

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAERA

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

CLOSENESS TO HASHEM - ONE EGYPTIAN STILL STANDS!

Ever been in a debate with someone, where you have a strong view about a certain topic. After a few minutes talking, you are surprised that the other side has actually explained themselves quite well. In fact all their arguments stack up, and you are beginning to understand where they come from. Do you yield? Or fight on into the abyss?

Are you up to trying to understand the other, and if you do, will you concede, or will you let your ego get involved and continue arguing for the sake of 'I can't be wrong'?

After the Makah of Dever, Pharaoh commissions a search to see if any Jewish (Israelite) livestock were killed. The Pasuk says (9:7), "Vayishlach Pharaoh - "And Pharaoh sent, and behold, none of the livestock of the Jews died, up to one. And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not send away the nation."

Pharaoh sends to check out what has happened to the livestock of the Jews. He hears that Lo Met Ad Echad - none died - up to one. What does that mean? Furthermore the Pasuk continues mentioning that after hearing this pharaoh hardened his heart. Why should he harden his heart, surely he should do

the opposite. So many Egyptian cattle had died, and only up to one of the Jewish cattle had died. Surely that is a reason to concede?

Most commentators interpret Ad Echad as meaning "except for one," which would suggest that there was one animal or one group of animals that did, in fact, die.

But how could this have happened? Are we not told that Hashem protected the Jews from the effects of Makat Dever (9:4)?

There are many answers offered, all with a fundamental underlying thread; One answer to this question, suggested by numerous commentators, is predicated on Ramban's statement that before Matan Torah, Jewish identity was determined by the father, not the mother. There was one case in which a Jewish woman, Shelomit Bat Divri, married an Egyptian and had a son (who later became the Mekalleh; see Vayikra 24:10-11). According to the system at that time, he would not have been Jewish, and his livestock would not have been spared. It was therefore his livestock to whose death the report referred.

The Chatam Sofer explains based on the statement of Rashi (11:4 Kachatzot) that the Egyptian astrologers were only able to approximate time, but could not pinpoint it exactly. Hence, their calculation of when the Makah of Dever started was not exact. If a Jew's animal died of natural causes between the time

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the Egyptians thought the Makah started and the time it actually did start, the Egyptians (with wrong time calculation) would have thought that one animal of the Jews was killed as part of the plague.

The Chatam Sofer also offers another interpretation of Ad Echad, saying that the messenger who told Pharaoh really meant that "not even one" animal died, but Pharaoh misinterpreted the message (perhaps deliberately) to mean that there was, in fact, one animal that died.

The Abarbanel explains that Pharaoh saw what he thought was Egyptian livestock surviving the plague.

In truth, these animals were owned jointly by Egyptians and Jews, and the partly Jewish ownership caused these animals to live through Makat Dever.

All of these explanations lead to the same answer for the second question, namely that Pharaoh's erroneous evaluation of the plague led him to say that the plague was not real. After all, Moshe specifically told him that none of the Jews' livestock would die, and Pharaoh perceived that this did not come true! Hence he hardened his heart. It seems like pharaoh had a point. Or did he?

Is it really so inconceivable that one animal would have died for a reason unknown to Pharaoh? What about the fact that the rest of the Jews' animals remained alive while all of the Egyptian animals died?

Sometimes signs are sent from above, they are clear and glowing, yet the beholder of these signs can misinterpret them. It all depends on the persons make up of life. In this case pharaoh had a self interest not to believe, (for to believe would mean that he was not the god, or powerful ruler), he thus clung onto any piece of information he could to translate to his benefit.

Midrash Lekach Tov takes this idea a step further, claiming that Pharaoh had a perfect understanding of what happened and realized that it really was an act of G-d. Instead of acknowledging his mistake, though, he decided to try to "save face" by continuing on his path of refusal to free the Jews. He hardened his heart and prepared to accept the consequences.

Unfortunately for the Egyptians, this meant that five more Makot would follow and that Egypt would be destroyed.

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

"My business is failing," he said. "I have tried everything, but the custom-

ers 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.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT VAERA

The ten plagues that G-d brought upon the Egyptians in Egypt were not only punishments or ways to show the control of the Creator of all worlds in His world, but also lessons and messages given by G-d to teach both Pharaoh and his people and the people of Israel on their way to redemption on how the

world is run.

The Nile. One of the longest rivers in the world, the source of life of Egypt, above the surface it looks like a place of peace and life. But beneath the surface the Nile was used to cover up horrific crimes and extremely heinous acts, the bottom of the Nile used as a cemetery for countless bodies of Jewish babies thrown into it by criminals knowing that no one would ever judge them

for their actions.

This is the first plague, the first lesson delivered by the Creator of the world. After decades of loss, fear and trauma, injustice and cover up of a painful truth, the big lie has been exposed and the waters of Nile have been revealed as they really are. Not a source of life but deaths, not heaven but hell, not cold water for a weary soul but blood of innocent helpless souls.

By turning the waters of the Nile into blood, by revealing the truth out of falsehood, as clearing the silver

from the slag, and as extracting the wine from its yeasts, the way to redemption, to receive the Torah and

to the unity and wholeness of the Jewish people has paved. The truth will set the world free.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Performing Netilat Yadayim with Cloudy Water

Halacha requires that when one washes his hands before partaking of bread, he must use clear water (Orach Hayim, Siman 160:1). The question thus arises in situations where the water appears "cloudy" when it first comes from the tap, whether a person must wait for the water to clear before performing Netilat Yadayim.

Rabbi Yitzchak Weiss (Galicia

-Israel, 1902-1989), in his work *Minchat Yitzchak*, in Helek 9 Siman 13, addresses this question. He rules that preferably one should wait a few minutes until the water clears up and then make Netilat Yadayim. He concedes, however, that if one used the water while it was cloudy, *BeDiavad* he doesn't have to wash again. However, Hacham Ben Tzion Abba Shaul in *Ir L'Tzion*, Helek 2, Peek 11:7, rules leniently even *Lechatchila*. This

leniency is also the ruling of Hacham Ovadia Yoseph in *Halichot Olam*, Helek 1, page 336.

As for the final Halacha, one may perform Netilat Yadayim with water that appears cloudy upon leaving the tap, and does not have to wait, but it is nevertheless preferable to wait a minute or so to allow the water to become clear before washing one's hands, in order to satisfy all opinions.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Vaera

Hashem tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt. However, the Jewish People do not listen. Hashem commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People. Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh's magicians copy the sign, embolden-

ing Pharaoh to refuse the request. Hashem punishes the Egyptians, sending plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy these miracles on a smaller scale, again encouraging Pharaoh to be obstinate. After the plague of lice, Pharaoh's magicians concede that only Hashem could be performing these miracles.

Only the Egyptians, and not the

Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail. However, despite Moshe's offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

1. Did G-d ever appear to Avraham and say "I am G-d"?
2. What cause did the forefathers have to question G-d?
3. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?
4. How long did Levi live?
5. Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother?

A

1. 6:9 - Yes.
2. 6:9 - Although G-d swore to give them the Land, they never actually had control over it.
3. 6:13 - With the respect due a king.
4. 6:16 - 137 years.
5. 6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon.



"There was one [giant] frog. The Egyptians hit it and it split into swarms and swarms [of smaller frogs]." (Rashi Sh'mos 8:2)

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