Points to Ponder

Voera 5782

**וַיְדַבֵּ֥ר אֱלֹק֖ים And Hashem spoke to Moshe (6:2)** - It is always interesting to note that the 6th Perek of Shemos starts in Parashas Shemos and then Voera begins with the second Possuk. Why? **Rav Mordechai Kamenetzky Shlita** quoted his grandfather **Rav Yaakov ztl.** who noted that technically this week’s Parsha should have started with the idea of Ata Tireh but since those words imply punishment (as noted by Rashi), it would be improper to start the Parsha that sets the practical Geulah in motion with it.

**וְלָֽקַחְתִּ֨י אֶתְכֶ֥ם לִי֙ לְעָ֔ם And I will take you for me as a nation (6:7)** - Why were the people able to listen to Aharon in last week’s Parsha but not now with Moshe? **Rav Elyashiv ztl.** explained that previously Aharon came with a message of freedom and no responsibility. Now Moshe was coming with a message of servitude to Hashem and at that point the people were more skeptical.

**אֵ֖לֶּה רָאשֵׁ֣י בֵֽית־אֲבֹתָ֑ם These are the stories of the leaders of their homes (6:14)** - Why does the תורה go into such detail of these families. Don’t we know this information from פרשת ויגש which tells us who came down to מצרים? **Rav Mendel Blachman Shlita** explained that the משה who we have seen so far in שמות ספר is some kind of “superman”: the one who has unnamed parents, who emanates a “light” upon birth, who is saved from the Nile by an Egyptian princess, lives in the king’s palace, and ultimately is destined to be the savior of the Jewish people. We have no personal encounter with the human side of משה. What the תורה offers us in this list is a personal glimpse of משה. We now know his familial context, being with the families of ראובן שמעון and לוי. We know he has a brother-in-law, a brother married with kids etc. משה is now seen being not as משה the “superman” or “רבנו” but as משה the normal human being who has a normal life with a normal family. We even see one of his nephews, אליעזר marrying the daughter of פוטיאל, who, as רש״י tells us, was יתרו, an עובד ע״ז. Every normal family has a “crazy cousin!” This gives us a glimpse of the making of משה: from a simple start to greatness.

**וַיִּבְלַ֥ע מַטֵּה־אַֽהֲרֹ֖ן אֶת־מַטֹּתָֽם: The staff of Aharon swallowed their staffs (7:12) - Rashi** cites the Gemara (Shabbos 97) that notes that although the sticks had turned into snakes, it was after Aharon’s had returned to being a stick that it swallowed the snakes. It was a miracle within a miracle. But why was there a need for 2 miracles here? **Sefer** **Panim Chadashos BaTorah** suggests that when a person depends on something and it rebels against him, it is doubly defeating. The classic example is one’s walking stick – it is supposed to help him and if it is used to best and beat him, it is a double punishment. That is what happened here – when the staff of Aharon swallowed the other sticks, they became part of it. When that staff brought on the Makos and then eventually the Egyptian defeat and drowning in Yam Suf, it was doubly defeating – they got punished yes, but by their own staffs which was twice as bad.

**וּבְעַמֶּ֔ךָ וּבְתַנּוּרֶ֖יךָ  And within your nation and in your ovens (7:28)** - The Talmud (Pesachim 53b) notes that Chananiah Mishael and Azariah used the frogs as a basis for a Kal V’Chomer argument for guidance as to how to proceed in regard to the threat they faced concerning being thrown into the fire. They argued that if the frogs were not commanded to give up their lives for Kiddush Hashem and did so anyway choosing to go into the ovens, then they who WERE supposed to engage in Kiddush Hashem certainly needed to proceed that way. **The Shaagas Aryeh** notes that the Kal VaChomer is weak as the frogs WERE commanded to go everywhere. How could an argument be made otherwise? The **Vilna Gaon** (who was 17 at the time) responded that although the group was commanded to go everywhere, each frog could have argued that s/he would go into the bed or the closet but leave the oven to someone else. No frog did so, setting the rule for the future Kal V’Chomer. The Shaagas Aryeh accepted the answer.

**דֶּ֚רֶךְ שְׁל֣שֶׁת יָמִ֔ים נֵלֵ֖ךְ בַּמִּדְבָּ֑ר Let us go into the desert for 3 days (8:23)** - Why was it ok for Moshe to lie to Pharaoh? **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained that when a master allows his servant to serve a different religion, he is giving him personal freedom. For within the Jewish religion we are told that we are to be servants to Hashem exclusively.

**וַֽאֲשֶׁ֥ר לֹא־שָׂ֛ם לִבּ֖וֹ And those who did not care about the word of Hashem (9:21)** - How did someone not even fear Moshe’s promise. They had already been knocked with 6 Makkos and each time Moshe was proved correct. To totally ignore seems impossible?! **Rav Zalman Sorotzkin ztl.** explained that when their science explained things in an opposing manner, they could not accept anything that Moshe offered.

**HAFTARA:**

**אֲשֶׁ֥ר אָמַ֛ר לִ֥י יְאֹרִ֖י וַֽאֲנִ֥י עֲשִׂיתִֽנִי He said the Nile is mine and I made it (Yechezkel 29:3) - Rav Aharon Kotler ztl.** 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.