Points to Ponder

Vaera 5784

**וְלָֽקַחְתִּ֨י אֶתְכֶ֥ם לִי֙ לְעָ֔ם  And I will take them as a nation for me(6:7)** - The people were able to listen and hear Aharon before and now were not able to hear Moshe. What changed? **Rav Eliyashiv**  explained that when Moshe came with a message of obligation (V’Lakachtee Eschem Lee L’Am V’Hayeesee Lachem L’Elokim) it became too hard for them to listen.

**וְלֹ֤א שָֽׁמְעוּ֙ אֶל־משֶׁ֔ה מִקֹּ֣צֶר ר֔וּחַ וּמֵֽעֲבֹדָ֖ה קָשָֽׁהThey didn’t hear Moshe because of their shortness of spirit and hard work (6:9)** - What was missing from their אמונה that created this inability to listen? **Rav Yaakov Ruderman** explained that פרעה only believed in a אלקים that the Zohar explains refers to טבע or nature. When Moshe used a new attribute of Hashem — הויה — פרעה refused to recognize that name. Rav Ruderman added that this was the issue here too. פרעה had so broken the Jewish people that they could only consider טבע and the idea of something and someone above its rules was beyond their comprehension due to their shallowness as a result of the hard work and broken spirit.

**אַתָּ֣ה תְדַבֵּ֔ר אֵ֖ת כָּל־אֲשֶׁ֣ר אֲצַוֶּ֑ךָּ וְאַֽהֲרֹ֤ן אָחִ֨יךָ֙ יְדַבֵּ֣ר אֶל־פַּרְעֹ֔ה** **You will say all that I command and Aharon your brother will speak to פרעה (7:2) - Rashi**explains that what this pasuk means is that each time Hashem gave Moshe a message to transmit to פרעה, Moshe would relate it once, and then Aharon would repeat it in a way that פרעה would be able to understand.  The **Ramban**, on the other hand, learns that Moshe would not say it in front of פרעה at all.  Rather, he would tell it to Aharon who would then transmit the message to פרעה. According to Rashi, what was the purpose in Moshe Rabbeinu saying each nevuah one time, if פרעה was only going to understand it from Aharon?  **Rav Moshe Twersky HYD** opined that Hashem needed to be involved in the entirety of Yetzias Mitzrayim. This included the warnings.  If only Aharon would have sounded the warnings of each makah, that would have been a mechanism of shlichus (agency).  That is why Moshe Rabbeinu – who was the one who served as the mouthpiece, kavayachol, of the Shechina – had to say each warning to פרעה at least once.  That way, it was a full manifestation of Ha’Kadosh Baruch Hu Himself taking Klal Yisrael out of Mitzrayim.

**The Maakos** – The Mishna in Avos (5:4) notes that there were 10 miracles that were done for our forefathers in Mitzrayim. **Rav Yisroel Meir Lau**  notes that this seems somewhat odd – the miracles were done to the Mitzrim – not our forefathers. And why bother to call them miracles anyway? Rav Lau explains that miracles are things that bring one to a better awareness of Hashem’s presence in the world. Although the miracle happened to the Mitzrim, the ones who seemed to get the message were the Jewish people.

**וַתַּ֨עַל֙ הַצּפַרְדֵּ֔עַ And Aharon raised his hand over the waters of Mitzrayim and the frog infestation arose and covered the land of Egypt (8:2) – Rashi** notes that the plague began with a single frog. The Mitzrim hit it until swarms sprung forth and covered the land. In 1986, **Rav Pam**  recognized that the splintered groups of terrorists from the PLO would grow in number with the retaliatory attacks to them. He added that terrorism seemed to grow with every military response to it. Rav Pam noted that despite the need to combat terror, the best way to end it is to do what Moshe and Aharon did in order to end the terror epidemic – Tefillah.

**דֶּ֚רֶךְ שְׁל֣שֶׁת יָמִ֔ים נֵלֵ֖ךְ בַּמִּדְבָּ֑ר Let us go 3 days in the desert (8:23)** - Why is it Mutar to lie to Pharaoh? **Rav Schachter**  explained that giving a slave his religion is the same as giving him his freedom. This is why we note that Hashem wants us to be His servant and not a servant to other servants.

**הַיָּרֵא֙ אֶת־דְּבַ֣ר ה מֵֽעַבְדֵ֖י פַּרְעֹ֑ה He who feared the word of Hashem from the servants of Pharaoh (9:20)** – How could the concept of “Fearing Hashem” enter the discussion when we are speaking about the Egyptians? The fearing of Hashem should have made them change their minds which is something that would not happen for another 3 Maakos? **The Steipler** explains that Yiras Shomayim is not an intellectual concept. One can see proof that there is Hashem and come up with all sorts of alternative explanations for the proof. True Yiras Shomayim is a desire to see the obvious. **Rav Dovid Povarsky**  adds that this is why the Jewish survival in the Galus, a concept that clearly proves *Ki Lo Yitosh Hashem Amo* is not widely seen by humanity as a proof to Hashem and a calling to be close to him.

**Haftarah:**

**אֲשֶׁ֥ר אָמַ֛ר לִ֥י יְאֹרִ֖י וַֽאֲנִ֥י עֲשִׂיתִֽנִי He said the Nile is mine and I made it (Yechezkel 29:3) - Rav Aharon Kotler**  noted that Pharaoh who was not a fool – actually quite an intelligent and wise man – was done in by his haughtiness and wickedness that led him to believe his own hype that he was a God. Rav Aharon notes that Minus – or heresy – is built on foolishness. The haughty believes his own haughtiness and that leads him to make obvious mistakes in his own thinking. This type of error has brought down many world dominators – from Pharaoh to Nevuchadnetzer to Hiram and taken their god complexes and turned them into sub-par mortals. The same can be found in modern times. It is not simply a difference of idea – it is an error of intelligence.