses, “Come to Pharaoh and tell him, “This is what God, God of the Hebrews, has said: “Let My people go so that they may serve Me.”

2 For if you refuse to let them leave and continue to detain them,

3 the power of God will be directed against your livestock in the field—against the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the cattle, and the flocks—with a very serious epidemic. It will not affect the animals in the barns and stables, however.¹⁴⁰

4 God will also differentiate between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of the Egyptians, and nothing belonging to the Israelites will die.

5 God has fixed a time, saying, “Tomorrow God will do this thing in the land.””

6 So Moses and Aaron went to warn Pharaoh, but Pharaoh did not heed their warning. Nonetheless, there were Egyptians who had learned by now to take Moses seriously, and they gathered their animals into their barns and stables. Thus, when God did this thing the next day, the 8th of Marcheshvan, all the livestock of the Egyptians that were left in the fields died. But of the livestock of the Israelites not a single animal died, even those in the fields. Here, too, Moses and Aaron did not perform any specific act to cause this plague, so the necromancers did not try to prove that it was magic by imitating them.¹⁴¹

140. Rashi on v. 10, below. 141. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, p. 31. 142. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 11, pp. 32-33.

— ONKELOS —

7 וישלח פרעה והא לא מית
מבעירא דישראל עד חד ואתי קר
לבא דפרעה ולא שלח ית עמא:
8 ואמר יי למשה ולאהרן סיבו לכון
מלי חפניכון פיה דאתונא ויזרקנה
משה לצית שמיא קדם פרעה:
9 ויהי לאבקא על כל-ארעא
דמצרים ויהי על אנשא ועל
בעירא לשיחנא סגי אבעבועין
בכל-ארעא דמצרים: 10 ונסיבו
ית פיהא דאתונא וקמו קדם
פרעה וזרק יתה משה לצית
שמיא והיה שיחנא אבעבועין
סגי באנשא ובבעירא: 11 ולא
יכילו הרשיא למיקם קדם
משה מן קדם שיחנא ארי הנה
שיחנא בחרשיא ובכל-מצראי:
12 ואתקיף יי ית לבא דפרעה
ולא קביל מנהון במא דמליל יי
עם משה:

7 וישלח פרעה והנה לאמת ממקנה ישראל עד-אתה
ויכבד לב פרעה ולא שלח אתהעם: פ
8 ויאמר יהוה אל-משה ואל-אהרן קחו לכם מלא
חפניכם פיה כבשן וזרקו משה השמימה לעיני פרעה:
9 והיה לאבק על כל-ארץ מצרים והיה על-האדם
ועל-הבהמה לשחין פרח אבעבעת בכל-ארץ מצרים:
10 ויקחו את-פיה הכבשן ועמדו לפני פרעה וזרק
אתו משה השמימה והי שחין אבעבעת פרח באדם
ובבהמה: 11 ולא יכלו החרטמים לעמוד לפני משה
מפני השחין ביהיה השחין בחרטום ובכל-מצרים:
12 ויתזק יהוה את-לב פרעה ולא שמע אלהם כאשר
דבר יהוה אל-משה: ס

— RASHI —

אבעבועין, שעל ידו צומחין בהן בועות: שחין. לשון
חמימות, והרבה יש בלשון משנה⁷⁴: "שנה שחונה": 10
באדם ובבהמה. ואם תאמר: מאין היו להם הבהמות
והלא כבר נאמר: "וימת כל מקנה מצרים"⁷⁵? אלא, לא
נגזרה גזרה אלא על אותן שבשדות בלבד, שנאמר:
"במקנה אשר בשדה"⁷⁶. והירא את דבר ה' הניס את
מקנהו אל הבתים. וכן שנויה במכילתא, אצל: "ויקח
שש-מאות רכב בחור"⁷⁷:

8 מלא חפניכם. יילוני"ש בלעז⁷¹ [נוסח אחר: פוייל
בלעז⁷²]: פיה כבשן. דבר הנפח מן הגחלים עמומים
הנשרפים בכבשן. ובלעז אולבי"ש⁷³. "פיה", לשון
הפוח, שהרוח מפוחן ומפריחן: וזרקו משה. וכל-
דבר הנזרק בכח, אינו נזרק אלא ביד אחת. הרי נסים
הרבה: אחד — שהחזיק קמצו של משה מלא חפנים
שלו ושל אהרן. ואחד — שהלך האבק על כל-ארץ
מצרים: 9 לשחין פרח אבעבעת. בתרגומו: "לשחין סגי

71. גלונים - מדות היבש. 72. אגרוף. 73. גחלים. 74. יומא נג, ב. 75. פסוק ו. 76. פסוק ג. 77. שמות יד, ו.

stand before Moses to challenge him because the nature of this inflammation overthrew their stance, for the inflammation had attacked the necromancers together with all of Egypt. From this point on, the necromancers no longer tried to expose Moses as a magician, even when he *did* seem to produce a plague by a specific action.¹⁴⁶

12 There was thus no room for Pharaoh to rationalize, but now **God hardened Pharaoh's heart** directly, as a punishment for his earlier obstinacy, **so he did not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as God had said to Moses.**¹⁴⁷

146. As was the case with the plagues of hail (9:22-23, below) and darkness (10:12-13, below). *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, pp. 31-32.

147. Above, on 7:3.

7 Pharaoh inquired and discovered that not even one animal of the livestock of the Israelites had died, but nevertheless, Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he did not let the people leave.

The Sixth Plague: Inflammation of the Skin

8 So, on the 15th of Marcheshvan, God told Moses to announce the sixth plague— inflammation of the skin—and warn Pharaoh about it. But Pharaoh did not pay heed, so on the 8th of Kislev, **God said to Moses and Aaron, "Take for yourselves two handfuls each of soot from a hot kiln, and Moses will then miraculously take hold of both his and Aaron's two handfuls in one of his fists (which normally holds only *half* a handful¹⁴³). Then, let Moses throw all four handfuls at once heavenwards before Pharaoh's eyes.**

9 **It will miraculously spread and become dust over the entire land of Egypt, and even though by then it will be cold, it will miraculously cause an inflammation erupting into blisters on man and beast throughout the land of Egypt.** Furthermore, the inflammation will miraculously erupt over the whole body, not only where the dust falls.¹⁴⁴ Nonetheless, here too, the plague will affect only the animals left out in the fields."

10 **They took the soot of a kiln and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses threw it heavenwards. It spread and became dust over all of Egypt, and caused an inflammation that erupted into blisters on man and beast.**

Unlike the previous two plagues,¹⁴⁵ this one *was* produced by specific acts that made it appear to be caused by magic: Moses and Aaron had to use soot of a hot kiln; Moses had to hold a relatively large amount of soot; he had to throw it forcibly into the air; and the inflammation did not erupt until the dust hit the skin. But the results were too miraculous to have been caused by magic: the soot was already cold when it hit the skin; the amount Moses held was still far too little to spread over all Egypt; he could not have naturally thrown something as light as soot heavenward, let alone over all Egypt; and once the dust hit the skin, the inflammation erupted even where the dust had not hit it. Thus, this plague demonstrated decisively that God has power over nature. Until now, the necromancers had admitted that the plagues were "the finger of God" only when they were caused either by something that could not be manipulated by magic (because it was too small, as was the case with the third plague, lice) or when they were caused without any manipulation at all (as was the case with the fourth and fifth plagues, the mixed horde and the epidemic). They still believed, however, that God's power over the forces of nature that *are* susceptible to magic was no greater than their own. Here, they had to admit that God could manipulate the forces of nature that are susceptible to magic far beyond *their* ability to do so.

11 **The necromancers were therefore completely demoralized: they could not**

143. *Bereishit Rabbah* 5:7. 144. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 36, p. 29. 145. Above, 8:20 and 9:6.

— ONKELOS —

13 ואמר יי למשה אקדם בצפרא ותתעתד קדם פרעה ותימר לה בדבן אמר יי אלהא דיהודאי שלח ית עמי ויפלחון קדמי: 14 ארי בזמנא הדא אנא שלח ית כל-מחתי בלבך ובעבדיך ובעמך בדיל דתדע ארי לית דכותי שליט בכל-ארעא: 15 ארי כען קריב קדמי דשלחית פון ית מחת גבורתי ומחית יתך וית עמך במוחא ואשתיציתא מן ארעא: 16 וגרם בדיל דא קיימתך בדיל לאתווייתך ית חילי וגדיל דיהון משתען גבורת שמי בכל-ארעא: 17 עד כען את כבישת בה בעמי בדיל דלא לשלחיתיהון: 18 הא אנא מחית בעדנא הדין מקור בדיא תקיף לחדא די לא הנה דכותה במצרים למן יומא דאשתכללת ועד כען:

13 ויאמר יהוה אל-משה השכם בפקר והתיצב לפני פרעה ואמרת אליו בה אמר יהוה אלהי העברים שלח את-עמי ויעבדני: 14 כי בפעם הזאת אני שלח את-כל-מגפתי אל-לבך ובעבדיך ובעמך בעבור תדע כי אין כמני בכל-הארץ: 15 כי עתה שלחתי את-ידי ואף אותך ואת-עמך בדרך ותפקח מן-הארץ: 16 ואולם בעבור זאת העמדתיך בעבור הראתיך את-כחי ולמען ספר שמי בכל-הארץ:

שביעי 17 עודך מסתולל בעמי לבלתי שלחם: 18 הנני ממטיר כעת מחר ברד כבד מאוד אשר לא-היה כמוהו במצרים למן-היום הוסדה ועד-עתה:

— RASHI —

“מתפעל” — נותן התייז של שמוש באמצע אותיות של עקר, כגון זו, וכגון: “ויסתבל החגב”⁸² — מגורת סבל. “כיתשתרר עלינו”⁸³ — מגורת שר ונגיד. וכן “מסתכל הוית”⁸⁴: 18 **כעת מחר**. כעת הזאת למחר, שרט לו שריטה בכתל — למחר בשתגיע חמה לכאן, ירד הברד: **הוסדה**. שונתיסדה. וכל-תבה שתחלת וסודה יו”ד, כגון “יסד” “ילד” “ידע” “יסר”, כשהיא מתפעלת — תבא הויו”ו במקום היו”ד, כמו “הוסדה”, “הולדה”⁸⁵, “ויודע”⁸⁶, “ויולד ליוסף”⁸⁷, “בדברים לא-יוסר עבד”⁸⁸.

14 **את-כל-מגפתי**. למדנו מכאן, שמכת בכורות [נוסח אחר⁸⁹: בכורות] שקולה כנגד כל-המכות: 15-16 **כי עתה שלחתי את-ידי וגו’**. כי אלו רצייתי, כשהיתה ידי במקנה שהכיתים בדרך, שלחתייה והכיתי אותך ואת עמך עם הבהמות, ותפקח מן הארץ. אבל “בעבור זאת העמדתיך” וגו’: 17 **עודך מסתולל בעמי**. כתרגומו: “כבישת בה בעמי”, והוא מגורת “מסלה”⁹⁰, דמתרגמינן: “ארח כבישא”, ובלעז קלקי”ר⁹⁰. וכבר פרשתי בסוף “ויהי מקץ”⁸¹: כל-תבה שתחלת וסודה סמ”ך והיא באה לדרבן בלשון

78. עיין לקוי”ש חל”א עמי 43. הערה 30. 79. ישעיה יא, טו. 80. לכבש. 81. בראשית מד, טו. 82. קהלת יב, ה. 83. במדבר טו, יג. 84. דניאל ז, ח. 85. הושע ב, ה. 86. אסתר ב, כב. 87. בראשית מו, כ. 88. משלי כט, יט.

INNER DIMENSIONS

[continued...] spectively, this plague was thus triggered by the unification of these two Divine attributes.

- ◆ Similarly, although this was a particularly severe plague, as indicated by the harsh warning preceding it, this very warning included merciful instructions how to avert it. No such warning was given with any other plague.
- ◆ Also, the hail itself comprised both water and fire, which also correlate allegorically to the Divine attributes of mercy and judgment.
- ◆ Finally, the Name *Havayah* transcends time,¹⁵⁷ while the Name *Elokim* signifies God’s presence

contracted into nature, including time. So, inasmuch as this plague, like all the plagues, manifested the Name *Havayah*,¹⁵⁸ the fact that it was timed precisely further indicates that it embodied the union of the Names *Havayah* and *Elokim*.

The purpose of blending these two opposing Divine attributes in one plague was to demonstrate that they are both attributes of one God, who transcends all dichotomies. This was a shock to the Egyptian worldview, which prefers to conceive of reality as prey to a conglomeration of disparate forces and thereby avoid admitting the reality of a single and sole Divine authority.¹⁵⁹

2:116a; *Me’orei Or*, s.v. *kotel* (Kaf 16). 157. *Zohar* 3:257b (in *Raya Mehemna*); *Sha’ar HaYichud veHaEmunah* 7 (82a). 158. Exodus 7:5, 17, 8:18, etc. 159. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 31, pp. 44-45, based on *Maskil LeDavid*.

The Seventh Plague: Hail

13 On the 15th of Kislev, God told Moses to announce the seventh plague—hail. God did not have Moses *warn* Pharaoh, because He had already deprived him of his free choice, and warning would therefore be pointless. He simply had Moses demand that Pharaoh release the people and *inform* him that He was going to send the next plague.¹⁴⁸ On the last day of the this announcement-period, **God said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and station yourself before Pharaoh, and you shall say to him: This is what God, God of the Hebrews, has said, ‘Let My people go so that they may serve Me.**

14 For this time I am about to send a plague that will prove as devastating to your beliefs as all My other plagues together. I will send it against your very heart and against your courtiers and your people, so that you will know that there is none like Me in all the world.

15 I could now have stretched forth My arm and smitten you and your people with the epidemic I sent against the animals, and you would have been obliterated from the world.

16 Nevertheless, I have spared you for this purpose: in order to show you My power, and in order that My Name may resound throughout the world. I will spare you until the end—even when I kill all the firstborn,¹⁴⁹ even though you yourself are a firstborn—for this purpose.¹⁵⁰

- ◆ **Seventh Reading 17 “Yet you are still treading upon My people and not letting them leave.”**

18 Moses made a scratch on the wall where the sun had cast a shadow and continued to deliver God’s message: “I will demonstrate My absolute power over the forces of nature by showing you that I can control them with perfect timing.¹⁵¹ **At this time tomorrow, when the shadow reaches this mark again, I will rain down a very heavy hail. Never before in Egypt, from the day it was founded until now, has there been anything like it.** I am using the sun to measure the time—rather than any kind of man-made timer—so no one will be able to contest the accuracy of My prediction because of the inaccuracy of their clocks or because someone tampers with them.¹⁵²

↻ A CLOSER LOOK ↻

[14] **As devastating...as all My other plagues together:** This is evident from the fact that this plague forced Pharaoh to admit for the first time that he

had erred by not releasing the people,¹⁵³ and from Pharaoh’s courtier’s declaration in its wake¹⁵⁴ that “Egypt is ruined.”¹⁵⁵

↻ INNER DIMENSIONS ↻

[18] **Moses made a scratch on the wall where the sun had cast a shadow:** The uniqueness of the plague of hail was its blend of Divine mercy and judgment:

- ◆ Allegorically, the sun alludes to the Name *Havayah* and the wall to the Name *Elokim*.¹⁵⁶ Inasmuch as these two Names signify God’s attributes of mercy and severe judgment, re-

148. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, p. 62, note 30. 149. As foretold above, 4:22. 150. Rashi on 12:29, below. 151. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 31, pp. 41-44. 152. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 31, p. 44. 153. Below, v. 27. 154. Below, 10:7. 155. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, p. 60, note 21. 156. *Zohar*

— ONKELOS —

19 וכען שלח כנש ית בעירך וית כלידי לך בחקלא כל אנשא ובעירא די ישתבח בחקלא ולא יתפניש לביתא ויחזות עליהון ברדא וימותון: 20 דדחיל מפתגמא די מעבדי פרעה כנש ית עבדוהי וית בעירא לבתא: 21 ודי לא שוי לבה לפתגמא די ושבק ית עבדוהי וית בעירא בחקלא: 22 ואמר יי למשה ארם ית ידך על צית שמיא ויהא ברדא בכל-ארעא דמצרים על אנשא ועל בעירא ועל כל-עשבא דחקלא בארעא דמצרים: 23 וארם משה ית חוטררה על צית שמיא ויי יתב קלין וברדא ומהלכא אשתא על ארעא ואמטר יי ברדא על ארעא דמצרים: 24 והיה ברדא ואשתא משתלקבא בגו ברדא תקיף לחדא די לא היה דכותה בכל-ארעא דמצרים מעדן דהרות לעם: 25 ומחא ברדא בכל-ארעא דמצרים ית כלידי בחקלא מאנשא ועד בעירא וית כל-עשבא דחקלא מחא ברדא וית כל-אילני דחקלא תבר: 26 לחוד בארעא דגשן די תמן בני ישראל לא היה ברדא: 27 ושלח פרעה וקרא למשה ולאהרן ואמר להון חבית זמנא חדא יי זכאה ואנא ועמי חיביו: 28 צלו קדם יי וסגי קדמוהי רוח דלא יהון עלנא קלין דלוט כאלין מן קדם יי וברדא, ואשלח יתכון ולא תוספון לאתעכבא: 29 ואמר לה משה כמפקי מן קרתא אפרש ית ידי בצלו קדם יי קלא יתמנעון וברדא לא יהי עוד בדיל דתדע ארי די ארעא:

19 ועתה שלח העז את־מקנך ואת כל־אשר לך בשדה כל־האדם והבהמה אשר־ימצא בשדה ולא יאסף הפיתה וירד עליהם הברד ומתו: 20 הירא את־דבר יהוה מעבדי פרעה הנים את־עבדיו ואת־מקנהו אל־הפתים: 21 ואשר לא־ישם לבו אל־דבר יהוה ויעזב את־עבדיו ואת־מקנהו בשדה: פ

22 ויאמר יהוה אל־משה נטה את־ידך על־השמים ויהי ברד בכל־ארץ מצרים על־האדם ועל־הבהמה ועל כל־עשב השדה בארץ מצרים: 23 ויש משה את־מטהו על־השמים ויהוה נתן קלת וברד ותהלך־אש ארצה ומטר יהוה ברד על־ארץ מצרים: 24 ויהי ברד ואש מתלקחת בתוך הברד כבד מאד אשר לא־היה כמוהו בכל־ארץ מצרים מאז היתה לגוי: 25 ויד הברד בכל־ארץ מצרים את כל־אשר בשדה מאדם ועד־בהמה ואת כל־עשב השדה הבה הברד ואת־כל־עין השדה שבר: 26 רק בארץ גשן אשר־שם בני ישראל לא היה ברד: 27 וישלח פרעה ויקרא למשה ולאהרן ויאמר אליהם הטאתי הפעם יהוה הצדיק ואני ועמי הרשעים: 28 העתירו אלי־יהוה ורב מהית קלת אלהים וברד ואשלחה אתכם ולא תספון לעמוד: 29 ויאמר אליו משה כצאתי את־העיר אפרש את־כפי אל־יהוה הקלות יחדלון והברד לא יהיה־עוד למען תדע כי ליהוה הארץ:

— RASHI —

השמים: 24 מתלקחת בתוך הברד. גם בתוף גם האש והברד מערבין, והברד מים הוא. ולעשות רצון קונם, עשו שלום ביניהם: 28 ורב. די לו במה־שהוריד כבר: 29 כצאתי את־העיר. מן העיר. אבל בתוף העיר לא התפלל, לפי שהיתה מלאה גלולים:

19 שלח העז. כתרגומו: "שלח בנוש". וכן "יושבי הגבים העיו"⁸⁹, "העזו בני בנימן"⁹⁰: ולא יאסף הפיתה. לשון הכנסה הוא: 20 הנים. הברית, לשון "וינס משה"⁹¹: 22 על־השמים. לצד השמים. ומדרש אגדה⁹²: הגביהו הקדוש ברוך־הוא למשה למעלה מן

89. ישעיה י, לא. 90. ירמיה ו, א. 91. שמות ד, ג. 92. עיין תנחומא וארא סימן טו.

19 So now, send word and gather in your livestock and everything you possess in the field. Any man or beast that is in the field and is not brought indoors will be pelted by the hail and will die.”

20 Pharaoh did not heed Moses’ warning, but those among Pharaoh’s courtiers who by now feared the word of God made their slaves and livestock flee indoors,

21 while those who did not heed the word of God left their slaves and livestock in the field.

22 On the 8th of Tevet, God said to Moses, “Raise your hand heavenwards, and I will give your hands power over the heavens: there will be hail throughout all the land of Egypt—on man and on beast and on all the plants of the field in the land of Egypt.”

23 Moses raised his staff heavenwards. God gave forth thunder and hail, and fire miraculously came down to the ground inside the hail, even though fire by its nature rises rather than descends, and God rained down hail over the land of Egypt.

24 The hail was very heavy—with lightning flashing miraculously in the midst of the hail—such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

25 Throughout the land of Egypt, the hail struck down whatever was outdoors, whether man or beast. The hail struck down all the plants of the field, and shattered every tree in the fields.

26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were, was there no hail.

27 Pharaoh sent word and summoned Moses and Aaron and said to them, “This time I have sinned. God is the Righteous One, and I and my people are the wicked ones.

28 Pray to God: there has been enough heaven-sent thunder and hail. I will let you leave and you need stay no longer.”

29 Moses said to him, “Now that some of your people have gathered their sheep into the city, your city is full of the object of your idol-worship,¹⁶⁰ so I cannot pray within it. But when I go out of the city, I will spread out my hands in prayer to God. The thunder will cease and there will no more hail—so that you will know that the world belongs to God.

❧ A CLOSER LOOK ❧

[24] **Lightning flashing in the midst of the hail:** The coexistence of fire and ice within the hail was not predicated on either of them “softening” or otherwise abdicating the intensity of their intrinsic properties in order not to conflict with the other.

The ice remained hard enough to injure and the fire hot enough to burn. This mutual coexistence was possible only because both fire and ice were subject to the will of their Creator, whose will transcends the limitations of nature.¹⁶¹

160. *Devek Tov*. 161. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 25, p. 261, note 32.

— ONKELOS —

30 ואת ועבדיך ידענא ארי עד בען לא אתכנעתון מן קדם ? אלהים: 31 ובתנא וסערי לקו ארי סעריא אביבין ובתנא גבעולין: 32 וחטיא ובתנא לא לקו ארי אפילתא אנון: 33 ונפק משה מלות פרעה ית קרמא ופרס ידוהי בצלו קדם ? ואתמנעו קליא וברדא ומטרא דהוה נחית לא מטא על ארעא: 34 וחזא פרעה ארי אתמנע מטרא וברדא וקליא ואוסיף למחטי ויקרה ללבה הוא ועבדוהי: 35 ואתקף לבא דפרעה ולא שלח ית בני ישראל במא די מליל ? בידא דמשה:

30 ואתה ועבדיך ידעתי בי טרם תיראון מפני יהוה אלהים: 31 והפשטה והשערה נפתה כי השערה אביב והפשטה גבעול: 32 והחטה והכפסמת לא נבו כי אפילת הנה:

◆ מפטיר 33 ויצא משה מעם פרעה אתהעיר ויפרש בפיו אליהוה ויחדלו הקלות והברד ומטר לא נתן ארצה: 34 וירא פרעה כיחל המטר והברד והקלות ויסף לחטא ויכבד לבו הוא ועבדיו: 35 ויחזק לב פרעה ולא שלח את בני ישראל באשר דבר יהוה ביד משה:

קביא פסוקים. גבעול סימן. יעיא"ל סימן.

— RASHI —

32 כי אפילת הנה. מאוחרות, ועדין היו רבות ויכולות לעמד בפני קשה. ואף על פי שנתאמר: "ואת כל עשב השדה הכה הברד"⁹⁹, יש לפרש פשוטו של מקרא, בעשבים העומדים בקלחם, הראויים ללקות בברד. ומדרש רבי תנחומא¹⁰⁰: יש מרבותינו שנוחלקו על זאת, ודרשו: "כי אפילת" — פלאי פלאות נעשו להם שלא לקו: 33 לא נתן. לא הגיע. ואף אותן שהיו באויר, לא הגיעו לארץ, ודומה לו: "ותתן עלינו האלה והשבעה" דעזרא¹⁰¹ — ותגיע עלינו. ומנחם בן סרוק חברו בחלק "כהתוך כסף"¹⁰² לשון יציקת מתכת. ורואה אני את דבריו בתרגומו: "ויצק"¹⁰³ — "ואתיה". "לצקת"¹⁰⁴ — "לאתקא". אף זה: "לא נתן לארץ" — לא הצק לארץ: חסלת פרשת וארא

30 טרם תיראון. עדין לא תיראון. וכן בל "טרם" שבמקרא "עדין לא" הוא, ואינו לשון "קדם". כמו: "טרם ישכבו"⁹⁵ — "עד לא שכיבו". "טרם יצמח"⁹⁶ — "עד לא צמח". אף זה כן הוא — ידעתי כי עדין אינכם יראים, ומשתדיה הרוחה תעמדו בקלקולכם: 31 והפשטה והשערה נפתה. לשון "פרעה נכה"⁹⁵, "נכאים"⁹⁶. וכן "לא גבו", ולא יתכן לפרשו לשון הכאה, שאין נוי' במקום ה"א לפרש "נפתה" כמו "הפתה", "נכו" כמו "הכו", אלא הנו"ן שרש בתבה, והרי הוא מגזרת "ושפו עצמתיו"⁹⁷: כי השערה אביב. כבר בכרה ועומדת בקשיה, ונשתברו ונפלו. וכן הפשטה, גדלה כבר והקשה לעמד בגבעוליה: השעורה אביב. עמדה באביה, לשון "באבי הנחל"⁹⁸:

93. בראשית יט, ד. 94. בראשית ב, ה. 95. מלכים ב, כט. 96. ישעיה טו, ז. 97. איוב לג, כא. 98. שיר השירים ו, יא. 99. שמות ט, כה. 100. וארא סימן טו. 101. דניאל ט, יא. 102. יחזקאל כב, כב. 103. שמות לח, ה. 104. שמות לח, כז.

30 But as for you and your courtiers, I know that you are not yet afraid of God, despite what you say.”

31 The flax and barley were crushed by the hail, since the barley was ripe and the flax had formed stalks.

32 But the wheat and spelt were not crushed, since they are late in sprouting and were therefore still pliable. They merely bent from the force of the impact. Even so, it was a miracle that the hail did not destroy them, too.

- ◆ **Maftir 33 Moses left Pharaoh’s presence and went out of the city, and spread his hands out to God. The thunder and hail ceased:** the hailstones in mid-flight disappeared before reaching the ground. **The rain stopped pouring down on the ground:** even the drops that were falling stopped in midair when Moses prayed; they either fell to the ground later or evaporated on the spot.¹⁶²

34 But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and hail and thunder had ceased, he continued to sin. His heart, like that of his courtiers, remained unmoved.

35 Pharaoh’s heart was stiffened and he did not let the Israelites leave, just as God had said through Moses.

The *Haftarah* for *parashat Vaeira* may be found on p. 304.
The *Maftir* and *Haftarah* for *Rosh Chodesh* may be found on p. 336.



⌘ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ⌘

33 They either fell to the ground later or evaporated on the spot: According to the first possibility, the plague did not disappear completely, only its effects were neutralized and the damage it was causing stopped. According to the second possibility, the plague disappeared completely.

Since this plague was the result of Pharaoh’s sin, the above two possibilities are dependent on just how much power can be ascribed to Pharaoh’s repentance.

Once the Torah was given, inherent goodness was fixed as the Jew’s true nature. Similarly, non-Jews were given the opportunity to root their dominant nature in goodness by accepting their obligations as defined by the Torah.¹⁶³ (This confers on them the status of a Righteous Gentile.) In such cases, then, the evil that envelops the soul of the (non-Jewish) sinner is a temporary affixture that adheres to his psyche only until he repents. As soon as he repents, the evil disappears, and when the evil disappears, the punishment or suffering it caused disappears with it.

In the case of a non-Jew who does not choose to root his nature in goodness, the evil that envelops his soul when he sins is *not* a foreign adhesion but an actual

addition to his provisionally unholy nature. Therefore, when he repents of this sin, his repentance only has the power to eliminate the *harmful* effects of the sin—the punishment or suffering it caused—but not to uproot its effects entirely.

Before the Torah was given, it could be argued that non-Jews then were similar to present-era non-Jews who have not opted to be Righteous Gentiles, inasmuch as the opportunity to re-root themselves in goodness that came with the giving of the Torah was not yet available to them. Or, it could be argued that all non-Jews were similar to Jews and Righteous Gentiles after the Torah was given, since this distinction between Jew and non-Jew became operative only upon the Giving of the Torah.

According to the first opinion, Pharaoh’s repentance was only able to stop the detrimental effects of the plague, and therefore the hail merely stopped in its tracks, but did not disappear altogether. According to the second opinion, Pharaoh’s repentance obliterated his sin and its effects entirely, and therefore the hail disappeared completely.¹⁶⁴

^{162.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, pp. 46-50. ^{163.} See below, on 19:5. ^{164.} *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 6, pp. 52-56.

