

Ve'eira

THE WEISS EDITION

*Light
points*

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



לזיכרון ולעילוי נשמת
הרה"ח הרה"ת
הר"ר ישעי' זושא ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה
ווילהעלם
נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט ה'תשפ"ב
תנצב"ה

To receive the booklet
via email or by mail,
scan this barcode.



וארא *Va'eira*

6:3 | ג:1

וַאֲרָא אֶל אַבְרָהָם אֶל יִצְחָק וְאֶל יַעֲקֹב

And I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov.

The Fathers

In the first verses of Parshas Va'eira, G-d assures Moshe that He will soon redeem Bnei Yisrael from Egypt, thereby fulfilling the promises He made when He appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. Rashi quotes the word "*Va'eira*—And I appeared," and summarizes to whom G-d appeared: "To the fathers." In doing so, Rashi is pointing out that although they each had distinctive qualities, their primary virtue was the one they had in common—they were "the fathers."

The prophet refers to Avraham as "Avraham, who loved Me"¹—his worship of G-d was characterized by love for his Creator. Yitzchak's relationship with G-d is described as "the

1. Yeshayahu 41:8.

fear of Yitzchak”²—his life was primarily defined by fear and awe of Heaven. Yaakov represented a balance of both approaches, as he attested, “Had not the G-d of my father, the G-d of Avraham and the Fear of Yitzchak, been for me...,”³ meaning that he incorporated both his father’s and grandfather’s spiritual traits in his worship of G-d.

Although love and fear of G-d are obviously unlike, they do share a commonality: both inspire action. As explained in Tanya,⁴ love of G-d motivates observance of the positive mitzvos, and fear of G-d ensures that one distances himself from transgressing any of His prohibitions.

Rashi hints to this with his emphasis that Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov were “the fathers.” Our Sages teach, “The principal offspring of the righteous are their good deeds.”⁵ Hence, by describing Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov as “the fathers,” Rashi is emphasizing that their emotional attachment to G-d did not remain abstract; it translated into “offspring,” i.e., practical good deeds.

In addition, by highlighting that our forefathers were, first and foremost, “the fathers,” Rashi illustrates that more than the remarkable qualities they each exhibited in their personal service of G-d, our forefathers’ main accomplishments in life were that they bred and inspired successive generations to follow in G-d’s path.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 3, p. 860*

2. Bereishis 31:42.

3. Ibid.

4. Chapter 4.

5. See Rashi, Bereishis 6:9.

 7:3 | ג.ז

וְאֲנִי אֶקְשֶׁה אֶת לֵב פַּרְעֹה וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת
אֹתוֹתַי וְאֵת מִוֹפְתָי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

*But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and I will increase
My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.*

Discovering the Real Motive

G-d struck the Egyptians with ten plagues to punish them for their cruel enslavement of Bnei Yisrael. These supernatural plagues also forced Pharaoh to recognize G-d's existence and might, as we read, "I have allowed you to stand in order to show you My strength, and in order to declare My name all over the earth."⁶

These reasons alone seem to provide sufficient cause for the Ten Plagues, yet Rashi brings a third reason. Commenting on the words "I will harden [Pharaoh's heart],"⁷ Rashi explains:

[G-d was saying:] "Since Pharaoh behaved wickedly and defied Me... it is better for Me that his heart be hardened, so that I can increase My signs and My wonders in him; thereby you will recognize My mighty deeds." Such is the custom of the Holy One, blessed be He. He brings retribution on the nations so that Israel should hear and fear.

According to this explanation, the primary goal of the plagues was not their effect on the Egyptians, but to inspire awe and wonder within Bnei Yisrael.

6. Shemos 9:16.

7. Shemos 7:3.

A principle that Rashi teaches on the very first verse in the Torah supports this approach. Rashi writes there that G-d created all of existence “for the sake of the Jewish people and for the sake of Torah.” This is true not only of the initial creation of the world, but of every event that transpires at any time thereafter. Therefore, even when seemingly Divine Providence caused a particular event to occur for other reasons, the true objective is the direct impact the event will have on the Jewish people.

Accordingly, Rashi emphasizes that G-d brought the Ten Plagues upon the Egyptians not only in retribution for their treatment of Bnei Yisrael or to make them recognize the Creator, but for the effect that the plagues would have on Bnei Yisrael themselves—they would inspire within them a more profound fear of G-d.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 36, pp. 33–36*

 ז:כ | 7:20

וַיִּהְיוּ כָּל הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּאֵר לְדָם

*And all the water that was in the Nile
turned to blood.*

Escaping the Cold

Bnei Yisrael's exile in Egypt seemed interminable. Slavery was such a deep part of their identity that they refused to believe that their redemption was imminent. Egypt's oppression of Bnei Yisrael was so severe that even Moshe struggled to understand how it could be part of G-d's plan. It was only when G-d struck the Egyptians with the Ten Plagues that Egypt's grip on the Jewish people began to crumble.

“In every generation and every day, one must regard himself as though he has come out of Egypt on that very day.”⁸ The Torah's name for Egypt, *Mitzrayim*, shares a common root with the Hebrew word *meitzar*, constraint. Accordingly, Chassidus explains that “in every generation and every day,” one must constantly strive to escape his personal “Egypt”—the internal constraints that hinder and restrain his devoted service of G-d. In this context, the Ten Plagues represent ten steps through which we can breach even the toughest internal barriers, freeing our souls to fully experience our attachment to G-d.

In the first plague, the waters of the Nile River—which the Egyptians worshipped as a god—turned into blood.

8. Mishnah, Pesachim 10:5, cf. Tanya, chapter 47.

Water is naturally cold; thus, the waters of the Nile represent coolness and indifference toward things that are G-dly and holy. This attitude of coolness is the root of all spiritual ills, for it is impossible for a person to remain perpetually unexcited about both holiness and that which challenges holiness. Consequently, even if a person observes all the mitzvos but does so coldly and apathetically, his detachment will invariably bring him to interest in and attraction to ideas that are incompatible with a life of holiness.

The first and most crucial step toward our escape from Egypt is therefore to rid ourselves of the cold waters of the Nile, and infuse our Judaism and Torah observance with passion.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 1, pp. 119-124*

 ז:כח | 7:28

וְשָׂרִיז הַיָּאֵר צְפָרְדַּיִם וְעָלוּ וּבָאוּ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְחֹדֶר מִשְׁכָּבְךָ
 וְעַל מִטָּתְךָ וּבֵית עֲבָדֶיךָ וּבְעִמְקָהּ וּבִתְנוּרֶיךָ וּבְמִשְׁאָרוֹתֶיךָ

The river will swarm with frogs, and they will emerge and come inside your home and into your bedroom and upon your bed, and inside the homes of your servants and among your people, and into your ovens and your kneading troughs.

Blood Before Frogs

G-d's battering of the Egyptians began with the waters of the Nile turning into blood. Next, G-d smote the land with a plague of frogs, which swarmed from the waters of the Nile into the Egyptians' homes, bedrooms and kitchens.

The Torah's name for Egypt, *Mitzrayim*, shares a common root with the Hebrew word *meitzar*, constraint. Accordingly, the ten plagues that brought down mighty Egypt represent the steps we must take to break out of our personal "Egypt"—the internal limitations that hinder and constrain our service of G-d.

The first two plagues both involved water. Water, which is cold by nature, symbolizes an attitude of coolness—detachment and indifference. The first plague, in which the waters of the Nile were transformed to warm and lifegiving blood, symbolizes that we must imbue our service of G-d with warmth and excitement. In contrast, the second plague, in which creatures of the water, frogs, swarmed, everything related to Pharaoh and Egypt—and particularly, their ov-

ens—symbolizes that breaking through our internal “Egypt” requires developing a coolness towards material pleasures.

Now, under normal circumstances, ridding ourselves of competing loyalties—symbolized by the plague of frogs—would be the first step to take before attempting to live a life devoted to G-d and G-dliness. We see, however, that the plague of frogs was not the first plague but the second; the plague of blood preceded it. The order of these two plagues teaches that even before we have succeeded at cooling down our material pleasures, we must already infuse our Torah and mitzvos with fervor, for the light and warmth of our passion-filled mitzvos will assist in dispelling any dark and undesirable passions that remain.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 1, pp. 123-125*

Light points is Project of

