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Why did Moses tell Pharaoh, if not a lie, then less than the full truth? Here is the conversation between him and Pharaoh after the fourth plague, arov, "swarms of insects" (some say "wild animals"):

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land." But Moses said, "That would not be right. The sacrifices we offer the Lord our God would be detestable to the Egyptians. And if we offer sacrifices that are detestable in their eyes, will they not stone us? We must take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, as He commands us." (Ex. 8:21-23)

Not just here but throughout, Moses makes it seem as if all he is asking is for permission for the people to undertake a three day journey, to offer sacrifices to God and (by implication) then to return. So, in their first appearance before Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron say:

"This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Let My people go, so that they may hold a festival to Me in the wilderness.'"

Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go."

Then they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, or He may strike us with plagues or with the sword." (Ex. 5:1-3)

God even specifies this before the mission has begun, saying to Moses at the burning bush: "You and the elders of Israel will then go to the king of Egypt. You must tell him, 'The Lord, God of the Hebrews, revealed Himself to us. Now we request that you allow us to take a three day journey into the desert, to sacrifice to the Lord our God'" (3: 18).

The impression remains to the very end. After the Israelites have left, we read:

The king of Egypt received news that the people were escaping. Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds regarding the people, and said, "What have we done? How could we have released Israel from doing our work?" (14:5)

At no stage does Moses say explicitly that he is proposing that the people should be allowed to leave permanently, never to return. He talks of a three day journey. There is an argument between him and Pharaoh as to who is to go. Only the adult males? Only the people, not the cattle? Moses consistently asks for permission to worship God, at some place that is not Egypt. But he does not speak about freedom or the promised land. Why not? Why does he create, and not correct, a false impression? Why can he not say openly what he means?

The commentators offer various explanations. R. Shmuel David Luzzatto (Italy, 1800-1865) says that it was impossible for Moses to tell the truth to a tyrant like Pharaoh. R. Yaakov Mecklenburg (Germany, 1785-1865, Ha-Ktav v'eha-Kabbalah) says that technically Moses did not tell a lie. He did indeed mean that he wanted the people to be free to make a journey to worship God, and he never said explicitly that they would return.

The Abarbanel (Lisbon 1437 – Venice 1508) says that God told Moses deliberately to make a small request, to demonstrate Pharaoh's cruelty and indifference to his slaves. All they were asking was for a brief respite from their labours to offer sacrifices to God. If he refused this, he was indeed a tyrant. Rav Elhanan Samet (Iyyunim be-Parshot Ha-Shevua, Exodus, 189) cites an unnamed commentator who says simply that this was war between Pharaoh and the Jewish people, and it war it is permitted, indeed sometimes necessary, to deceive.

Actually, however, the terms of the encounter between Moses and Pharaoh are part of a wider pattern that we have already observed in the Torah. When Jacob leaves Laban we read: "Jacob decided to go behind the back of Laban the Aramean, and did not tell him that he was leaving" (Gen. 31: 20). Laban protests this behaviour: "How could you do this? You went behind my back and led my daughters away like prisoners of war! Why did you have to leave so secretly? You went behind my back and told me nothing!" (31:26-27). Jacob again has to tell at best a half-truth when Esau suggests that they travel together: "You know that the children are weak, and I have responsibility for the nursing sheep and cattle. If they are driven hard for even one day, all the sheep will die. Please go ahead of me, my lord" (33:13-14). This, though not strictly a lie, is a diplomatic excuse.

When Jacob's sons are trying to rescue their sister Dina who has been raped and abducted by Shechem the Hivite, they "replied deceitfully" (34:13) when Shechem and his father proposed that the entire family should come and settle with them, telling them that they could only do so if all the males of the town underwent circumcision.

Earlier still we find that three times Abraham and Isaac, forced to leave home because of famine, have to pretend that they are their wives' brothers not their husbands because they fear that otherwise they will be killed so that Sarah or Rebecca could be taken into the king's harem (Gen. 12, 20, 26). These six episodes cannot be entirely accidental or coincidental to the biblical narrative as a whole. The implication seems to be this. Outside the promised land Jews in the biblical age are in danger if they tell the truth. They are at constant risk of being killed or at best enslaved.

Why? Because they are powerless in an age of power. They are a small family, at best a small nation, in an age of empires. They have to use their wits to survive. By and large they do not tell lies but they can create a false impression. This is not how things should be. But it is how they were before Jews had their own land, their one and only defensible space. It is how people in impossible situations are forced to be if they are to exist at all. No one should be forced to live a lie. In Judaism, truth is the seal of God and the essential precondition of trust between human beings. But when your people is being enslaved, its male children murdered, you have to liberate them by whatever means are possible. Moses, who had already seen that his first encounter with Pharaoh made things worse for his people – they still

had to make the same quota of bricks but now also had to gather their own straw (5:6-8) – did not want to risk making them worse still. The Torah here is not justifying deceit. To the contrary, it is condemning a system in which telling the truth may put your life at risk, as it still does in many tyrannical or totalitarian societies today. Judaism – a religion of dissent, questioning and “arguments for the sake of heaven” – is a faith that values intellectual honesty and moral truthfulness above all things. The Psalmist says: “Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord and who shall stand in His holy place? One who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not taken My name in vain nor sworn deceitfully” (Ps. 24:3-4). Malachi says of one who speaks in God’s name: “The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips” (Mal. 2:6). Every Amidah ends with the prayer, “My God, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from deceitful speech.”

What the Torah is telling us in these six narratives in Genesis and the seventh in Exodus is the connection between freedom and truth. Where there is freedom there can be truth. Otherwise there cannot. A society where people are forced to be less than fully honest merely to survive and not provoke further oppression is not the kind of society God wants us to make.

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Rabbi Reisman - Parshas Va'eira 5776

1. A couple of thoughts on this week's Parsha. We have in the last Posuk before Sheini a highly unusual Posuk, a Posuk which is Darshuned in many directions. The Posuk says that HKB"H spoke to Moshe and Aharon as can be found in 6:13 (וַיִּצְוֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיֹּאמֶר -) and he commanded the Jews and to Pharaoh and that is the whole Posuk. It doesn't say exactly what was commanded. Everyone wonders, what was commanded. Regarding Pharaoh is known, they went to Pharaoh and told him about the Makkos. What commandment was there here that was (אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) and as you know all the Darshanim, the Meforshim all have each his own Pshat and (על פנים לתורה) it may all be true.

However, there is one Pshat that comes from a Gemara Yerushalmi. Of the many Peshatim, this is one of the earliest. It is in Maseches Rosh Hashono on Daf Yud Zayin, third Perek, Halacha Hei. The Gemara says (על מה ציום) on what were Moshe and Aharon commanded to go to Klal Yisrael at this juncture, at this point. This was after all before the Makkos.

The Yerushalmi answers (על פרשת שילוח עבדים) they were starting to be taught the Mitzvos of the Torah and the Ribbono Shel Olam started by telling Moshe and Aharon to tell them that if they would have an Eved Ivri then there is a Parsha of Shiluach Avadim, they would have to let the Eved go after 6 years of work or after Yovel whichever comes first. He taught them the Parsha of Shiluach Avadim.

So here the Yerushalmi teaches us a Chiddush. The very first Mitzvah the Jewish people were taught in Mitzrayim before the Mitzvos that were taught in Marah such as Shabbos, before the Mitzvos that were taught in Parshas Bo such as the Korban Pesach, before all that there was a Choshen Mishpat Mitzvah that was taught and that was the Mitzvah of Shiluach Avadim, sending an Eved Ivri free. This is what it says in the Yerushalmi.

First of all, with this Yerushalmi we understand a Posuk in Yirmiya 34:13. The Posuk there says (כה-אמר יְרֹד, אֲלֵרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל). The Ribbono Shel Olam through Yirmiya says to the Jewish people (בְּרַחֲמֵי בְּרִית , אֶת-אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם, בְּיוֹם הַוָּצְאָה אוֹתָם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִצְרַיִם, מִבַּיִת עֲבָדִים לְאֹמֶר). When I took the Jewish people out of Egypt I made a Bris, I made a bond with them, I made a deal with them, and I said to them 34:14 (מִקֵּץ שָׁבַע) (שָׁנִים תִּשְׁלַחוּ אִישׁ אֶת-אֶחָיו הָעִבְרִי 7th year he has got to be sent out. After 6 years he goes free.

Anyone who learns the Posuk wonders, (I say anyone who learns the Posuk because not to many people learn Yirmiya Perek Lamed Daled). But anyone who learns the Posuk wonders where is there a Bris regarding Shiluach Avadim when Klal Yisrael left Mitzrayim. Shiluach Avadim is in Parshas Mishpatim after Har Sinai. What is going on here, where is this Parsha?

The Yerushalmi says yes it is here at the beginning of Parshas Vaera. HKB"H taught Klal Yisrael this Mitzvah. Ok so we have here I guess a technical piece of information that Mitzvos were taught already in Mitzrayim beginning with the Mitzvah of Shiluach Avadim.

When we learn Parshas Mishpatim we learn 21:1 (וְאָמַרְתָּ, הַמְשַׁפְּטִים, אֲשֶׁר) and Rashi says (מה הראשונים מסיני אף אלו מסיני) (לפניהם) and Rashi says (מה הראשונים מסיני אף אלו מסיני). After Mattan Torah, Moshe Rabbeinu was told by the Ribbono Shel Olam teach the Jewish people Choshen Mishpat Halachos. Teach them Halachos that have to do with financial dealings. After all, some people think that religion is limited to things that have to do with Bain Adom Lamakom, to the Mitzvos of the Yomim Tovim, the Mitzvah of Davening or of learning Torah. Teach them Af Eilu Misinai that the dealings of Bain Adam L'chaveiro, the Choshen Mishpat dealings these are all part of Torah.

Parshas Mishpatim begins with the Parsha of Eved Ivri. We wonder, did the Ribbono Shel Olam have to start with the Parsha of Eved Ivri? Is that the most common Mitzvah? We have the Parsha of the Arbaa Shomrim in the Parsha, isn't that much more common, to watch something for your friend? Isn't it more common to work for someone, to have a Parsha of Sochrin? Why does it begin with Shiluach Avadim. Halo Davar Hu?

The answer to the question which explains why it is first in Parshas Mishpatim and why it was first in the existence of the Jewish people in Parshas Vaera before Marah and Shabbos and before Mattan Torah and before the Aseres Hadibros, before Korban Pesach. Why is this first?

The answer to this riddle touches on the essence of being a Frum Yid. We live life and we have challenges every day. There are different experiences that cross our path, different experiences that cross our path. We also have Mitzvos, we have a big Torah. Taryag Mitzvos, many D'rabbans. The Torah is big. Your life's experience very often will give you an angle, an avenue, a way to strengthen a particular part of your Avodas Hashem. It may happen, sometime, in your experiences in interacting with other people or in your own challenges from the Ribbono Shel Olam, that something happens that awakens you to something and makes you aware of something. Certainly a person who needed Tzedakah, who couldn't make ends meet and later becomes a wealthy person, is expected to respond more warmly to giving donations to poor people than someone who never had that unfortunate experience of needing money. The Tevia, the demand from you is to learn from the experiences of your life. As you go through life, there is no shortage of opportunities to be

inspired, to be moved towards a particular area, towards a particular avenue. Learn from your experiences.

As the Torah says in Shemos 23:9 (וְאַתֶּם, יְדַעְתֶּם אֶת-נַפְשׁ הָעַר--כִּי-גֵרִים (הָיִיתֶם, בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם). Because the Jews came to Eretz Mitzrayim as strangers, we thousands of years later have to be sensitive to the needs of strangers in our midst. This idea, this fundamental part of the life of a person who is serious about serving Hashem, this fundamental idea explains why Klal Yisrael while they were still slaves in Mitzrayim at the beginning of Parshas Vaera, right at the beginning, because as you know as soon as the Makkos began their servitude ended. Right there HKB"H says do you know what it means to be a slave, you have the experience, I want to teach you the Parsha of Shiluach Avadim. I want to teach you that if you ever have a slave that you have to let him go after 6 years of service.

The Parsha of Shiluach Avadim is something you can feel. Grab the moment. Take the moment and stick with it forever. What a lesson in our lives. HKB"H is always sending us messages. Take those messages, make them real, live them, find strength in them. What a Chiddush! In what would otherwise be a technical Yedia that a certain Mitzvah was taught at this moment.

2. We are told that Klal Yisrael was Zoche, they had the Zechus in Mitzrayim of being saved because as it says in (שְׂדֵה מַלְבוּשָׁם וּמְאָכְלָם) (ולשונם משונים מן המצריים). Because they stayed with a certain Yiddishkeit, with a certain strength of staying separate from the Egyptians, of the Mitzrim. I wonder (שלא שנו את שמם) they didn't change their names, they kept Jewish names? How strange, you would think that when you would have a list of names of Yidden in Mitzrayim, descendants of the greatest Jews, the Shevatim and their children, you would find names like Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Reuvain, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda. After all, they stayed with Jewish names. How strange? We don't find that at all! We don't find a single one of the Yotzei Mitzrayim who had the names of the Avos or the Shevatim. Halo Davar Hu! How strange. (שלא שנו את שמם) they kept their Jewish names. We don't see that, we don't find that. Moshe Rabbeinu had many names and not one of them is Levi or Yaakov or any of those names. Halo Davar Hu! We must be missing something. We say Jewish names mean to name after a Zeidy, after a biblical name. It doesn't seem that way.

I would like to share with you an idea. We find that when Alexander came to Eretz Yisrael in the time of the Bayis Sheini and he met Shimon Hatzaddik and he was impressed by him and although he took control of Eretz Yisrael he dealt in a benevolent way with the Jewish people. Alexander asked that a statue of him be erected in the Bais Hamikdash. Shimon Hatzaddik said he couldn't do it. There are no statues in a Jewish holy place. But he offered to Alexander that all the Jewish children that would be born that year would be named Alexander. That is how the name Alexander which is not even a Jewish name made its way into the Jewish people until today. The question is if giving a name is truly so important, what kind of tradeoff is it to give non-Jewish names to children. Is that important, is that significant? The Chasam Sofer has a Teshuva in Even Ezer Bais Siman Samach Bais where he talks about the importance of the Segula of names. When he talks about (שם שמונת בְּאֶרֶץ) in Tehillim 46:9. That HKB"H puts Sheimos (names) B'aretz. The names mean something. What is going on here?

I would like to answer with something that I heard from Rav Pam B'sof Yamav (towards the end of his life). Rav Pam said that in his experience when people came to talk to him about giving names, sometimes there is friction in a family over a name that is expected by the older generation to be given to a grandchild and the children just don't like the name or they don't like the person who it is being named after. Rav Pam said then, any time in his experience that a name was given for Sholom Bayis reasons they always had Nachas. I learned from here that the Ikkur is not the name the Ikkur is the motivation for the name. Why you are giving the name. It is that way with a lot of the things that we do. It is not so much what we do it is with what attitude we do it.

I once had a friend who was unsure whether to name his child after his father who died as a relatively young man. He asked me and I said go ask Rav Elyashiv. He asked Rav Elyashiv. Rav Elyashiv said Kibbud Av V'aim is a Segula for Arichos Yamim. Of course you should give the name. It is not so much the name as why you give the name. Why you give the name counts.

So too, the name Alexander was given as protection of the Bais Hamikdash. It was given by people because Shimon Hatzaddik the Gadol Hador said to do it. It is not the name, it is why you give the name. Lo Shinu Es Shemam. In Mitzrayim it is not the name. They didn't give names after the Avos as that wasn't the practice. They gave names for Yiddishe reasons. Reuel the Ramban says because Raava he should be a Chavar to the Ribbono Shel Olam. Deuel he should know the Ribbono Shel Olam. So too, with so many of the names in Sefer Shemos. Some we can see easily and some it takes some work to figure out. The names were given for reasons just like the Imahos gave names. For example Reuvain as is found in 29:32 (כִּי-רֵאָה יָרֶךְ בְּעֵינָי) for Hakaras Hatov. They gave names with a Yiddishe meaning.

Lo Shinu Es Shemam, they give Yiddishe names. Names that were based on serving the Ribbono Shel Olam. It is not what the name is it is why you give the name. It is very often that way. Not so much what you do but why you do it. That is a big message in Lo Shinu Es Shemam. And so, we have two thoughts for the Parsha each one is significant not only in that it answers a difficulty but also in that it teaches us a lesson moving forward.

3. In this week's Haftorah we have as one of the main themes in the Haftorah the idea that the Egyptians at the end of the Bayis Rishon had a treaty with the Jewish people and the Navi ridicules that treaty. He calls it a treaty of a stick of reeds like someone who needs a staff to be able to walk. It is a stick of reeds something which can't support him. It is very weak. Yechezkel 29:6 (מִשְׁעַנְתִּי קָנָה, לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל).

I would like you to look at Rav Elchonon in the Kovetz Mamarim (traditional print) page # Kuf Lamed Vav. A tremendous insight into this idea of the Haftorah, something that is very Noge'a to us Bazman Hazeh. But my time is up for today's Shiur so I give it to you to look up and bring it to your Shabbos table. A beautiful message.

With that I wish everybody an absolutely wonderful Mishmar night coming up. Don't forget a Good Shabbos too. Kol Tuv!

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VAEIRA

As the narrative of the redemption of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage unfolds, I am continually struck by the apparently gradual process that is described for us in the Torah. What does all of the detail associated with each of the plagues visited upon Egypt come to teach us? And would not one great plague alone have sufficed? After all, in the past century we witnessed how two bombs, alone, forced the powerful and fanatical Japanese Empire to surrender unconditionally. So, what is the message of the ten plagues and the elapse of time from the onset of the mission of Moshe to its final successful conclusion?

These issues are raised and discussed by all of the great rabbinic commentators over the ages. As is usual in Jewish biblical commentary, there is no one definitive answer, for the Torah itself is said to have seventy different “faces.” Yet, there is much ground for a general understanding of the matter in their writings and opinions.

The main thrust of rabbinic opinion is that all of this was necessary to give the Egyptians an opportunity to repent and save themselves and, just as importantly, to give the Jews an opportunity to begin to think of themselves as a free and independent people and no longer as slaves and pagans. It takes time and a series of many events to turn around the mentality and preconceived ideas of human beings.

The Egyptians had to somehow become accustomed to the fact that they had no right to rule over others and be cruel to their fellow human beings. The Jews had to become accustomed to the responsibilities of freedom and an independent life and to realize that they were destined to be a special people dedicated to the service of God and humankind.

These things cannot happen suddenly and if they do, then they are not of a long-lasting nature. Judaism is not built upon sudden epiphanies but rather upon the long, grinding routine. Only after ten plagues have visited Egypt, the Egyptians and the Jews as well begin to understand what God wants from them.

We see from many incidents recorded for us throughout the Bible that one-shot miracles, no matter how impressive and meaningful they are at the moment they occur, do not really change the mindset of people in the long run. The miracle performed through Elijah, when all of Israel proclaimed that Hashem is the God of the universe, was not of a long-lasting nature and/or influence.

The people soon sank back into the swamp of idolatry and immorality. Regularity, consistency and repeated instruction and education are necessary to make miracles truly influential and long-lasting. If the Jews had been delivered from Egyptian bondage by one great miracle, they would have had a much harder time grasping the unique role that God intended them to play in world history.

They would have been much more reticent to accept that role at Sinai had it not been for the fact that they witnessed so many miracles. Those miracles were repeated regularly and explained to them by Moshe in the light of the godly Torah, which they now willingly accepted.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

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Trapping on Shabbos

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Would the Bnei Yisroel have been permitted to trap arov on Shabbos?

Question #1: Non-kosher Trapping

“Is it prohibited min haTorah to trap a non-kosher animal on Shabbos?”

Question #2: Watch your Trap!

“Can someone violate the melachah of trapping by closing the door of his house?”

Question #3: Anesthesia

“Is it permitted to anesthetize an animal on Shabbos?”

Introduction:

One of the 39 melachos forbidden on Shabbos is tzad, trapping. Although it might seem that this is an easy melachah to define, we will see that it presents some interesting issues. For example, some instances that we would never call “trapping” in English violate the melachah of tzad, and many things that we might consider to be trapping do not. For example, if a deer happens to wander into your house, and you close the door so that it cannot get free, you have just violated the Torah prohibition of tzad. On the other hand, if you close the door of a large cage with a small bird inside, you have not violated the melachah of tzad min haTorah. Tzad requires that the animal or bird is now easily usable, which is not the case of a small bird in a big cage. How one violates the melachah of tzad min haTorah might even vary from species to species, depending on how easy it is to catch.

Not all melachos are created equal

Let us examine another curiosity about trapping. Tzad is not a typical melachah. Most melachah actions make some type of physical and/or chemical change on their object, such as what happens when one cooks, sews, plants, or builds. Yet, tzad does not cause any kind of chemical or physical change to the animal that is caught. It is therefore among the minority of melachos that do not create any physical change. There are only a few other melachos in this category. A similar melachah is hotza’ah, carrying, which involves changing an item’s location, but no alteration to the item itself.

On the other hand, tzad creates a functional change – one makes the animal accessible to humans, whenever one may need it. Since the purpose of trapping is to harness a living creature, so that mankind can now access it, tzad can be viewed as a type of “acquisition” that makes the animal “usable” (Shu”t Avnei Neizer, Orach Chayim 189:7; however, see Biur Halachah 316:2 s.v. oh choleh, who may disagree).

Trapped species

The Torah prohibition of tzad is violated only when one traps a creature that is normally hunted by mankind (Shabbos 106b), meaning that people use its food or hide, or extract from it a medicine (Shabbos 107a) or dye (Shabbos 75a). An animal that meets these requirements is called bemino nitzod, literally, a species that is trapped. Catching an animal of a species that is not usually trapped or used by mankind, which is ein bemino nitzod, is not prohibited as a melachah min haTorah, but only because of rabbinic prohibition. Therefore, catching an animal whose species has no commercial value does not violate tzad min haTorah.

Non-kosher trapping

At this point, let us discuss the first of our opening questions: “Is it prohibited min haTorah to trap a non-kosher animal on Shabbos?”

If this is a type of animal whose hide is used, or from which either a dye or medicine is extracted, trapping it is prohibited min haTorah. According to the Chazon Ish (Orach Chayim 50:4 at end), someone who catches an animal to become a pet also commits a Torah violation of tzad. In his opinion, this use qualifies as bemino nitzod. On the other hand, what is the halachah if an animal is non-kosher, but non-Jews trap it for food? Is bemino nitzod for food limited to whether Jews eat it or not?

This appears to be the subject of a dispute between the rishonim, since Rashi (Shabbos 106b s.v. Hagizin) implies that trapping an animal for food is prohibited min haTorah only when it is a kosher species. On the other hand, the Ritva (Shabbos 106b) states explicitly that trapping a non-kosher species on Shabbos because a gentile intends to eat it is prohibited min haTorah –

the fact that gentiles consume the non-kosher species qualifies it as bemino nitzod.

Catching mice

Early halachic authorities prohibit setting up a mousetrap on Shabbos (see Piskei Tosafos, Shabbos 17b, #62; Magen Avraham 316:9). However, this does not mean that catching mice on Shabbos violates a Torah prohibition – it might be prohibited only miderabbanan. This is because it is unclear whether mice are considered bemino nitzod. If they are considered bemino nitzod, then catching them could sometimes be prohibited min haTorah. If they are not considered bemino nitzod, catching mice is prohibited only because of a rabbinic ruling.

Why would mice or rats be considered bemino nitzod? Although cats catch mice and rats for food, people in the western world are not interested in mice or rats for their food, leather or any other purpose. And the fact that a cat considers it bemino nitzod should not affect halachah.

However, one major authority, the Chayei Odom (30:7), rules that rats are considered bemino nitzod, since the hide can be used for leather, albeit of poor quality. In addition, according to the above-mentioned opinion of the Ritva, in a country where people eat rats, they qualify as bemino nitzod. Therefore, in China, where barbecued rat is a delicacy, it is bemino nitzod, according to the Ritva.

Catching lions

We will now move our discussion from the minute to the massive, from mice to lions. A lion is certainly considered bemino nitzod, since the hide would definitely be used, and, therefore, someone who successfully trapped a lion would violate tzad. However, lions are fairly powerful, so one would violate tzad only if it was, indeed, caught. The Gemara teaches that if a lion wandered into your house, closing the door does not constitute a Torah violation of trapping, since the lion will be able to break free. It is not considered tzad because one has not completed trapping it. One violates tzad for trapping a lion only by catching it in a cage or something similar that can keep it restrained (Shabbos 106b). Presumably, anesthetizing it or any other animal involves a melachah activity of tzad, since it is now “captured,” and one can move it into an appropriate enclosure while the animal is anesthetized.

Thus we can now address the third of our opening questions:

“Is it permitted to anesthetize an animal on Shabbos?”

It seems to me that, if the animal qualifies as bemino nitzod, this is prohibited min haTorah, and, if it does not, it is prohibited miderabbanan.

Catching bees and wasps

Having discussed both mice and lions, let us move from land creatures to flying ones. Catching bees on Shabbos is prohibited because of a rabbinic prohibition, but not min haTorah (Beitzah 36b), for an interesting reason.

Most beekeeping businesses pay their bills either by renting the bees for pollination of crops or by selling the honey. In either way, bees are “used” commercially by allowing them to roam wild – thus, they are never really “trapped” for use by man (Shu”t Avnei Neizer, Orach Chaim #189:21).

In an article I wrote entitled Wanted Dead or Alive, which is available on the website RabbiKaganoff.com, I discussed whether on Shabbos one may catch creatures, such as wasps and mosquitoes, that most of us consider a nuisance.

Catching itself

The Gemara (Shabbos 107a) describes what seems to be a very strange case. If a bird flies into your sleeve or garment on Shabbos so that it is now effectively caught, one is not required to release it. In this instance, the bird is considered to have trapped itself, and there is no requirement to let it go. However, one must be careful not to move it directly on Shabbos, since it is muktzeh.

Not always caught

Any action qualifies as tzad only if the creature is fully trapped, meaning that one no longer needs to figure out how to catch it. Therefore, if one traps a bird in a large enclosure one may not yet have violated the Torah prohibition

of tzad. This depends on whether someone who plans to use it would still need to plan how to catch it (Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 10:19).

Sick animals

On the other hand, catching a deer or any other animal that is sick, lame or injured to the extent that it is unable to flee does not involve a Torah prohibition of tzad. Since the animal can be obtained with little effort, it is considered already caught and already available for man’s possession (Tosefta, Shabbos Chapter 13:4; Gemara Shabbos 106b; Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 10:24). Similarly, it is not prohibited min haTorah to catch a newborn animal that is not yet strong enough to flee (Beitzah 24a). It is also not a Torah prohibition to catch a snail, since they are so slow that they are considered caught (Tosafos Rid, Chagigah 11a).

Domesticated animals

There is no melachah min haTorah involved in catching an animal that is already cultivated, such as domesticated chickens or geese (Shabbos 107a; Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 10:24). However, if the animal breaks free, catching it is prohibited miderabbanan. This is also germane to catching a caged pet that broke free. What can one do if one’s favorite parakeet escaped from its cage on Shabbos? Because of space considerations, we will need to leave the details of this topic for a different time (see Magen Avraham 316:26).

Locking the door

With this background, we can explain some of the following laws concerning meleches tzad. The Mishnah (Shabbos 106b) states that if a deer entered a house, it is prohibited min haTorah to close the door, because this traps the deer. Similarly, it is prohibited min haTorah to sit in the open doorway, because doing so also traps the deer (Mishnah Shabbos 106b). However, once someone is blocking the deer’s escape path, it is permitted for a second person to position himself in such a way that the deer will remain trapped even after the first person gets up (Shabbos 107a). To quote the Rambam, If the first person sat in a way that he closed off the deer’s exit, and then a second person sat next to him, even if the first one later gets up, the first person desecrated Shabbos and the second one did not do anything. He is permitted to remain in his place until Shabbos is over and then seize the deer (Hilchos Shabbos 10:23). The reason why this is permitted is because once the first person caught the deer, it is permitted to keep it captured (Mishnah Berurah 316:23, 24).

Similarly, if someone closed the door and thus caught the deer, a second person may now lock the door to make sure that no one mistakenly opens the door, which will free the deer (Rav, Shabbos 106b; Rema, Orach Chayim 316:5). These acts are permitted even miderabbanan.

Conclusion

Rav Hirsch (Shemos 35:2) explains that whereas other melachos demonstrate man’s mastery over the physical world, carrying demonstrates his mastery over the social sphere. Most melachos show man’s mastery over the world by the way man changes them. In the case of tzad, it is man’s showing mastery of the animal world by demonstrating his potential ownership. Rav Hirsch further notes (Shemos 20:10) that people assume that work is prohibited on Shabbos in order to make it a day of rest. He points out that the Torah does not prohibit doing avodah, which connotes hard work, but melacha, which implies purpose and accomplishment. Shabbos is a day on which we refrain from altering the world for our own purposes. The goal of Shabbos is to allow Hashem’s rule to be the focus of creation, by refraining from our own creative acts (Shemos 20:11). We thereby demonstrate and acknowledge the Creator of the world and all it contains.

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva
Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a

Rav Aviner

Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:

Illegal Building

Q: Is it permissible to build houses illegally in Israel? What is of higher value: the settling of Eretz Yisrael or the law of the State of Israel?

A: We do not perform a Mitzvah through a transgression.

Israeli Embassy Outside of Israel

Q: What is the halachic status of an Israeli embassy in a foreign country?

A: According to international law, it is considered the territory of the State of Israel, but according to the Halachah, it is foreign soil. And the opposite it also correct: a foreign embassy in Eretz Yisrael is Eretz Yisrael.

Blessings by Rabbis

Q: Which is preferable – going to Rabbis to receive blessings or going to Shul to receive Birkat Cohanim?

A: Birkat Cohanim, since it is not a blessing from Cohanim but a blessing from Hashem (And Ha-Rav Aharon Yehudah Leib Shteinman expressed surprise that people travel great distances to receive a blessing from a Rabbi instead of running to Shul to receive Birkat Cohanim. Be-Orchotecha Lamdeni p. 38).

Informing Others of the Police on Waze

Q: Is it permissible on Waze to inform others that there is a police trap?

A: It is certainly permissible since it immediately causes people to drive in a more cautious manner in that area, and this is what the police are interested in.

Electric Hand Dryer

Q: If one washes Netilat Yadayim before a meal, is it permissible to dry his hands with an electric hand dryer and then recite the blessing?

A: Yes, just as one may dry his hand in the sun. Pri Megadim (Mishbetzot Zahav #13. This ruling is also found in Shut Revivot Efraim 2:68 #4 and Sha'arim Metuyanim Ba-Halachah, Kuntres Acharon 40:5).

Sefer Torah which Fell

Q: When we opened the Aron Ha-Kodesh, the Sefer Torah fell out. We then fasted. How else do we do Teshuvah?

A: Maran Ha-Rav Kook said in Igrat Ha-Re'eiyah (Volume 1, Igeret #10) that you should make sure that the Torah is secure in the Aron Ha-Kodesh so the Sefer Torah does not fall (Similarly, a 4-year old child once fell out of a window and a miracle occurred and she only had minor injuries. The parents asked Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach what they should do as a "Tikun" (spiritual repair) to repent for the occurrence. He said: Put bars on your windows! Another time, a father was drinking a hot drink while holding a child, and it slipped on the child and she was badly burnt. The parents asked Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman what they should do as a "Tikun". He answered: Do not drink hot drinks while holding a child! In the book "Ve-Alehu Lo Yibol" Volume 3, pp. 163-164).

Tzedakah of a Child

Q: If my parents give me spending money, do I need to give Maaser?

A: Only if they agree.

Eretz Yisrael Vomiting Out Sinners

Q: When the Torah writes that Eretz Yisrael vomits out sinners (Vayikra 18:25, 28), does it refer to individuals or only to Klal Yisrael?

A: It also refers to individuals. And if they appear as sinners and are nonetheless not vomited out, it is a sign that inside they are good. Chesed

Le-Avraham (Ma'ayan Shelishi, Ein Ha-Aretz, Nahar 12). And see Sefer Orot p. 84 (And see at length in Shut Eretz Yisrael pp. 270-277).

Switching the Parochet

Q: Someone donated a Parochet for the Aron Ha-Kodesh in Shul. Is it permissible to take down the old one and put up the new one?

A: Yes, since a donor knows that one day someone will donate a new Parochet.

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**Rav Yochanan Zweig
Weekly Insights
GROUP THERAPY**

And Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aharon, and gave them a charge to Bnei Yisroel... (6:13)

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Rosh Hashana 3:5) derives from this passuk a fascinating teaching: R' Shmuel son R' Yitzchak asked, "With what did he charge Bnei Yisroel? He charged with the mitzvah of Shiluach Avadim (freeing one's slaves)." Remarkably, according to the Talmud Yerushalmi, the very first mitzvah that Hashem asked Moshe to command the Jewish people was to free their slaves.

At a glance, this can be difficult to comprehend: Why would the mitzvah of freeing one's slaves have the importance of being the first mitzvah given to the nation as a whole? One would expect that perhaps the mitzvah of Shabbos or keeping kosher or family purity laws would surely take precedence.

Furthermore, none of the Jews even had any slaves at this point, and anyway the law couldn't be observed until they settled in their homeland of Eretz Yisroel! Why charge them with a mitzvah that cannot even be fulfilled at this time, and why give it the importance of being the first mitzvah they are commanded to do?

Psychological studies show that those who were abused as children have a tendency to become abusers themselves. Obviously, not everyone abused as a child becomes an abuser; but studies show that there is a threefold higher risk for abused children to become abusers later in life. Psychologists have offered a few possible reasons for this link. One of the prevailing theories is that children rationalize this abuse by thinking that this abuse is normal behavior. So as they mature they don't fully understand that this behavior is wrong, and therefore don't have the same barriers in place to prevent such behavior.

This is problematic for a few reasons: 1) if someone experienced something difficult or painful he should be more sensitive to it, and thereby take extraordinary measure to ensure that he does not cause the same pain to another, particularly a child and 2) this reasoning doesn't explain why they would have a stronger tendency toward deviant behavior. At some point in their lives they would certainly learn that society considers such abuse wrong. Why shouldn't that be enough to stop them?

A much more compelling theory is that an adult who has unresolved issues from being abused as a child acts out as a way of coping with the feelings of helplessness experienced as a child. In other words, those abused become abusers to prove to themselves that they are no longer helpless victims. By becoming abusers they psychologically reinforce within themselves that they are no longer the ones abused.

We see this in many other instances as well. Smokers who are finally able to quit for good often become crusaders and feel compelled to lecture others to quit smoking; overweight individuals that manage to lose weight are suddenly weight loss experts and have no problem sharing their opinions

about how much you should weigh; religious leaders struggling with their own demons become virulent anti-smut and lascivious behavior crusaders, yet nobody is surprised when scandals about them emerge. These "crusades" are merely a coping mechanism for their unresolved issues.

This is exactly what Hashem is telling Bnei Yisroel. You have been slaves now in Egypt for close to two hundred years. Bnei Yisroel needs to emotionally deal with the fact that they are now truly free and no longer slaves. One of the ways to emotionally get past one's own slavery would be to have and hold on to slaves of your own. This is why Hashem commanded them to observe the mitzvah of freeing slaves. The ultimate proof that they have internalized their freedom and are in a healthy emotional place, is the fact they no longer need slaves of their own. At that point they will be truly free.

IT'S ALL ABOUT ME

These are the heads of their fathers' houses; The sons of Reuven the firstborn of Yisroel; Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the families of Reuven... (6:14)

Rashi (ad loc) is bothered by why the Torah suddenly finds it necessary to record the genealogy of Yaakov's family right in the middle of the story of the exodus. Rashi goes on to explain that the Torah wanted to record the yichus(lineage) of Moshe and Aharon; and once it mentioned Moshe and Aharon, it begins from the firstborn of the family - Reuven.

This is unusual for a few reasons. Generally, when the Torah records the lineage of an individual, the Torah begins with the individual and works its way backwards (e.g. Pinchas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aharon the Kohen). So why did the Torah begin with Yaakov? Moreover, why does the Torah mention the families of Reuven and Shimon at all?

Sometimes when attending someone's simcha, during the speeches the attendees are subjected to a detailed recollection and description of all the prominent antecedents in the family. While it is true that a family's yichus does add, at least somewhat, to that individual and family's prominence - as the possuk says, "the glory of children are their fathers" (Mishlei 17:6) - most people tend to forget the beginning of that very same possuk: "the crown of grandfathers are their grandchildren."

In other words, the crowning achievement of one's family isn't in the past, it's in the future. We have to develop ourselves into people that our forbearers would be proud of and become their crowning achievement. That means that all they did in their lives, their sacrifices, their own accomplishments etc. all become for naught if we fail to fulfill our own mission in life. The Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah - Toldos) says that the only reason Avraham was saved from the fiery furnace was because he would have a grandson named Yaakov. In essence, we can, and must justify the lives of our ancestors.

This is an awesome responsibility to fulfill. While all of us are descended from a glorious past - that of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, our personal obligation is to fulfill their mission. If we, G-d forbid, fail to live up to that responsibility then all is for naught. As great as our forefathers (and all our forbearers throughout history) were, they need us in order for the world to come to its final culmination and fulfill the destiny of why all of us were created.

That is what the Torah is telling us here. Moshe was supposed to lead Bnei Yisroel out of Egypt and into Eretz Yisroel to the final purpose of why the world was created. Therefore, this is the story of Yaakov's family. That is why the lineage begins with him. Continuing with his first born Reuven and then Shimon, great as they were, they didn't succeed in fulfilling the family's mission. But Levi, through Moshe and Aharon, justified the entire family and their purpose in fulfilling Avraham's vision of bringing Hashem down to this world, and on to the final redemption.

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*Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vaera
For the week ending 28 January 2017 / 1 Shevat 5777
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights*

Lebensraum

"And the sorcerers did thus with their spells, and the frogs arose on the land of Egypt." (8:3)

When one reads of the plagues of Egypt one tends to think that nothing else was happening in Egyptian life at the time. However, the Midrash relates that during the plague of frogs there was an ongoing war between the Egyptians and their neighbors — the nation of Kush — over the precise line of the border.

When G-d commanded the frogs to swarm over Egypt, they did so only on the Egyptian side of the border, so further dispute became moot. However, the Egyptian sorcerers tried to create a little extra lebensraum by trying to make the frogs swarm over the borders on the side of Kush.

G-d frustrated their designs, as the verse says, "And the frogs arose on the land of Egypt..." Even the frogs brought up by the Egyptian sorcerers arose only "on the land of Egypt," and not on the land of Kush.

Sources: Avodat B'Yehosef in Mayana Shel Torah

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More Than a Superiority Complex

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

The term "inferiority complex" is one with which we are all familiar. There are individuals who are haunted and hampered by a lack of self-worth, a phenomenon which was noted by early 20th century psychologist Alfred Adler. It was he who coined the phrase "inferiority complex" to help describe the underlying factors involved in such a condition. Adler also coined the twin phrase "superiority complex." This term characterizes individuals who have an inflated sense of self-worth. Such individuals are impressed with their own self-importance and think of themselves as being better than others. Adler, however, insisted that those of us who think of ourselves as superior are in truth compensating for deep-rooted feelings of inferiority. For Adler, this exaggerated sense of self-worth helps us defend against the feelings of inferiority which are unacceptable to our conscious selves. We focus on our self-importance because we are threatened by the feelings of inadequacy and impotency that we dare not face.

I have long found Adler's theory fascinating and have often wondered about the degree to which his concepts apply to the heroes and villains of the Bible. Was Moses, for example, the humblest of men, burdened by an "inferiority complex?" I think not. I prefer to believe that there is a fundamental difference between authentic humility and feelings of inferiority. A humble man knows very well that he has strengths and talents and skills. The fact that he does not boast about them publicly does not mean that he considers himself inferior.

What about the "superiority complex?" Are there characters in the Bible who were convinced that they were better than others? Here I respond with a resounding, "Yes." Numerous persons in our sacred scriptures considered themselves superior to others. Some of them went so far as to conceive of themselves as ubermenschen, as supermen. Friedrich Nietzsche, who introduced the term "ubermensch" into the world of literature, described

such a person as “the ideal superior man who could rise above morality to create and impose his own values.”

The Midrash Rabbah, based in part upon a passage in this week’s Torah portion, Parshat Vaeira (Exodus 6:1-9:35), enumerates four biblical characters who imagined themselves as *ubermenschen*, believing that they were above conventional morality and could impose their values upon others. But the Midrash does not simply describe them as four individuals with “superiority complexes.” Instead, the Midrash states: “There were four who considered themselves gods.”

Who were these four individuals, these “gods,” for whom even the status of “supermen” was insufficient? The Midrash lists them: Hiram, King of Tyre; Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon; Pharaoh, King of Egypt; and Yoash, King of Judah. What do we know of these four men, and what may have led them to the preposterous assumption that they were superhuman, indeed divine?

The Midrash begins by quoting the specific references in the Bible to the claims that each of these four men made, asserting that they indeed were gods. And the Midrash demonstrates how all four met defeat and degradation. But the Midrash begs the question, “How could four intelligent men delude themselves in such an outlandish and brazen manner?”

This question is all the more relevant when asked of someone like Hiram of Tyre, who assisted King Solomon in constructing the first Holy Temple in Jerusalem. How could a man capable of such generosity and piety allow himself to believe that he was a god?

King Yoash is described in the Bible as an upright King and as a disciple of the High Priest Yehoyada. How did such a man yield to the foolish temptation of asserting his divinity? The 18th century rabbinic sage, Rabbi Yehonasan Eybeshutz, sharpens the question and asks in his commentary on the haftarat for Parshat Shekalim, “Did not Yehoyada teach the young king Yoash everything he needed to know? Did he not teach him not to dare think of himself as a god?”

Rabbi Eybeshutz’ answer is an interesting one. He suggests that Yehoyada could anticipate many mistakes that the young king might eventually make, and he admonished him not to make those mistakes. But *lo ala al da’ato*—he could not ever imagine that a human being could make the mistake of thinking of himself as a god, so it never occurred to him to warn Yoash not to do so.

One approach to answering the puzzle of the grandiosity that leads some intelligent men astray is the insight of Alfred Adler, mentioned at the beginning of this essay. He believes that this “superiority complex” is a defense against an inner conviction of one’s inferiority. Adler’s theory, however, does not seem to fit the four biblical characters whom the Midrash enumerates. We find no trace of hidden “inferiority complexes” in the biographical material that the Bible provides us about Hiram, Nebuchadnezzar, Yoash, and Pharaoh.

I have found another approach to understanding this grotesque claim of divinity in the writings of a man named Rabbi Chaim Zeitchik, of blessed memory. Rabbi Zeitchik was a Holocaust survivor, and his exposure to suffering sharpened the skills he learned in the famed Yeshiva of Novardok, a yeshiva known for its emphasis on understanding the human psyche. Rabbi Zeitchik teaches us that success in life is a spiritual test. Many people are so carried away by material success that they begin to believe that they have unusual powers. Some go far as to believe that these powers are supernatural. Some, like our four “heroes,” come to believe that the success they have experienced is proof positive that they are gods, immune to failure and even immortal.

All four of these men were blessed with amazing success in the form of wealth, military power, and even artistic genius. The baby Yoash was hidden for the first seven years of his life in the Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctum of the Holy Temple, and he survived. This kind of success led him to believe that he was not only “untouchable,” but that he was himself a god.

Rabbi Zeitchik provides examples of true spiritual heroes, individuals who passed the test of success in life, yet who did not fall prey to the delusion that they were gods. In fact, in spite of their material successes, they remained humble.

He draws upon a beautiful passage in the Talmud Tractate Hullin 89a, which reads in part: “The Holy One, Blessed Be He, said to Israel, ‘I admire you because even when I bless you with great success, you conduct yourself humbly. I gave great success to Abraham, and he said that he is but dust and ash; to Moses and Aaron, and they said that they were but nothing; to David, and he said that he was but a worm and not a man.’”

We often think of poverty and misfortune as tests of faith. Rabbi Zeitchik teaches us that wealth and good fortune are also challenges to our faith. The Midrash on this week’s Torah portion lists four remarkably accomplished individuals who succumbed to “superiority complexes” of ludicrous dimensions. Each of us must learn to follow the path of those spiritual heroes who, when challenged with success in life, knew how to remain not only human, but humbly human.

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The Jerusalem Post

Parashat Va’era: Ten plagues and three insights

Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz January 26 2017 | Tevet, 28, 5777

In this week’s portion, Va’era, we read about seven of the ten plagues brought on the Egyptian nation and its leaders.

These plagues were not given only as a punishment for the Egyptians’ cruel treatment of the enslaved Jewish nation – throwing infants into the Nile River, and more – but also to educate the Egyptian people to change the ways and outlooks that led them to this cruel and abject behavior.

In the Passover Haggada read in every Jewish home at the Seder, we encounter the following interesting sentence: Rabbi Yehuda would give them signs (acronyms): DeZaCH, ADaSH, BaCHaV.

Rabbi Yehuda, of the fourth generation of the Tannaim period and one of the greatest of Rabbi Akiva’s students, divided the plagues into three groups based on the first letter of the Hebrew name of each one. Was Rabbi Yehuda so afraid we would forget the plagues written in the Torah that he provided us with these acronyms as a mnemonic device? It seems reasonable to assume that this was not the purpose.

Don Yitzhak Abarbanel was a commentator, statesman and economist who served as the finance minister of Portugal and Spain, from which he was expelled along with the other Jews in 1492. After this, he served as the finance minister of Naples, Italy. He analyzed the Torah verses and found that the Ten Plagues were indeed divided into three groups, with each group having its own purpose written explicitly in the Torah when the plagues were described.

The purpose of the first three plagues was to prove to the Egyptian nation – and to Pharaoh in particular – the basic fact that there is a Creator of the world; there is a God. The purpose of these plagues was told to Pharaoh, “With this you will know that I am the Lord” (Exodus 7:17).

The next insight was: God is interested in the world; He supervises and administers it. The next three plagues came to prove this, beginning with the insight Pharaoh was expected to internalize, “. . . in order that you know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth” (ibid. 8:18). “In the midst of the earth,” meaning, God is not disconnected from the world. He is supreme, but His loftiness is expressed in His interest in each creature.

God cares about the world He created.

Yet Pharaoh could have thought that even if God exists and cares, His power is limited. He may want to help, but who knows if He can. . . ? For this, God sent the last four plagues, at the beginning of which Pharaoh was told, “in order that you know that there is none like Me in the entire earth. . . in order to show you My strength” (ibid 9:14-16).

This “educational series” is not told in the Torah as a historic anecdote, even if it would be valuable as such.

It is told to convey a message. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, needed 10 plagues in order to comprehend these three insights; we can internalize them without plagues.

These three insights are significant. They have the power to change the life of a man or of a nation.

There is a God, He is the ultimate, perfect, and eternal goodness. Because He is goodness without limit, He is caring. Caring is the expression of goodness, just as apathy toward injustice is the other side of the picture.

Because He is good, He is caring.

But we need another stage. With all due respect, goodness without strength is not capable of action and making things better. Many of us would like to benefit humanity in a range of spheres if we only had the money/time/political ability. Goodness without power lacks influence. In order to believe in goodness, in order to believe that goodness will overcome evil, in order to believe that we are capable of acting based on values of truth and succeeding – we must internalize the third insight: God, the ultimate of goodness, is omnipotent.

We can count on Him, trust Him, and believe that goodness, and only goodness, will prevail.

The writer is rabbi of the Western Wall and Holy Sites.

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Drasha Parshas Vaera

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Guts and Glory

There is a narrative in this week’s portion that includes two verses that seem superfluous. The Torah, in reintroducing Ahron and Moshe to us as they emerge as leaders of Klall Yisrael, also defines their lineage. While tracing their heritage, the Torah also enumerates the descendants of all the tribes, starting from the oldest, Reuvain. It finally reaches Amram, the grandson of Levi and tells us that he married Yocheved who bore Moshe and Ahron. The Torah continues with Ahron’s wife, descendants, and others from the tribe of Levi. Then the Torah stops the listings. The rest of the tribes are enumerated later. However, the Torah re-identifies Moshe and Ahron with two verses. “This was the Moshe and Ahron to whom Hashem commanded “take the Children of Israel out of Egypt. They were the ones that spoke to Pharaoh telling him to send the children of Israel out of Egypt; that was Moshe and Ahron” (Exodus 6:26-27). We are talking Moshe and Ahron! Doesn’t everyone who reads the Torah know that they are the ones that led the Jews out of Egypt? The details of their encounters with Pharaoh are clearly appraised throughout the first three portions of the Book of Shmos. Why then does the Torah, in two succinct verses, tell us that these are the Moshe and Ahron that were sent on a Divine mission these are the same pair that told Pharaoh to let the Jews go?

Rabbi Chaim of Sanz was once walking in a small shtetl with his shammash (sexton). Suddenly he stopped in front of the home of a simple Jew. “There is a certain spirituality that I sense here. I’d like to stop by this man’s home.”

His shammash knocked on the door, and as it opened the holy Rebbe exclaimed, “There is a smell in this home that must be from the Garden of Eden. It is sweet and pure. Pray tell me, where does it come from?” The simple Jew did not know what to answer, but allowed the Rebbe to roam freely through his humble abode and open any door he chose. Suddenly the Rebbe pointed to a closet. “What is in that closet? The holiness comes from within.” The man was reluctant to open the door, but the Rebbe urged him. The man opened the door and in the closet hung the vestments of a priest! The Rebbe turned to the man once again and asked. “Please tell me. What is a holy Jew doing with those clothing?”

The poor Jew told his tale: “Years ago, I was asked to help raise money for a family thrown into jail by a poritz (landowner) to whom they owed rent. My Rebbe asked me to raise the funds, and I immediately agreed. After all, I thought, with the Rebbe’s wishes it would be an easy task. Everyone would give to save a Jewish family! I was wrong. Everyone in town had an excuse not to give. There was a deadline approaching, and I had no choice but to approach the wealthiest Jew in town who was known for his malevolence toward Chassidim. “The man told me he would give me the entire sum that day on one condition. I must parade through the town, dressed as a priest singing psalms in Hebrew and asking for tzedaka (charity) in Yiddish. At the end of the day, he would pay the ransom.

“I did what I had to do, while a group of his friends followed me around, laughing and mocking me wherever I walked. I got the money and I never returned the vestments he gave me.”

The Rebbe turned and said, “Yes. These clothing are truly holy. They are the source of the spirituality I sense.” Legend has it that the Rebbe told the man to be buried in those clothes.

The Torah sums up the mission and job of Moshe and Ahron in two verses. They were the ones enthusiastically sent to redeem the Jews. Then it tells us that they were the ones that had to deal with Pharaoh. They were mocked with the words, “who is this Hashem that I shall listen to Him?” (Exodus 5:2). They were the ones who were threatened by Pharaoh that “the day you return to see me you will die! (Exodus 10:27). But they did not back down. They suffered the threats, the humiliation, the skepticism, and the failures with strength and fortitude. We may remember them as the ones who were told to take the Children out of Egypt but the Torah reminds us in the ensuing verse that we should never forget the difficult process that led to their great accomplishments. For in order to fulfill what one hears from G-d, he or she must also be ready to hear from a Pharaoh. In those two contrasting verses, the Torah teaches us that very often if there are no guts, then there is no glory.

Good Shabbos

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Rav Kook Torah

Three Prayers, Three Goals

The Sages established three daily prayers: Shacharit in the morning, Minchah in the afternoon, and Arvit (Ma’ariv) in the evening. Why do we need three prayers?

“Rabbi Helbo taught: One should always be careful regarding the Minchah prayer, for Elijah was only answered in this prayer.

Rabbi Yochanan said: Also with the evening-prayer, as it says, “May my prayer be like an incense-offering before You, as I lift my hands in the evening offering” (Psalms 141:2).

Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak said: Also with the Shacharit morning-prayer, as it says, “God, hear my voice in the morning. In the morning I will arrange my prayer to You and wait expectantly” (Psalms 5:4).” (Berachot 6b)

This Talmudic discussion is peculiar. It starts by stating that the Minchah afternoon-prayer has advantages over the other prayers and requires special attention. Then the rabbis note that the morning and evening prayers are also special. If so, all three prayers are equally important. What does this mean?

Distinct Purposes

Some organs in the human body, like the kidneys, are doubled. This is not because we need two in order to live, but in case one should stop functioning, we can rely on the second as a backup.

One might think the same holds true for the three prayers. We pray three times a day in the hope that at least one prayer will be sincere and inspiring. The Talmud, however, rejects this idea. The rabbis note that each of the three prayers has its own special value. Each prayer meets a particular spiritual need.

What then is the purpose of each of these prayers?

Restoring the Spirit

Our major spiritual need is to counteract negative and corrupting influences. During the working day, we encounter all types of people, including some who are crass and unprincipled. These social interactions affect us, and not for the good. They can reinforce negative traits and lead us to frivolous and empty goals.

Prayer comes to restore our spiritual purity. We pour out our hearts to God, and the words of prayer lift us to pure and holy aspirations. Prayer washes away the superficial attraction of falsehood and the temporary loss of our moral compass.

This spiritual restoration is the purpose of the Minchah prayer. It is prayed in the middle of the day, when we have the greatest involvement with society. Now we can understand why Rabbi Helbo brought proof to the importance of Minchah from Elijah. The prophet's midday prayer was pivotal in his victory over the false prophets of Ba'al. In his prayer, Elijah sought Divine assistance to overcome the evil and idolatrous beliefs rampant among the numerous followers of Ba'al. Our Minchah prayer is a similar plea for help to overcome false and corrupting influences.

Repairing Thoughts

What is the purpose of the evening prayer? Why is it compared to an offering of ketoret-incense?

The ketoret offering was not performed publicly. The incense was burnt within the inner chamber of the Temple. The Sages taught that the incense atones for sins that are 'hidden' — private thoughts of malice and hatred and surreptitious slander (Yoma 44a, Zevachim 88b). The inner service of incense was a source of inspiration to cleanse malicious thoughts lurking in the heart's inner chambers.

The evening prayer is recited at a time when we have withdrawn to the solitude of our homes. The root-cause of social sins is the corruptive influence of an egocentric self-love. Like the inner service of ketoret, the goal of the night-time Ma'ariv prayer is to elevate the spirit and prevent our souls from being sullied in selfish and petty thoughts.

Awakening the Spirit

What about the third prayer, the morning-prayer of Shacharit?

When we first rise in the morning, the soul's powers have not been corrupted by external sources. But they lack vitality and strength, having been dormant while sleeping. Therefore it is necessary to awaken these spiritual powers.

We must arrange them so they will be ready to contemplate elevated matters — justice and integrity, awe and love of God. This spiritual preparation is the goal of the morning-prayer.

For this reason, the verse categorizes the morning-prayer as a time when "I arrange my prayer to You and wait expectantly." It is the hour when we direct the aspirations of the heart and order the powers of the soul. After this preparation at the start of the day, we anticipate God's assistance to gain spiritual fortitude. As the Sages taught, "Those seeking to purify themselves are granted assistance from Above" (Yoma 38b).

(Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I, pp. 17-18 (introduction); Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 27)

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Ohr Somayach :: Insights into Halacha

For the week ending 2 February 2013 / 21 Shevat 5773

The Colored Water Caper

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Red Alert

Several months ago, pleasure seekers at Australia's famous Bondi (pronounced Bond-eye) Beach, located in the Sydney suburb of Bondi, were left high and dry when a Crimson Tide rolled in, effectively transforming its normally tranquil waters into the 'Red Sea'. This rare natural phenomenon, known as an algal bloom, occurs when there is a rapid increase or accumulation in the production of microscopic algae (dinoflagellates, usually toxic phytoplankton) in an aquatic system. This results in a visible coloration of the water, typically taking on a reddish hue. Apparently all was not "fair dinkum" for the Aussies. Not that it's any consolation for those robbed of a pleasure swim, nonetheless, at least this gives us an inkling of what Makkas Dam might have seemed like, as well as helping us understand an interesting halacha.

Colored Water?

The Shulchan Aruch[1] rules, as did the Tur before him, and based on a Mishna in Maseches Yadayim, that regarding Netilas Yadayim for eating bread[2], if the water's appearance has changed, whether by itself or due to something else falling inside it or due to its location, that water is pasul, disqualified for being used for washing purposes[3]. This would mean that it would be prohibited to use water during "red tide" to wash for Hamotzi.

Yet, many authorities argue on part of the Shulchan Aruch's statement. They point out that the Mishna does not actually mention the water color being changed "by itself" with no outside stimulus as making the water assur. The Mishna only mentions the other criteria, namely different types of inks and dyes falling in, for prohibiting colored water!

Additionally, regarding such 'dyed water' for use as a mikva, only when the color has changed due to something else falling in would such a mikva be invalidated, and not when the color has changed by itself[4]. It stands to reason that the rules of Netilas Yadayim, which are a Takanas Chachamim, cannot be any stricter than those regarding the Biblical mikva!

A further proof cited is that the Rambam[5], when codifying this halacha, omitted any mention of water whose color has been changed by itself being prohibited. Therefore, many halachic decisors, including the Taz, Magen Avraham, Gr'a, Pri Megadim, Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, and Mishna Berura[6] rule that water whose color has been changed by itself is perfectly permissible to be used for Netilas Yadayim.

Accordingly, this would mean that 'red tide' water due to an algal bloom would in fact be permitted for Netilas Yadayim, as no one added anything and it is a natural phenomenon that actually occurs on a microscopic level. Color Coded

However, other authorities disagree, concurring with the Tur and Shulchan Aruch's stringent ruling. They explain that there truly is no such thing as water changing color "by itself". It actually occurs when the water is sitting exposed to the elements, that it gets contaminated, possibly by (microscopic) organisms in the air, which change its color. It is only referred to as changing by itself because nothing was purposely added to the water that might change its color. Proof is that if someone would place water in an airtight sealed clear container, its appearance would remain unchanged.

These authorities argue that the Rema, who does not comment on the Shulchan Aruch's ruling, and perhaps even the Rambam, would actually agree to this. Although the Rambam did not mention water whose appearance changed "by itself", he nonetheless added that water whose color was changed "by the ground" is passul for use for Netilas Yadayim. These decisors opine that it is possible that this was his intent, referring to water sitting exposed on the ground whose appearance was changed naturally. Additionally, they point out that Chazal, and later the Shulchan Aruch, use

extremely strong terms for the punishments awaiting those negligent with washing Netilas Yadayim properly[7]. Therefore, they maintain that one may not compare it to a mikva, which would not become invalidated with this type of water. In fact, many halachic authorities, including the Prisha, Chida, Ma'amar Mordechai, Shulchan HaTahor, Ben Ish Chai, Aruch Hashulchan, Kaf Hachaim, and Chazon Ish[8] rule that water whose color has been changed by itself is prohibited to be used for Netilas Yadayim. This would also seemingly include our 'Crimson Tide'.

Breaking Out the Bubbly?

This whole background will help us understand a more common case. Have you ever filled up your cup to wash for Hamotzi and found the water a bit whitish, cloudy or bubbly? Usually, the water settles down and returns to its normal appearance after a few seconds. A quite common question is whether one needs to wait for the water to settle down in order to wash, as it would have the status of water whose appearance changed "by itself", or whether this is not the same issue.

Many contemporary poskim, including Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer, Rav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul, Rav Nosson Gestetner, and the Yalkut Yosef[9] rule that there is no reason to wait for the water to settle. They explain that the reason the water looks this way at first is due to air pressure in the pipes. Therefore, they maintain that this is not the same case as 'shinui mareh machmas atzmo' as the water's appearance did not truly change. They bring proof from the Shulchan Aruch himself who rules that if the water's appearance changed due to rocks and dirt getting mixed in, then it is still kosher for Netilas Yadayim[10]. Therefore, a temporary whitish tinge or bubbles in the water cannot be considered any worse for Netilas Yadayim.

Yet, other authorities, including the Minchas Yitzchak, Rav Yaakov Blau zt"l, and the Netei Gavriel[11], still maintain that even though washing with such water would be permissible, it is nevertheless preferable to wait until the water clears before washing l'chatchila.

When one views the world through the lens of halacha, current events, Crimson Tides, and even simple tasks like hand-washing take on a whole other dimension.

Postscript[12]: There is another interesting related topic about whether water with bubbles has the halachic status of water: drinking seltzer during Shalosh Seudos (Seudat Shlishit). There is an obscure custom of not drinking water during Bein Hashmashos on Shabbos. This is loosely based on the Rema's comment in O.C. 291, 2 about the dangers of drinking well water during this time period[13]. The Steipler Gaon, as well as his son Rav Chaim Kanievsky[14], maintain that this includes seltzer (which is intrinsically water with carbon dioxide added in), as the bubbles do not detract from the water's status. However, Rav Moshe Halberstam zt"l, citing many earlier authorities including the Maharsham[15], argues that seltzer is not included in the water category in respect to this minhag. A little fizz goes a long way. *The author wishes to thank his friend and talmid, renowned business consultant and marketing specialist Rabbi Issamar Ginzberg, whose sheilah was the impetus for this author's interest and research in this topic.* [1]Tur / Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 160, 1), Mishnayos Yadayim (Ch.1, 3). [2]The Mishna Berura (158, 1; see also Shaar HaTzion ad loc. 1 & 2) gives an excellent summary of the sources and reasons why Netilas Yadayim is mandated before eating bread, one of them being that it is alluded to by the pasuk in Parshas Kedoshim (Vayikra Chapter 20, verse 7) "V'hiskadeeshtem, V'heyisem Kedoshim", "And you shall sanctify yourselves, and be holy". The Gemara (Brachos 53b) clarifies that "And you shall sanctify yourselves" refers to washing the hands before the meal, Mayim Rishonim, and "and be holy" refers to washing the hands after the meal, Mayim Acharonim. In other words, by washing our hands before making a bracha (in this case before eating bread), we are properly sanctifying ourselves. See previous article titled "Mayim Acharonim, Chova?". Another reason why we wash is to be akin to the Kohanim eating Terumah, who had to eat their food in purity. One should not make light of this obligation as the Shulchan Aruch writes (O.C. 158, 9) extremely strong ramifications for one who does, based on three separate maamarei Chazal (Mishnayos Ediyus Ch. 5 Mishna 6, Gemara Shabbos 62b, and Gemara Sotah 4b). See also Shmiras HaGuf VeHanefesh (vol. 1, Ch. 55 at length). [3]This halacha is gleaned from the water in the Kiyor in the Beis HaMikdash, used to

wash the Kohanim's hands and feet. Just as if that water's appearance was changed it would be rendered unfit for use, so too our water would - Ra'ah (Brachos 53b s.v. chamei), cited by the Beis Yosef (O.C. 161, 1 s.v. tzarich) and Mishna Berura (ad loc. 1). [4]Mishnayos Mikvaos (Ch.7, Mishna 3), Rambam (Hilchos Mikvaos Ch.7, 12), Beis Yosef and Shulchan Aruch (Y"D 201, 25 - 27). [5]Rambam (Hilchos Brachos Ch.6, 7). [6]O.C. 160 ad loc. - Taz (1), Magen Avraham (2), Gr"a (1), Pri Megadim (M.Z. end 1), Shulchan Aruch HaRav (1), Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (40, 8), and Mishna Berura (160, 2). [7]See end footnote 2. [8]O.C. 160 ad loc. - Prisha (2), Chida (Birkei Yosef 2), Ma'amar Mordechai (1), Shulchan HaTahor (1), Ben Ish Chai (Year 1, Parshas Kedoshim 1), Aruch Hashulchan (3, who writes that the appearance change is due to maggots and flies), Kaf Hachaim (5), Chazon Ish (O.C. 22, 7 & 13). Additionally, the Bach (end 1) who argues on this rule, nevertheless concludes that if at all possible it is preferable to be stringent. Similarly, the Machatzis Hashekel (end 2) who likewise refutes this rule still concludes that if after washing with the colored water one finds water whose appearance has not changed, it would be prudent to wash again without a bracha. [9]Rav Elyashiv's opinion is cited in Shu"t Rivevos Efraim (vol. 6, 410), Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fischer (Shu"t Even Yisrael vol. 7, 11), Rav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul (Shu"t Ohr L'Tzion vol. 2, Ch. 11, 7), Rav Nosson Gestetner (Shu"t L'Horos Nosson vol. 4, O.C. 8), and the Yalkut Yosef (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch O.C. 160, 2). The Chazon Ish (O.C. 22, 9 s.v. sham) implies this way as well, regarding permitting water that got 'dirty' due to something small falling in that does not intrinsically change the water's actual color. [10]Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 160, 9). It still must be water that a dog would drink. Although there are two different explanations why the Shulchan Aruch's ruling holds true, it is possible that both would apply here. [The Pri Megadim (ad loc. M.Z. 1) explains that since in the end the water itself remains truly clear as the dirt and mud do not actually change the color of the water itself, it is not deemed a problem. The Shulchan Aruch HaRav (ibid.) maintains that since it is the derech of the 'gidul' of water to have dirt and mud mixed in, it won't affect the water's status. See also Mishna Berura (ad loc., 3).] [11]Shu"t Minchas Yitzchak (vol. 9, 13), Netei Gavriel (Ch.66, 7, pg. 441). This author personally heard this psak of Rav Blau's zt"l, to be choshesh l'chatchila for the Minchas Yitzchak's position, approximately a week before he was niftar. The Minchas Yitzchak held that the hetter of rocks and dirt mixing into the water was not a comparable case according to several opinions and therefore it would be preferable to wait until the water settled down. [12]Thanks are due to Rabbi Yaakov Nissan for pointing out this related interesting machlokes. [13]See Shmiras HaGuf VeHanefesh (vol. 2, 130) and Shu"t Divrei Moshe (O.C. 13) at length, explaining how this custom can be sourced in the Rema's enigmatic and seemingly unrelated ruling. [14]The Steipler's minhag is found in Orchos Rabbeinu (vol. 1, 109). Rav Chaim Kanievsky's short responsa on topic, defending his father's shitta, is printed in Shu"t Divrei Moshe (O.C. end 14). He concludes that it is "kasha lehakel b'makom sakana". [15]Shu"t Divrei Moshe (O.C. 14) at length; Maharsham (Shu"t vol. 3, 375; Daas Torah O.C. 158 & Y"D 339, 5). Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority. L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda, and l'zchus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam and her children for a yeshua teikef u'miyad! © 1995-2017 Ohr Somayach International