



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

17th January 2015 - Volume 7 - Issue 27 – פרשת וארא – כ"ו טבת תשע"ה

## T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Robert Berman on the birth of a grand daughter to Mr & Mrs David Booth.

### Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush after Davenning this Shabbos in honour of Shabbos Mevorchin sponsored by Mr & Mrs Yitzchok Douek.

### Rosh Chodesh

Please note the earliest time for Tallis and Tefillin on Rosh Chodesh is 6.55am.

## T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

### Raise the Baton!

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

In this week's portion, once again, Hashem sent Moshe and Ahron to Pharaoh in a second effort to sway his heart and have him change his mind to let the Hebrews leave Egypt. Unlike the unembellished appeal in last week's portion, this time they were equipped with more than pleas - this time they came with miracles. Standing in front of the ruler, Ahron threw his stick down and it turned into a snake. Pharaoh was not impressed. He countered with a little magic of his own. His sorcerers matched the miraculous stick-to-snake act by having his spooks throw down their sticks and by transforming them into snakes.

Ahron one-upped the Egyptian magicians as his stick swallowed all of their sticks. But that obviously was not enough. Pharaoh's heart was once again hardened and he refused to let the Jews leave Egypt. And so, Hashem decided that the benign miracles would not be effective with the stubborn king. It was time for the heavy artillery -- the ten plagues.

Hashem commands Moshe: "Go to Pharaoh in the morning -- behold! He goes out to the water -- and you shall stand opposite him at the river's bank, and the staff that was turned into a snake you shall take in your hand" (Exodus 7:15). A simple question bothers me. Moshe had only one special stick. There are various Midrashic explanations as to its origin, but everyone agrees it was a unique one. It was a special one with special powers. Moshe may have been a leader of many hats, but he only carried one stick. Why did Hashem need to define the stick as the one that turned into a snake? He could have simply asked Moshe to come with his stick. Moshe would surely have known exactly which stick Hashem wanted him to take.

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson is better known to us as Lewis Carroll, author of the 1865 children's fantasy story, Alice in Wonderland. What most of us do not know about him was that he was also a brilliant mathematician spending more than twenty-five years teaching at Oxford University.

An apocryphal story relates that Queen Victoria was so delighted after reading his fantasy-laced novel, Alice in Wonderland that she asked him to send her any other works penned by the same quill. Dodgson responded immediately, but the Queen was somewhat taken aback when she received two of his other works, Syllabus of Plane Algebraical Geometry and An Elementary Treatise on Determinants.

We tend to look at the world and forget that routine natural events are also replete with awe-inspiring miracles and supernatural properties. We become acclimated to the mundane miracles of life so that we also shrug when Hashem turns proverbial sticks into proverbial snakes. We feel we can do that too!

Therefore, before orchestrating the largest insubordination of natural law in world history, by turning the flowing Nile into a virtual blood bath, Moshe is told to bring with him the stick that Pharaoh only considered to be capable of performing minor miracles. Moshe is told that the same stick that was not able to impress Pharaoh has the ability to shatter the Egyptian economy and with it the haughty attitude that kept the Hebrew nation enslaved.

Sometimes our marvel of G-d's wonders is dulled by the scoffing of the naysayers. They lead us to forget that the same power behind the minor miracles of life are the generators of great miracles that we can hardly fathom and surely not anticipate! Even the incomprehensible miracle of life itself is blunted by its ongoing regularity. Our emotions become bored and our intellect spoiled with the majestic events that are considered trite by their regular reoccurrence. And when we fail to see the greatness of genius in the wonderland in which we live, we expect G-d to send us a more prominent message. But we must never forget that even the most awe-inspiring message comes from the same Hand and Stick that bring us the simplest benign worms!

### "Let My Person Grow!"

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

Let's envision the battle of Moshe and Pharaoh as an internal struggle within the psycho-system of one person. The struggle to let the Jewish people escape mirrors the conflict of every man and his huge reservoir of greatness being oppressed by the Lilliputians of daily minutiae. The Egyptian culture is our material make-up and the physical world around us. As Reb Yisrael Salanter said, "A person is a drop of intellect in a sea of instinct." Moshe's job, should he decide to accept it is to salvage that drop intellect; the last piece of personal sanity.

### The Week Ahead

פרשת וארא	שבת מברכין שבת
Candle Lighting	4.06pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	4.11pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.17am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
Rov's Hilchos Shabbos Shiur	3.29pm
2nd Mincha	3.59pm
Seuda Shlishis	following
Motzei Shabbos	5.19pm
Ovos uBonim	6.34pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday / Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am
Tuesday / Friday	6.45am / 7.20am
<b>ראש חודש</b> Wednesday	<b>6.35am / 7.00am</b>
Mincha & Maariv	4.15pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

The genius of the human personality to remain irrationally addicted to the status quo in the face of clear evidence is manifest profoundly in the conflict. Each time Moshe calls another successful shot, Pharaoh and his wise men find some other loophole, no matter how minuscule, to escape. He holds his nation on a path of self-destruction but not to admit or submit. The music turned louder, the walls built higher, the pace of life quickens only not to hear the small voice of Moshe, the conscience whispering.

The story is not as old as we think. Consider the words of biologist Michael Denton; "It is the sheer universality of perfection, the fact that everywhere we look, to whatever depth we look, we find an elegance and ingenuity of an absolutely transcending quality which excels in every sense anything produced by the intelligence of man. Alongside the level of ingenuity and complexity exhibited by the molecular machinery of life, even our most advanced artifacts appear clumsy."

Even the words of Charles Darwin betray more than a particle of uncertainty in these words written only twenty years after publication of his "Origin of the Species"; "There is still considerable difference as to the means, such as how far natural selection has acted or whether there exists some mysterious innate tendency to perfectibility."

There is the institutional inertia of social thinking and teaching to contend with as Hoyle described; "Once the whole of humanity becomes committed to a particular set of concepts, educational continuity makes it exceedingly hard to change the pattern."

Nobel Prize winning chemist Dr. Harold C. Urey admitted: "All of us who study the origin of life find that the more we look into it, the more we feel that it is too complex to have evolved anywhere. But we believe as an article of faith that life evolved from dead matter on this planet. It is just that its complexity is so great, that it is hard for us to imagine that it did."

George Wald who won the Nobel Prize for medicine wrote in Scientific American the following: The reasonable view was to believe in spontaneous generation; the only alternative was to believe in a single, primary act of supernatural creation. There is no third position. For this reason many scientists, a century ago, chose to regard belief in spontaneous generation as a 'philosophical necessity'. I think a scientist has no choice but to approach the origin of life through a hypothesis of spontaneous generation. (He concludes) One has to contemplate the magnitude of this task to concede that spontaneous generation of a living organism is impossible. Yet, here we are, as a result I believe of spontaneous generation." (Were their awards for accomplishments in science or philosophy?)

Aldous Huxley, of "A Brave New World" fame in an essay titled "Confessions of an Atheist" bravely expressed the heart of Pharaoh's hardened heart, "I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. For myself, as no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument for liberation from a certain political and economic system and a liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom."

Consider the words of the leader of a great modern state as Pharaoh in his time; "It is true that we are barbarians. That is an honored title to us. I free humanity from the shackles of the soul, from the degrading suffering caused by the false vision called conscience and ethics. The Jews have afflicted two wounds on mankind-circumcision on its body and conscience on its soul. They are Jewish inventions. The war for dominion is waged only between the two of us, between these two camps alone-the Germans and the Jews. Everything else is but deception."

The story of them back then is the story of every man and now. The Pharaoh within is no fool nor peculiarly insane. He's suffers from a common form of cognitive dissonance, rationalization, denial. The Moshe deep within us quietly proves his point and cries persistently even still, trying to bend Pharaoh's ear and arm, pleading, "Please let my person grow!"

## Don't Flog the Frog

Frogs. Everywhere the Egyptians looked there were frogs. In the streets, in their homes, on their beds, even in their ovens. Billions of slimy frogs with bulging eyes, biting everything in sight and letting loose a cacophony of raucous croaks at an ear-shattering, mind-numbing decibel level. Egypt was prostrate and helpless.

Where did all these frogs come from? Did they descend on Egypt in swarms, like the predators and the locusts of later plagues? Our Sages tell us that they did not.

It all began with a single frog emerging from the river. The Egyptians struck the repulsive creature in an attempt to kill it, but to their shock, the frog split into two exact replicas of the first, like an ameba undergoing binary fission. The Egyptians then struck these two frogs, and they, too, executed an immediate two-for-one split. The Egyptians flogged the frogs again and again, but all they accomplished was a rapid geometric proliferation of slimy creatures that metastasized into an all-encompassing plague that gripped Egypt in a reptilian stranglehold.

Let us try and visualize this surreal scenario, Egyptians desperately striking at the frogs again and again only to see them multiply before their very eyes. We cannot help but marvel at the utterly bizarre behavior of the Egyptians. Why in the world would they continue to flog the frogs when each blow just exacerbated the situation? Couldn't they see that striking the frogs was counterproductive, to say the least? There can be only one explanation. They were not thinking rationally. With the painful memory of the blood plague still fresh in their minds, the Egyptians reacted to the onset of the promised second plague with anger and frustration bordering on panic. For all practical purposes, the stress caused them to take leave of their senses and lash out in a totally irrational manner. As the frogs multiplied, the demented frenzy of the Egyptians drove them to ever more violent reactions, which caused even more frogs to appear. They were caught in a downward spiral headed for disaster.

But the question still remains: Why indeed did Hashem choose to send the plague in this fashion? Why didn't he simply unleash a massive flood of frogs on Egypt as he would eventually do with the predators and the locusts?

The commentators explain that Hashem knew the Egyptians would react irrationally. In fact, this itself was one of the crucial messages of this early plague. The message was simple and straightforward. Just as it was futile and indeed irrational to flog the frogs, so would it be futile and irrational to defy the will of Hashem. Just as fear and revulsion could cause them to take leave of their senses and flog the frogs, so could their inflated egos cause them to scorn the divine retribution of the plagues and insist on keeping the Jewish people enslaved. It would be the height of madness to disobey the commands of Hashem. Hashem had give the Egyptians a warning within a warning, but they chose to disregard it.

A merchant came to seek the advice of a great sage.

"My business is failing," he said. "I have tried everything, but the customers have stopped coming to my store. I don't know what to do." "Tell me what you have done thus far," said the sage.

"Well, I've spent a fortune on advertising. I've run numerous sales. I've renovated my store. The worse the situation became, the more money I spent on advertising and renovations. But nothing helps."

"I think I see the problem, my friend," said the sage. "You've been looking in the wrong direction. Drawing all the customers in the world to your store won't help if your product is inferior. Look inward. Improve your product, and your customers will return." In our own lives, things sometimes do not go our way, no matter how much or how often we try. Clearly, this is a message from Heaven. Sometimes, however, we refuse to acknowledge it and stubbornly continue to bang our heads against brick walls, inflicting grievous damage on ourselves and our loved ones in the process. Only when wisdom prevails and our minds take control of our impulses can we recognize Hashem's hand and look inward for the causes of our misfortune. And when that happens, no matter how our problems are resolved, we will be forever enriched by our newfound closeness to Hashem.