

8 years of Points to Ponder on

Parashas Voera

**וָֽאֵרָ֗א אֶל־אַבְרָהָ֛ם אֶל־יִצְחָ֥ק וְאֶל־יַֽעֲקֹ֖ב**  **And I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov (6:3)** – **Rashi** adds that Hashem appeared to the Avos. What does Rashi want to prove with his addition? **Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah ztl** explains that although Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov were incredible individuals it was not their role model status alone that would inspire the Jewish people. However, when thinking that they were our Avos and Maaseh Avos Siman L’banim – the young nation could be inspired to relate to the Avos and learn to be inspired by their lead to move toward Geulah.

**לָכֵ֞ן אֱמֹ֥ר לִבְנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵל֘** **Speak to Bnei  Yisrael and tell them that I am Hashem (6:6) – Rashi and the Rashbam** (Pesachim 99b) notes that the 4 cups at Pesach represent the 4 languages of freedom mentioned here. While one can drink if necessary between the first and second cups and between the second and third, one is not supposed to drink anything between cups 3 and 4. **Rav Asher Weiss Shlita** suggested an interesting hint here. Many see a difference between the redemption of the body and the soul. By telling us not to break the 4th language apart from the first 3, and the fourth – v’Lakachtee – representing the redemption of the soul, we are highlighting the necessity of not separating between the 2 Geulot.

**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 ztl**. 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.

**וְנָֽתַתִּ֨י אֹתָ֥הּ לָכֶ֛ם מֽוֹרָשָׁ֖ה And I will give it to you as a Morasha (6:8)** – Moshe himself was not sure what the word Morasha meant. This was later clarified in the time of Tzlofchad’s daughters. The Talmud in Bava Basra explains that the issue was about getting Pi Shnayim (double portion) in the land of Israel . **Rav Schachter Shlita** pointed out that they wanted to know if the land of Israel was considered Raui or Muchzak. Thus, Morasha does not mean the same thing as Yerusha – Morasha means a heritage – I got it and I must see that it is transmitted to the next generation in its entirety. Torah and Eretz Yisrael are uniquely Morasha – they are our heritage and must be transmitted entirely to the future generations.

**וְלֹ֤א שָֽׁמְעוּ֙ אֶל־משֶׁ֔ה מִקֹּ֣צֶר ר֔וּחַ וּמֵֽעֲבֹדָ֖ה קָשָֽׁה** **And Moshe spoke to the people accordingly but they couldn’t listen to Moshe due to the shortness of breath and the hard labor (6:9) – Sforno** explains that the people couldn’t conceive of listening to the word of Moshe because of the oppressive work. Otherwise, they would have had no problem listening and believing in him and his message**. Rav Sheinberg ztl** tries to understand what the goal of Moshe was and why he tries once again to step out of the job as spokesman especially after Hashem had told him “no”? He explains that Hashem would not perform a Miracle for Bnei Yisroel if they did not have the most basic faith. The problem of Kotzer Ruach is that it took away the most basic faith. By having a different person speak on behalf of Hashem, Moshe thought the people would be moved to Emunah and merit the miracles as a result.

**וְלֹ֤א שָֽׁמְעוּ֙ אֶל־משֶׁ֔ה מִקֹּ֣צֶר ר֔וּחַ וּמֵֽעֲבֹדָ֖ה קָשָֽׁה** **And they didn’t listen to Moshe due to a shortness of spirit and hard labor (6:9) – Rashi**explains the Kotzer Ruach to be like one who has trouble breathing. **Rabbi Dr. Benny Lau Shlita** explains the idea as being like one with an asthma attack who must reach for steroids in order to breathe. He explains that in those moments, the asthmatic cannot think long term because he is merely concerned about the next breath. One cannot discuss the languages of Geulah at that point.  But that immediate urge style of living without long term vision destroys the potential for a united vision and hope.

**מִקֹּ֣צֶר ר֔וּחַ וּמֵֽעֲבֹדָ֖ה קָשָֽׁה But they could not listen to Moshe, for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage. (6:9)** - **Rav Amital ztl.** Explained that in order for words of Torah to penetrate, we need openness. We can listen to sichot and learn tremendous amounts, but we still need Divine assistance for the message to pervade us and to allow us to grow. We pray to God daily (in the "U-va le-Tziyyon" prayer), "Hu yiftach libbenu be-Torato, ve-yasem be-libbenu ahavato ve-yirato…" - "May He open our hearts with His Torah, and place in our hearts love and fear of Him…" Not only do we need to be open to have God's words penetrate our heart, but we need to open our hearts to call out to Him in sincerity.

**וַיְצַוֵּם֙ אֶל־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל וְאֶל־פַּרְעֹ֖ה מֶ֣לֶךְ מִצְרָ֑יִם  He commanded them to Bnei Yisrael (6:13)**– What did he command them to do with Bnei Yisrael? **Rav Bernard Weinberger ztl.** explains that if Moshe was to go to speak on their behalf to Pharaoh, he needed their acceptance of his leadership and representative status. Thus, they would need to accept him. This is the intent of the Possuk here – He commanded Moshe and Aharon to be representatives of the Bnei Yisrael and then to go to Pharaoh. (Think like the role of Barchu which is the acceptance of the role of Shaliach Tzibbur).

**וַיִּקַּ֨ח עַמְרָ֜ם אֶת־יוֹכֶ֤בֶד דֹּֽדָתוֹ֙ Amram took Yocheved his aunt (6:20)** – Amram is identified as one of 4 who died without sin (Shabbos 55b), how could he marry his aunt? How could a marriage that brought out Moshe, Aharon and Miriam result from a Shidduch that would be unacceptable in the Torah? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** answers that Amram and Yocheved knew that great people would come from them and thus, they knew that they should not keep the Torah before it was given. This is consistent with the words of Rav Chaim of Volozhin who explains that the Avos and others who kept the Torah did so as Einam Mitzuvim V’Osim  who acted on the basis of their own Seichel based on the merits of following that which they were not commanded to do. When that happens, it is ok to do that which is best for the Klal even if it is against the Mitzva. That is not the case post-Matan Torah.

**וַיִּקַּ֨ח עַמְרָ֜ם אֶת־יוֹכֶ֤בֶד דֹּֽדָתוֹ֙** **And Amram married Yocheved his wife (6:20)** – It is interesting that in regard to the section of the Arayos in Parshas Achrei Mos and Kedoshim, no punishment of Kares is mentioned explicitly in regard to one who marries his aunt. **The Baalei Tosafos** explain that this is done on purpose to protect the Kavod of Amram similar to the reason why no Kares is mentioned in regard to the idea of marrying 2 sisters (out of respect for Yaakov) . Both times it is left to Torah She’Baal Peh to explain. **Rav Yehuda Cooperman ztl.** explained that the Torah clearly understood that both times it was necessary for Yaakov and Amram to break what would later be considered Torah. However, had it left an identifiable mark even in a later Parsha, it would be the subject of debate to the actions of Yaakov and Amram perhaps punishing them with what **the Netziv** considers a form of KAres – a suggestion of impropriety that can never be wiped away as it is as forever as the Torah. Therefore the Torah left it out.

**ה֥וּא משֶׁ֖ה וְאַֽהֲרֹֽן:** **These are  Aharon and Moshe…These are Moshe and Aharon (6:26-7) – Rashi** notes that they were equals**. Ramban** takes exception to that in the fact that Moshe was unparalleled in his Nevuah power. How would they be considered equal? Moreover, how can two people with the same genetic makeup be so diverse? **Rav Amital ztl** explained that Nevuah power is dependent on how much of a Mivakesh one is. Thus, two people of the same genetic background – equals – can have diversity in their Nevuah power. Today, the same can be said about Chochma. Two people of the same intellectual capacity might not become the same Talmidei Chachamim – the difference comes down to knowing who is the bigger Mivakeish.

**My son my Bechor Yisrael ()**– The **Kuzari**notes that we are different than the rest of the world. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often point out that this is the uniqueness of being Am HaNivchar. What does this mean? Rav Schachter notes that when we are Chaviv that means that we represent the sense of Godliness to the world. He would often remind us that this is the responsibility of the Bechor in general – that he is to represent the parental ideal to the other family members. Sometimes we do not do this job well, and it hurts our standing as Am HaNivchar.

**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 ztl. 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.

**וַיַּ֥עַשׂ משֶׁ֖ה וְאַֽהֲרֹ֑ן** **And Moshe and Aharon did as Hashem had commanded them (7:6)** – Usually the phrase “as Hashem commanded” is reserved for Mitzvos that would be relevant for future generations as well. Why is it used here? **Maran HaRav Schachter Shlita** explains that the Halacha that a Novi must bolster his own word with some degree of proof that he is a Novi is a Halacha relevant to future generations as wel**l.**

**וּמשֶׁה֙ בֶּן־שְׁמֹנִ֣ים שָׁנָ֔ה Moshe was 80 years old (7:7)** - Why do we need to know how old Moshe and Aharon were? **Rav Sorotzkin ztl.** explained that in the eye of the Torah there is never any time for retirement.

**תְּנ֥וּ לָכֶ֖ם מוֹפֵ֑ת** **Provide a proof for yourself ( 7:9)** -   Why will Pharaoh need a proof when Moshe and Aharon speak to him?  **Rav Yehuda Pesaya ztl.**famed Mikubal and author of the Kesser Tzaddik  likened the situation to that of someone who had a servant for many years. Every time the master needed money he would send his servant to his rich friend to borrow some money on his behalf. The friend would always send the money with the servant. After some time the servant got married and the master had to get another servant in his stead. When he sent the new servant to borrow money, his friend refused to give the servant any money till he brought him a signed agreement that the money would be repaid. When asked why there was a need in the agreement, the lender told the borrower that the first servant’s loyalty was clear – that’s why no promissory note was needed but the second one was new and as such untested and not as yet deserving of the trust. Similarly, when Moshe Rabbenu, 'a"h, approached him with the message that he was sent by G-d, Pharaoh said, "Wait for me till I look up your G-d's Name in my book of gods". But, according to the Midrash, the Holy One Blessed Be He's Name was not in his book. Moshe Rabbeinu told him that his book contained only dead and meaningless gods, but the G-d of Israel who is a living G-d was not in his book. That is why Pharaoh asked for proof, because his knowledge was limited to his lifeless gods and he knew nothing about the true G-d of Israel.

**The Makkos – The Ran (Derashos 6)** notes that when Hashem promises that he shall not put any of the punishments of Egypt on Bnei Yisrael, what kind of promise is it, not to punish an Oved Hashem simply by keeping from the punishments of sinners? Ran explains that the promise was not limited to the maakos but rather that the Egyptians got EVERY Machala in Mitzrayim. **Rav Mattisyahu Salomon Shlita** explains how each Makkah was actually representative of multiple makkos – Dam caused a cessation of fluid in the land and consequently in the people – it affected the kidney and urinary tracts. Those who drank the blood suffered gastro-intestinally, the smells caused fainting or asthma. Tzfardeia caused ulcers and complex gastro difficulties, the noises causing hearing difficulties and loss of sleep and madness. Kinim caused fatigue. Arov brought about anxiety and traumatic stress not to mention resulting toxins from poison and potential sclerosis if bitten. Shechin brought forth all the dermatological illnesses and the psychological complexes that came with it. Barad destroyed the roof over the head of the Egyptian and exposed him to the respiratory illnesses of collapsed buildings…the list is endless.

**כָּבֵ֖ד לֵ֣ב פַּרְעֹ֑ה Pharaoh’s heart is too hard (7:14**) – What Was Pharaoh thinking when he wouldn’t listen to the obvious messages to be found in the Makkos or even in the words of his advisors? What was HIS logical flow? The author of the **Teshuvah MeiAhava** explains that although Pharaoh had heard the rumors that Hashem promised Avraham that his children would be enslaved and then released with great reward, he lived with the premise of the rumors of the Leitzanei HaDor that Yitzchak was sired by Avimelech.  Therefore Bnei Yisrael could not have been the nation Hashem prophesized about. He adds that this is the idea in the Haggada that B’Tzeis Yisrael ..Me’Am Loeiz – from a nation that offered and spouted rumors that we were not legitimate Bnei Avraham.

**לֵ֣ךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹ֞ה בַּבֹּ֗קֶר הִנֵּה֙ יֹצֵ֣א הַמַּ֔יְמָה Go to Pharaoh behold he is going out to the water (7:16) - Rashi** reminds us that Pharaoh would go to the water early each morning to relieve himself because he started the claim that he was a God and did not need to use the facilities. **Rav Reuven Melamed ztl.** pointed out the irony of Pharaoh. On the one hand, he was the wealthiest person in the world with the greatest honor. Still, he was unable to do as he pleased due to the aura he created for himself. In essence, he was enslaved to the image he created in order to lead the people. Rav Melamed explains that this is an incredible lesson for anyone enslaved to any sort of desire. That which we tend to be interested in pursuing often becomes that which becomes all consuming – of us and our lives.

**אֱמֹ֣ר אֶל־אַֽהֲרֹ֡ן קַ֣ח מַטְּךָ֣ Tell Aharon to take your staff (7:19)** – The first three Makos which involved hitting were done by Aharon as opposed to Moshe because both the land and the water had saved Moshe in his life and Moshe felt indebted to them. However, water and land are both inanimate so what difference does hitting it or not make? **Rav Wolbe ztl.** explains that the issue of refraining was not for the water or the land but rather for Moshe. Moshe knew that a refined person shows dignity to anything he comes in contact with and benefits from. If one trains himself in regard to even that which is inanimate, certainly s/he will do the same for animate items.

**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 Shlita** 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.

**דם Dam** - Why was Dam the first of the Makos that Hashem sent? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl** explained that when a person has jealousy, desire or a penchant for Kavod, it destroys him (see Pirkei Avos). When a person quenches the penchant toward these Middos through the Torah and Mussar, all is well. However, if the internal mechanisms do not apply, then external means to handle the jealousy, desire and Kavod will be employed. Rav Moshe noted that this happens in governments especially -- where the motives of war and of unrest are most often jealousy, desire and honor and the result is most often, death and theft.  In order to change their middos here, Hashem first sent the Egyptians the Makkah of blood to show them that they were people who had blood on their hands all the time -- not just when actively killing. Their actions were based on their jealousy, desire and honor and these actions left blood on their hands -- and throughout their land.

**צפרדע Tzefardeiya** - **Rav Lamm Shlita** noted that the early Makkos highlighted that which was most important to the Egyptians that became the source of their travail and woe. The frogs were a sign of fertility and here, the frogs had so much fertility that it threatened the comfort of the Egyptians and their lives. Rav Lamm expanded the message -- noting that in our own lives we have our idols --science, technology etc. The expansion of each to an extreme has brought us a world of anarchy in extreme freedom, pornography in the extreme of free love, technology and enslavement to it -- etc. There is divine irony in all of it.

**וּבְכָ֥ה וּבְעַמְּךָ֖ וּבְכָל־עֲבָדֶ֑יךָ יַֽעֲל֖וּ הַֽצְפַרְדְּעִֽים**: **And in your ovens (7:29) – The Talmud (Pesachim)** learns from here that the frogs even went into the hot ovens despite their danger. In fact, the gemara notes that Chananiah Mishael and Azaria made a Kal VaChomer to determine that they too, must go into the oven at the time that they were tested**. Tosafos** asks why we needed a Kal VaChomer for this if it is a clear Halacha? **Rav Schachter Shlita** cited Rabbeinu Tam who noted that perhaps the Avodah Zara that they were supposed to bow to was not a real Avoda Zara and in the face of torture, they could have been lenient. Therefore they used a Kal VaChomer. Rav Schachter added that many of the other Rishonim were not happy with this explanation but it demonstrates the lesson that one can learn issues of sacrifice for Kiddush Hashem from animals too.

**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 ztl** 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.

לְמָחָ֑ר **Tomorrow (8:6)**– Why didn’t פרעה want the frogs out today? Why wait until tomorrow and continue to suffer for 24 hours? **Rashi**explains that פרעה wanted Moshe to daven now that the frogs disappear tomorrow because this would demonstrate that the power was distinct from that of the Egyptian magicians who could only do things immediately.  To make this point, פרעה was willing to suffer. **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl.** notes the power of פרעה’s scientific curiosity that led him to wait it out. Once he had the freedom of mind, he hardened his heart – not because of his doubt but rather his stubbornness.

**וַיִּצְעַ֤ק משֶׁה֙ אֶל־ה עַל־דְּבַ֥ר הַֽצְפַרְדְּעִ֖ים אֲשֶׁר־שָׂ֥ם לְפַרְעֹֽה**: **Moshe and Aharon went out and Moshe called out to Hashem about the frogs (8:8)** – Why is it only by the frogs do we find Moshe crying out to remove a Makkah? **Rav Chaim Kamil ztl.** noted that the Frogs were famous for their Mesirus Nefesh and they serve as the source for the message of Mesirus Nefesh in the future (Pesachim 93b). That being the case, Moshe knew that ordinary prayer would not be able to remove them. In order to overpower the frogs, the style would need to be stronger – hence the Tzaakah.

**וַיִּצְעַ֤ק משֶׁה֙ אֶל־ה עַל־דְּבַ֥ר הַֽצְפַרְדְּעִ֖ים אֲשֶׁר־שָׂ֥ם לְפַרְעֹֽה And Moshe cried out to Hashem on the matter of the frogs (8:8)** – On the matter of Moshe’s **Rabbi Akiva Sofer ztl.** impassioned Tefillah noted here as Tzaaka one becomes aware of Moshe’s roused compassion for the Egyptians. Why? Was he so aggrieved about their plight? explained that Moshe was concerned lest the full Kiddush Hashem due to be achieved through the 10 Makkos not be achieved if Pharaoh listened to the messages of the frogs. Thus he cried out Al Divar – on the words of the frogs – lest he hear and the Kiddush Hashem not be actualized.

**כינים Kinim** - The Kinim were on man and beast (Shemos 8:13) - Why couldn’t the magicians replicate this Makka? **Rashi** explains that they had no power on something that was smaller than a barleycorn. **Daas Zekanim** offers a different interpretation. They note that unless a magician’s foot is on the ground, he has no ability to conduct his wizardry. **Rav Mattisyahu Solomon Shlita** notes that the severity of this Makkah went so far that the Magician couldn’t place his foot on the ground because of the Kinim.

**וַתְּהִי֙ הַכִּנָּ֔ם בָּֽאָדָ֖ם וּבַבְּהֵמָ֑ה And the Kinim were found in man and animal (8:13)** – The **Rambam** (in his Pirush to Avos) notes that unlike all the other Makkos which seem to differentiate between the Maaka’s effect on the Egyptian and its lack of effect on the Jew, in regard to Kinim no such reference is present. Rambam explains that in fact, Kinim were found within the camp of both Jew and non-Jew but it only affected the Egyptian. **Rav Sorotzkin ztl**. finds proof from the fact that Yaakov asked not to be buried in Egypt. Rashi explains that he was worried that his body would be affected by the Makkah of Kinim. If Kinim were not to be found in Goshen, why would he simply request to be buried there – unless Kinim were to be found there as well. But why would Hashem have this makka there? Rav Sorotzkin adds that this was necessary because it was the last Makka of brick requirement. Had kinim not been in the Jewish camp the Egyptians might have moved the brick operation to Goshen and the Jews would have had to continue working.

 **לְהוֹצִ֥יא אֶת־הַכִּנִּ֖ים וְלֹ֣א יָכֹ֑לוּ  To produce the Kinim and they could not (8:14)** – Why was the 3rd Makka Kinim? And why was Yaakov afraid of it so much that he wanted to be out of Mitzrayim for it? **Rav Eytan Feiner Shlita** suggested that after Pharaoh, the next ruling class was the class of Preists and Chartumim. However, the Avodah Zara protocol for them demanded that not only they – but also their animals --be hairless. This was the case in order to prevent lice from being on them as they served Avodah Zara. Ergo, the challenge of Kinim from Hashem to the Egyptians was that He was cutting them off from their status – not only would they be made to suffer, they would not be able to do anything about it. Moreover, they would look to Yaakov Aveinu and see that his body was free of lice and then they would turn him into an Avoda Zara posthumously. This, Yaakov could not stand and asked to be removed from the place.

**ערוב It is the finger of Hashem (8:15)** – The **Vilna Gaon** points out that the difference between the finger and the hand (which was seen at the shores of Yam suf) is that a finger warns and the hand strikes. **Rav Yaakov Galinsky ztl**. adds that if the 10 makkos were merely a warning – we need to accept the warnings of OUR lives and engage in Teshuvah for OUR misdeeds.

**אֶת־הֶֽעָרֹ֑ב Arov - Rashi (8:17)** notes that it was all types of wild animals mixed together. Why is it important to know that they came together? **Rav Nosson Gestetner ztl.** explained that different wild animals become scared of different things. Some are afraid of fire, tossed stones, water etc. But, what scares one wild animal might embolden a different specie. Thus, that they came in a group meant that the Egyptians were more helpless in deterring them since no one proven method of chasing them was a possibility.

**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 Shlita** 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.

**דֶּ֚רֶךְ שְׁל֣שֶׁת יָמִ֔ים נֵלֵ֖ךְ בַּמִּדְבָּ֑ר  We shall travel 3 days into the desert and bring a sacrifice to Hashem (8:23)** – At the beginning of the Parsha Moshe was told that this was to be emancipation and suddenly he is turning it into some kind of Shabbaton**? Rav Belsky Shlita** suggested that perhaps the Bnei Yisrael were incapable of comprehending the idea of full emancipation and thus Moshe spoke of a 3 day “break” to warm them to the idea of freedom, to warm them to the idea of freedom. At the same time, the idea of a 3 day excursion allows one to contemplate kedusha independent of secular responsibilities. It affects the preparations for the moment and the relations from the time spent and how it is taken into the rest of the year. This too, was part of Moshe’s desire for the people.

 **וַיֵּצֵ֥א משֶׁ֖ה מֵעִ֣ם פַּרְעֹ֑ה וַיֶּעְתַּ֖ר  Moshe left Pharoh and davened to Hashem (8:26) – Rashi** explains that he went the extra mile for the Tefillah. **Rav Schwab ztl**. asks why he did that? Why wasn’t it better NOT to daven, have Pharaoh and the people be punished and the Jews would leave? Why does Moshe daven on the Egyptians behalf? Rav Schwab answers that Bnei Yisrael are recognized as Goy Gadol (See Megillah 27a) because we call out to Hashem or because we study His Torah. Moshe chooses to daven extra hard because when the Egyptians see the power of his prayer, Moshe will have created a Kiddush Hashem and the nations would know to appreciate Bnei Yisrael for this power.

**דבר Dever - Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** noted that Dever was unique among the Makkos insofar as it was the first that shattered the economic and military foundations of the Egyptian empire. The other Makkos made the Egyptians uncomfortable. This Makka made it so that their economy could not and would not recover. Pharaoh considered the Jews his property. Hashem showed him that even that which he DID own he could not control. Thus, this makka is the one of Yad HaChazaka -- it is the outstretched arm that exposes danger and the suddenness of catastrophe that is about to strike. It was now that Pharaoh would see the power of Hashem in a more intense, more damaging way.

**הִנֵּ֨ה יַד־ה הוֹיָ֗ה בְּמִקְנְךָ֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר בַּשָּׂדֶ֔ה Behold the hand of Hashem will attack your cattle in the field (9:3)** – **Rav Dovid Soloveitchik Shlita** asks how we use this as a proof to the Yad Hachazaka of the Seder. After all, the Makka of Dever was only at the halfway point to Geulah? Why was Dever singled out with the phrase Yad HaChazaka? **Rav Dovid Cohen Shlita,** Chevron Rosh HaYeshiva, explains that the first 5 makkos broke the spirit of Pharaoh and he would have let the Jews go. Thereafter Hashem hardened his heart in order to punish him. This is why I is referred to as “Yad HaChazaka” it is a five fingered punishment that destroyed the economy.

 **הִנֵּ֗ה לֹא־מֵ֛ת מִמִּקְנֵ֥ה יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל עַד־אֶחָ֑ד  And from the Jewish animals up to one (9:7)** – It almost sounds like one died. Yet, earlier the Possuk had mentioned that no animal had died. Which version was correct? The **Gra** explained that the sheep of the Migadef did die but prior to Matan Torah his Jewish status was determined based on patrilineal descent. Ergo, the sheep dying was that of a non-Jew. The only thing was that Pharaoh did not know this. **Rav Gedaliah Eisman ztl**. explains that this is an incredible lesson in human nature. Pharaoh did not bother to seek an alternative explanation for the abnormality because he did not WANT to accept the possibility that Hashem was correct despite seeing the entire Egyptian flock die. It is an incredible lesson about the Yetzer HaRa’s belief system.

**שחין Shechin - Rav Mordechai Eliyahu ztl**. noted the possuk (Devarim 7:15) that reminds us that if we follow the Mitzvos than the plagues of Mitzrayim that we knew will not be upon us. Rav Mordechai Eliyahu wanted to know what was added with the words “Asher Yadata” that you know? Don’t we know of all of the Makkos? Rav Eliyahu answers that in order to make sure that we really understood the intensity of each of the Makkos, Hashem allowed us to experience them in Mitzrayim but for a brief moment. Otherwise, we might look at a Shechin and recommend a talc or a salve or a cream for it, out of our ignorance. Therefore Hashem gave us a moment’s experience of the Makkah that would stay with the Egyptian so that we would know what they were going through and know that if we follow the Mitzvos, we will never experience the same fate.

 **וַיְהִ֗י שְׁחִין֙ אֲבַעְבֻּעֹ֔ת פֹּרֵ֕חַ בָּֽאָדָ֖ם וּבַבְּהֵמָֽה: Shechin..on the people and the animals (9:10)** - While able to understand why the people got the Makkah what did the animals do? **Rav Yehuda Hertzl Henkin ztl** explained that in both of these Makos Pharaoh had just noted that his heart became “Kaveid” which comes from the word “Kavod” or “Honor”. Rav Henkin suggests that Haashem wanted Pharaoh and the Mitzriyim to know that they might think that they are so special but they are not anymore important in Hashem’s eyes than the animals.

**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 ztl.** 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 ztl.** 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.

- **הַיָּרֵא֙ אֶת־דְּבַ֣ר ה מֵֽעַבְדֵ֖י פַּרְעֹ֑ה The one who feared the word of Hashem (Shemos 9:20)** - Note that it does not say, “the one who feared Hashem” because Yiras Shomayim does not come as a result of shock and awe in a Makka. It comes from someone listening to the word of Hashem and His Torah. **Rav Yechiel Perr Shlita** would also note the contrast is to “he who did not pay attention”. Rav Perr explained that not having belief comes from not being open to having it. The opportunities to see Hashem in so many different ways abound us. We just need to allow ourselves to be open to it.

 **כְּצֵאתִי֙ אֶת־הָעִ֔יר אֶפְרֹ֥שׂ אֶת־כַּפַּ֖י  When I leave the city I will spread my hands up to Hashem (9:29)** – Shlomo HaMelech also does this style when he dedicated the Beis HaMikdash.  Why don’t we do this today? **Rabbi Akiva Eiger** points out that we have set positions for Tefillah. Why do we not spread our hands? He answers that the issue is one that the Christians corrupted from us.  A similar concept exists in the name of the **Gra** who points out at the beginning of Yeshayahu that there are 2 types of Prishus Kapayim – one outward and down and the other outward and up (like a giver and a receiver). If one were to duchan and could not hold his hands out**, Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted in the name of Rav Soloveitchik ztl., that he would not be Yotzai since to give a Beracha one needs to hold his hands out on his own.  Rav Schachter Shlita would point out to us that there are a number of instances where the Christians corrupted the intent and Chazal decided to make changes from the style in Tanach. Here the Prishus Kapayim means 2 different things based on position of the hands up or down.

**כִּ֥י אֲפִילֹ֖ת הֵֽנָּה  The wheat and the spelt were not destroyed (9:32) – Rashi**explains that these crops are late and thus wee still young and soft enough to withstand the storm of the Barad. **Midrash Tanchuma** argues with this idea maintaining that the word Afilos comes from the word Ploei Ploim – wonderous in that it was wonderous that these crops were able to survive. Why does the Midrash challenge Rashi’s explanation if this Peshat is supported throughout Shas? And why is it Ploei ployim instead of merely “a peleh”? **Rav Nebenzahl Shlita** explains that the entirety of Barad was a miracle as it involved a challenge to nature and the Barad itself – fire and ice/hail at the same time was an additional amazing thing. That the late crops were not destroyed at the time that destruction was happening in the most miraculous way – is Plaoi Peloim.

**כִּ֥י אֲפִילֹ֖ת הֵֽנָּה  The wheat and the spelt were not destroyed since they are late in sprouting (9:32)** **– Rashi** cites the Tanchuma which explains that it was a miracle (Pele) that these types were not destroyed. Why were the Wheat and spelt deserving of a miracle**? Rav Bauch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explains that there was a lesson here to Pharaoh – to be flexible instead of brazen – like the wheat and spelt whose flexibility kept them alive. The Pele is a reference to the fact that the miracle was performed for Pharaoh and he STILL didn’t want to learn it.

**Haftorah:**

**Nevuchadnetzer’s defeat of Mitzrayim** – **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** notes that the battle of the Babylonians and Egyptians contained a major dual message for the Jewish people. On the one hand, the defeat of Pharaoh Necho II and the Egyptian empire reminded Bnei Yisroel that they cannot trade their trust in Hashem for support of Egypt for Egypt can crumble in a moment. At the same time, the rise of Nevuchadnetzer came about, as the Novi notes, as payback for Babylonia’s dealing with Tyre who had strained relations with Yirushalayim. When good or bad things happen in the world, we need to look at them from a Jewish perspective.

**בְּקַבְּצִ֣י | אֶת־בֵּ֣ית יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל מִן־הָֽעַמִּים֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר נָפֹ֣צוּ בָ֔ם וְנִקְדַּ֥שְׁתִּי בָ֖ם לְעֵינֵ֣י הַגּוֹיִ֑ם There will no longer be a silon mam’ir for Bnei Yisrael and a painful thorn, and they will know that I am Hashem… when I gather the House of Israel from the nations of their dispersions. I will be sanctified before the nations, and they will live in their Land which I gave to my servant Yaakov. (Yechezkel 28:24-25)** - **Rav Yosef Carmel Shlita** noted that this Nevuah contrasts with that of Yirmiyahu offered at the same time. In regard to the prophecy we began with, the two see things similarly, as Yirmiyahu uses similar imagery of planting vineyards and living in security (Yirmiyahu 31:4, 32:37). Yechezkel also uses very strong and rare language to get his idea across. According to **Targum Yonatan**, the word silon means a corrupt king and Rashi explains that mam’ir means a painful affliction (as is used in regard to tzara’at (see Vayikra 13:51). Targum Yonatan explains shatim as marauders who plunder, and **Rashi** explains that it means those who degrade their victims. To summarize the approaches of both, in the future, Bnei Yisrael will escape exceptional oppression and will be fortunate to live in security in their Land. Rav Carmel added that we have witnessed our populace becoming among the most affluent in the world. While some 75 years ago, we were viewed as thorns in the eyes of the nations and like lepers, we have now been able to turn things around. We stand out among our neighbors as a uniquely talented nation, and those who still try to oppress us have themselves experienced great destruction. The interest of so many nations to get to see and take part in our success is part of the prophecy of Yechezkel and Yirmiyahu. May we succeed in being a light unto the nations.

**בְּקַבְּצִ֣י | אֶת־בֵּ֣ית יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל מִן־הָֽעַמִּים֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר נָפֹ֣צוּ בָ֔ם וְנִקְדַּ֥שְׁתִּי בָ֖ם לְעֵינֵ֣י הַגּוֹיִ֑ם   When I gather Bnei Yisrael from among the nations and my name will be sanctified from them (Yechezkel 28:25)** – **Rav Dov Lior Shlita** used this possuk to explain the Kiddush Hashem of the Medina despite some of its shortcomings. The Novi explains the settlement of the land, the planting of vineyards and the building of homes. Where are the discussions of doing mitzvos and learning in Yehivos? Rav Lior cited the **Chofetz Chaim** who noted that initially at the time of the early stages of the Geulah, the land will need infrastructure first. Thereafter, a larger group will come and a greater stress on Shmiras HaMitzvos will come with it. Rav Lior noted that this is what seems to be happening to us in Eretz Yisrael and Halevai we be Zoche to be ready to move on to the continued steps until the Geulah Sheleima --- and beyond.

**The great 'tanim' (serpent) that crouches within its rivers, who has said, 'Mine is my river and I have made myself.'" (Yechezkel 29:3) – Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** pointed out that in contrast to pharaoh who give credit to the great serpents in the waters, the Jewish view of the Leviathan (identified in the Gemara as the Taninim HaGedolim) is as a vehicle for Kavod Shomayim. In contrast to the arrogant Pharaoh, who says, "Mine is my river and I have made myself," the Jew says, "Know that Hashem, He is G-d; He made us and (not we) [we are His]." (Tehillim 100:3) The written form is, "and not we," and the spoken form is, "and we are his." These two readings of the pasuk complement each other. When we know that it is "not we" that made ourselves, then "we are His," and them we will merit to say, "For Hashem is good, His kindness endures forever!" (100:5) [Similarly, the Bnei Yissachar quotes that this is the song of the Leviathan.]

**בַּיּ֣וֹם הַה֗וּא אַצְמִ֚יחַ קֶ֙רֶן֙ לְבֵ֣ית יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל וּלְךָ֛ אֶתֵּ֥ן פִּתְחֽוֹן־פֶּ֖ה בְּתוֹכָ֑ם Son of man, Nevuchadnetzer, king of Bavel etc. Therefore, so says Hashem, for his efforts I have given him the land of Egypt. On that day, I shall bring forth the savior to the Jewish people (Yechezkel 29:21)** – What is the connection between the reward of Nevuchadnetzer and that of the destiny of the Jewish people? And what does the Novi mean when he speaks of “That day”? **Rav Nebenzahl Shlita** explains that Nevuchadnetzer fought with Tzur not because of his desire to fulfill the word of Hashem but rather due to his own plan of global domination. Still, since in the end, he achieved Hashem’s plan, he is deserving of reward. How much more so will this be true for the children of Israel who follow Hashem’s plan – on the day that Nevuchadnetzer is rewarded for his efforts Shelo L’Shma, they will receive reward for their efforts L’Shma.