

עטרת השבוע

Ateres HaShavua

A Weekly Torah Publication from the Students of Mesivta Ateres Yaakov
Ruth & Hyman Simon High School

פרשת וארא
ראש חודש שבט תשע"ג
January 12, 2013

Candle Lighting:	4:30
First קריאת שמע:	9:04
Second קריאת שמע:	9:40
First תפלה:	10:04
Second תפלה:	10:28
שקיעה	4:49
Earliest הברלה:	5:39 (50 minutes)

All times are for The Five Towns

This week's edition of the Ateres HaShavua is sponsored by Mr & Mrs Moshe Malek in honor of the Bar Mitzva of their son Yehuda

This week's edition of the Ateres HaShavua is sponsored by Mr & Mrs Ari Friedman in honor of the birth of their granddaughter Michal Tamar

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Next Issue will be Parshas Yisro

Coming Soon: Halacha Shiurim by Rabbi Moshe Sokoloff and more...

BETHANKFUL

By Rabbi Yehuda Orlansky, 12th grade Rebbe

”ויאמר ד' אל משה אמר אל אהרן נטה את מטך והך את עפר הארץ והיה לכןם בכל ארץ מצרים” (ח:יב)

“Hashem said to Moshe, say to Aharon, stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the land, it shall become lice throughout the land of Egypt”

Although we typically associate Moshe with bringing the 10 plagues upon Egypt, a careful examination of the verses reveals that Hashem actually commanded Moshe to have Aharon bring about the first three plagues. Rashi explains that because Moshe had gratitude to the river which had protected him when he was placed there as an infant, it was inappropriate for him to strike the water for the first two plagues (blood and frogs). This sense of appreciation is understandable, as the water sheltered him, and it was there that Pharaoh's daughter discovered and rescued him.

However, regarding the third plague – lice – Rashi's explanation that it was inappropriate for Moshe to strike the same ground which protected him by hiding the body of the Egyptian that he slew is difficult to understand. Although Moshe thought that nobody saw the killing, in reality Dasan and Aviram witnessed the murder. They informed on him to Pharaoh, who would have killed Moshe if not for
(continued on page 2)

BALANCING ACT

By Yossi Koppel, 12th grade

Throughout Parshas Va'era, the pasuk repeats the phrase “And I will harden Paraoh's heart”, or “And Paraoh's heart became hardened”. In fact, after every Makkah, the pasuk mentions this. After every makkah, when it would have made sense for Paraoh to let the B'nai Yisroel go, Hashem hardened his heart, and Paraoh said “No”.

The problem is that Hashem gives every person bechira, or free will. We're not forced to do anything – a person has a choice to follow his Yetzer Hatov, or his Yetzer Hara. After going through each Makkah, it would be safe to assume that Paraoh's bechira would have led him to follow his Yetzer Hatov, and free the Jews. So how could Hashem have hardened Paraoh's heart, which seemingly took away his Bechira?

There are a number of answers to this question. The Rambam answers that sometimes, if a person does an Avaira that is so bad, his punishment can actually be that he is not able to do Teshuva. In Paraoh's case, since his Avairos were so bad, his punishment was that Hashem prevented him from doing Teshuva. Hashem did this by hardening his heart, and forcing him not to let the Bnai Yisroel go.

The Ramban gives an answer based on the pasuk “Va'ani aksheh es leiv Paraoh v'hirbaisi es ososai” – “But I shall harden Paraoh's heart and I shall multiply my signs”. The Ramban explains that Hashem could remove a person's bechira if it is for a greater purpose. This can explain why Hashem hardened Paraoh's heart. It was for the greater purpose of publicizing His miracles throughout all of Mitzrayim.

(continued on page 2)

ATERES HASHAVUA

Rabbi Yehuda Orlansky (continued from page 1)

a miracle that saved his life (Rashi 2:14-15). Practically speaking, the ground did absolutely nothing to benefit or assist Moshe in any way. If so, why did he feel gratitude toward it, and why couldn't he strike it himself to bring about the plague of lice?

One commentator on the Medrash (Shemos Rabbah 10:7) suggests that the ground provided Moshe temporary peace-of-mind by allowing him to think for at least one day that his killing of the Egyptian would go unnoticed. I would like to alternately suggest that the Torah is teaching us the fallacy of a common English expression. If we give of our precious time, energy, and heart in an earnest attempt to help somebody out, only to have our efforts fail, the average American will tell us, "Thanks, but no thanks." This expression indicates that he owes us no debt of gratitude for our efforts and not-so-subtly suggests that next time we should just mind our own business. However, the Torah teaches that because the ground was willing to help and tried to be of assistance in doing its best to cover up the taskmaster's corpse, Moshe was obligated to show his appreciation for its good-faith efforts and was unable to strike it to bring about the plague of lice.

I once shared this thought in a Torah class that I taught. Later that week, a woman called to say that her husband had offered to help her clean the house. Unfortunately, although his intentions were good, his cleaning skills left something to be desired. She explained that when he finished, not only was the house still a mess, but it would take her considerable work just to get it back to where he started! She was about to tell him, "Thanks, but no thanks," when she remembered the lesson she had just been taught.

So many times a relative, a co-worker, or a shadchan will volunteer to try to help us out. Unfortunately, these efforts don't always lead to the results we were hoping for. The next time it happens, instead of rubbing in the failure to somebody who already feels badly enough, let us remember the lesson of Moshe and the ground and express our sincere appreciation for their time and good intentions. Adapted from Rabbi Ozer Alpert

Yossi Koppel (continued from page 1)

A third answer is given by Rav Eliyahu Dessler, in his sefer Michtav M'Eliyahu. He writes that every person has what he calls a Bechira point – the point where you truly have a 50/50 chance of making a decision either way. For example, there's a 50 percent chance you'll choose your Yetzer Hatov, and a 50 percent chance you'll go with your Yetzer hara. However, if there would be something that could influence your decision in any one direction, then you would no longer have true Bechira.

According to Rav Dessler, Paraoh was originally operating at his Bechira-point the whole time. At any moment he could have chosen to let the Jews go, or not. However, once the makkos started coming, he couldn't really choose to let the Jews go – he would have "chosen" that automatically. The makkos were the outside influence that was affecting his bechira. It was no longer a 50/50 decision, maybe more like a 75/25 decision in favor of letting them go. Or even a 95/5 decision. Who would have chosen to say "No, I will not let you go" after going through makkah after makkah?! Paraoh clearly wasn't thinking straight; his bechira was way off!

That, says Rav Dessler, is why Paraoh's heart had to be hardened. Hashem didn't remove his bechira, he actually restored it. In order to restore him to his 50/50 Bechira-point, Hashem had to counter the effect of the makkos by making him stubborn. That way, he had an equal influence pulling him in either direction, allowing him to have true bechira.

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Stories of Tzaddikim

By Binyomin Goldstein

Rav Moshe Isserles (The Ram'ah) was a great talmid chacham. He wrote on the Shulchan Aruch, and all Ashkenazi Jews follow his interpretation. The father of the Ram'ah was Rav Yisroel, and most people called him Rav Issur. Rav Issur had a special minhag, never do business on Friday afternoon, because he might delay preparing for Shabbos.

One Friday morning, a wealthy businessman walked in to Rav Issur's store and gave him a whole list of things he wanted. Rav Issur was very excited because he had a chance to be making a lot of money. As Rav Issur was starting to put it all together, he realized that it became the afternoon. Rav Issur explained to him that he doesn't do business on Friday afternoon, and asked the customer if he could come back after Shabbos to come pick it up.

The wealthy man got very angry and upset that Rav Issur wasn't taking care of his order. He even threatened to take his business to another store, which would cause the Rav to lose out on a lot of money. Although Rav Issur realized that he'd be losing a lot of money, he chose to stick with his minhag. He told the man that he will not complete the sale, and he will stay with his minhag.

Suddenly, the man got very calm. He explained that he came to test Rav Issur if he would stay with his minhag or make the sale. As a reward for being so strong in this minhag, the man gave Rav Issur a bracha that he should have a son who will grow up into a big talmid chacham. Not long after, Rav Issur and his wife had a baby boy, and named him Moshe. Due to his tremendous kavod for Shabbos, Rav Issur had the merit to have such an amazing son.

Thoughts On The Haftorah

By Ari Halpern

In the haftorah of Parshas Va'era, Yechezkel foretells the destruction of Egypt as repayment for their sins. Pharoh is described very colorfully as a great crocodile who lies down in the rivers of Egypt and proclaims "the river is mine and I made myself." As Rashi explains, the sin of Egypt is their proclamation that they have no need of Hashem to supply them with rain because their land has "natural" water supplies. They are self-sufficient.

The Vilna Gaon explains that rain is not "natural" at all. Nature describes phenomena that happen regularly and predictably every day such as the rising and setting of the sun. Rain, however, is extremely irregular. At times there are droughts, at other times the rains come in abundance, as Eretz Yisrael is experiencing at this time. Rain was specifically designed during the Six Days of Creation to come not on a regular schedule, but in response to prayer.

In Parshas Bereishis the Torah says about the world before the creation of Adam:

כי לא המטיר ה' אלקים על הארץ ואדם אין לעבד את האדמה

There was no rain because there were no humans to appreciate the need for rain and to daven for it.

Pharoh's mistake was to think that "nature" is enough to supply his needs; that there is no need to daven to Hashem for rain if nature supplies all his needs. Hashem tells him that he will learn his lesson very dramatically. He will be dragged out of the river with hooks in his jaws, with all the fish of the river attached to his scales, and he will be deposited in the desert as food to the animals. At that point, presumably, he will appreciate the need for rain from the heavens!

אם תשיב משבת רגלך

Losh-Kneading

Basic Premise of Losh- Losh is the combining of particles into a solid or semisolid mass through a liquid. This is what happens during the kneading process of bread. this happens in two steps. 1) The liquid comes in contact with the flour and 2) they are mixed and blended with a kneading motion.

Losh in the mishkan- Losh was used to knead the bread of the lechem hapanim that were placed on the Shulchan. As we said before, losh is when particles combine with a liquid. The gemara differentiates between two types of particles, Bar Gibul and Lav Bar Gibul.

Bar Gibul- Bar gibul refers to very tiny and fine particles that dissolve and fuse with the liquid. This includes things like fine flour, fine sand, baby cereals, and similar substances.

Lav Bar Gibul- This refers to things that do not dissolve in water. this refers to things like coarse sand, and bran.

Losh with mashed substances- Losh doesn't only refer to the particles becoming solid but even mashed substances as well. For example, one may not mix butter with a mashed avocado; even though the avocado is already mashed one may not knead other substances into the *avocado*.

וקראת לשבת עונג

שתיים במפה תכסה

What was *Adam Harishon*, the author of שיר ליום השבת, singing about? Last year in our discussion of the restorative powers of Shabbos we quoted the *medrash* that relates how, when *Adam* recognized the value and power of *Teshuva*, he composed this hymn.

Another explanation in the *medrash* is that the שיר ליום השבת is a celebration of Shabbos being a day of respite from forces of war and destruction, and a day of dwelling in peace with Hashem.

Over the course of much of our discussion last year we highlighted how the central force which connects Shabbos with Torah, *Teshuva*, Hashem and creation is peace. We discussed how acting peaceably and harmoniously with each other is requisite to our receiving the shelter of peace-the *Sukkas Shalom*-with which Hashem lovingly embraces us on Shabbos. According to this, these two explanations in the *medrash* share a common theme.

Let us examine yet another explanation of the *medrash*. The song of Shabbos is double-שיר. The *korbon* of Shabbos is double-שני כבשים. The warnings of Shabbos are double-זכור ושמור. Its punishments are double, and its rewards are double. And of course, as we explained last week when we discussed the connection of Shabbos and מן, its להם is double.

As we mentioned last week, we cover the *Lechem Mishneh* above and below, reminiscent of the מן. There is another, better known, reason for covering the *Lechem Mishneh*, and that is so as not to embarrass the bread when we bypass it to make Kiddush on wine.

Now, how embarrassed can a piece of bread get? There is a story told of a husband, who upon arriving home one Friday night with his Shabbos guests noticed that the *challo*s were uncovered. With exasperation, he berated his wife for neglecting to cover the *challah*, embarrassing her in front of the guests. Witnessing this shameful display of uncouth unctuousness, one of the guests asked him, "so remind me again, why is it that we cover the *challo*s?"

We hope the story ended on a positive note and they lived happily ever after, but the point is that the lesson of being concerned for inanimate objects is to sensitize us to being mindful of each other. This third explanation of the *medrash*, then, shares the common theme of peace with the first two *p'shatim*.

How fitting it is that at our Shabbos *seuda*, when we will be greeting the *malachei hashalom* to join us for the day whose theme is *Shalom* that we learn this subtle, yet powerful lesson of the importance of peace-even the peace of bread.

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