Class # 14 - **Parshat Va’era: Gandalf versus Moshe**

Advanced Fellowship Parsha Class - Sponsored in memory of Alice Toby Barbanel Z”l

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1. The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers''. Gandalf frees King Theoden of the sorcerer spell .<https://youtu.be/m_mPE9gcQJo>



Questions:

1. What are the key features of Gandalf?
2. How does that description compare to what we visualize Moshe as?

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|  | Gandalf | Moshe |
| Hair |  |  |
| Beard |  |  |
| Clothing |  |  |
| Staff |  |  |
| Speaking |  |  |
| Powers |  |  |
| Aura |  |  |
| Mission |  |  |
| Beliefs |  |  |

Parshat Va’era

The Staff Becomes a Serpent

7:8 God said to Moses and Aaron,  
7:9 'When Pharaoh speaks to you, he will tell you to prove yourself with a miraculous sign. You [Moses] must then tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh. Let it become a viper!' '  
7:10 Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh. They did exactly as God had said. Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh, and it became a viper.  
7:11 Pharaoh summoned his scholars and sorcerers. The magicians were able to do the same thing with their magic tricks.  
7:12 When each one threw down his staff, [the staffs] all turned into vipers. Aaron's staff then swallowed up their staffs.

7:13 But Pharaoh remained obstinate and did not pay attention to them, just as God had predicted.  
   
Warnings for the First Plague  
7:14 God said to Moses, 'Pharaoh is obstinate and he refuses to let the people leave.  
7:15 Pay a call on Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water. Stand where you will meet him on the bank of the Nile. Take in your hand the staff that was transformed into a snake.  
7:16 'Say to him: God, Lord of the Hebrews, has sent me to you with the message, 'Let My people leave, and let them worship Me in the desert.' So far, you have not paid attention.  
7:17 God [now] says, 'Through this you will know that I am God.' I will strike the water of the Nile with the staff in my hand, and [the water] will turn into blood.

7:22 However, when the magicians of Egypt were able to produce the same effect with their hidden arts, Pharaoh became obstinate. He would not pay attention to [Moses and Aaron], just as God had predicted.  
7:23 Pharaoh turned his back to them and went to his palace. Even to this [miracle], he would not pay attention.

Lice: The Third Plague

8:12 God said to Moses, 'Tell Aaron to hold out his staff and strike the dust of the earth. It will turn into lice all over Egypt.'

8:13 They did this. Aaron held out his hand with his staff, and struck the dust of the earth. The lice appeared, attacking man and beast. Throughout all Egypt, the dust had turned into lice.

8:14 The magicians tried to produce lice with their hidden arts, but they could not. [Meanwhile], the lice were attacking man and beast alike.

8:15 'It is the finger of God,' said the magicians to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh remained obstinate and would not listen, just as God had predicted.

The magicians of Egypt in modern times have long been celebrated adepts in charming serpents; and particularly by pressing the nape of the neck they throw them into a kind of catalepsy, which renders them stiff and immoveable, thus seeming to change them into a rod. They conceal the serpent about their person, and by acts of legerdemain produce it from their dress, stiff and straight as a rod. Just the same trick was played off by their ancient predecessors.... [A]nd so it appears they succeeded by their “enchantments” in practicing an illusion on the senses (Jamieson, Robert, A.R. Fausset, and David Brown (2002 reprint), *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson). The idea that a skilled magician could use a snake in such a way is no novel concept in the world of magic tricks. Walter Gibson, in his book Secrets of Magic, states that there is a certain type of snake that can be made motionless by applying pressure just below its head. Gibson also notes that the particular species of snake suitable for this stunt happens to be the naja haje (or haja), otherwise known as the Egyptian Cobra (as cited in “Case Studies,” n.d.).

* 1. Why is it important for Moshe and Aaron to have a show down with the magicians of Egypt?
  2. Why does he warn Pharoh of the impending Plague?
  3. Why does he mention, “Through this you will know that I am God.”, Why is that important?
  4. What is clearly NOT the singular goal of the miracles and plagues of Moshe?
  5. Who were the audience of the messages of the plagues?
  6. How is Moshe different from Gandalf?