

VAERA

28th Tevet 5776

Shabbat begins: 15:55

Shabbat ends: 17:05

COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
DIRECTOR, TAL

Hashem Melech!

At a Brit in Jerusalem a great Rabbi stood up to speak and wish well to the grandfather, an accomplished Talmud scholar, on the occasion of the Bris of his first grand-child, "Mazel Tov" he said, "today you are a human being!" Everyone was stunned. Maybe there is some hidden insult implied here. Until now he wasn't human?

Then he went on to explain that in the animal kingdom it is common to find creatures that have an instinct to protect its young.

However, only by humans does a grandparent demonstrate love and care for his or her grandchild and grandchildren have feelings for grandparents. This is symptomatic of real soulfulness, to see one's self in a grander historical or familial context. The greater one's spiritual development the broader is his grasp of the importance of the historical relevance of his life, and its mission. The Gesher HaChaim lists a number of major differences between a human being and an animal. Amongst the items spoken about there is man's unique ability to perceive past, present, and future, and to see himself as a creature of history.

The Sephardim mention daily the words "Hashem Melech Hashem Malach Hashem Yimloch Leolam Vaed" - Hashem is King,

Hashem, was King, and Hashem will be King forever!

We state that HASHEM is the King in the past, present, and future.

The Ben Ish Hai (Rabbi Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), (Vayigash) writes that whenever we recite this verse, we recite it twice. This verse expresses our acceptance of G-d as King over us, and we recite it twice to emphasize that we accept the Almighty's kingship over both our bodies and our souls. The precedent for this practice is found in the Book of Melachim I (18:39), where we read that Bnei Yisrael declared their loyalty to G-d by declaring, "Hashem Hu Ha'Elokim Hashem Hu Ha'Elokim" ("Hashem is G-d, Hashem is G-d"). Just as Bnei Yisrael

kavanot we are supposed to have when saying G-d's Name we are supposed to think, He *was*, is and will be.

In this case we are thinking about the past first. Why the difference?

In this week's Parasha Hashem tells Moshe that He had made Himself known to the forefathers only as Kel Sha-dai but never revealed himself as Hashem- (spelt Yud, Heh, Vav, Heh -YHVH).

It was now time to make use of this new revelation.



repeated this declaration, so must we repeat "Hashem Melech" in order to express our commitment of both body and soul to the Almighty.

The Shulchan Aruch (OH 5:1) states that whenever we make a blessing and mention G-d's Name it is important to contemplate about the way we pronounce His Name (Adnut) as well as the way we read His Name (YHVH). Thus we should ponder each time that He is the Master of everything (Adnut) and He always was, is and will be (YHVH).

It is interesting to note that in Hashem Melech we start with the present — Hashem *is* the King. Whereas when relating the



1. What is a good way of remembering how many plagues are found in which parsha?
2. The second plague was *tzefardaia*. What animal was this?
3. What famous thing happened from the actions of the *tzefardaia*?
4. How long was each plague for?
5. Where do some people find a Jewish source for a magic wand?
6. Which plague continued happening later in history?
7. What is the pattern in the ten plagues?

Answers On Page 3

There are many different explanations of the distinction between these two names of G-d. On a simple level the idea of YHVH is the concept of the Eternal. The name is a shortened version of "Haya, Hove, V'yehiye" (was, is and will be). G-d is not only powerful, great, kind etc. but as well He is Eternal. He has made us promises in the past and despite the fact that we have not always seen their fulfilment immediately, we have full confidence in what the future holds. Promises were made to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov and now the time has come for fulfilling them.

Times can be tough, but we should always know that there is a long term plan and there is a Master of the world. Moshe had questioned why G-d sent him at this time if it made Pharaoh increase the burden on the Bnei Yisrael. G-d's reply was that the forefathers *never* asked, Ushmi Hashem Lo Nodati Lahem - they never needed Me to explain to them the essence of My Name – that I was, am and will be. Rather they lived my Name in comprehensively and understood and felt G-d constantly even in the tough times.

The Gemara (Taanit 25) relates the famous story of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa. One Friday evening, he came in to see his daughter looking very sad because she accidentally lit Shabbat candles with vinegar

(which doesn't normally burn) instead of oil. He consoled her saying not to worry, because it made no difference—Hashem can command the vinegar to burn the same way He commands the oil to burn. The Gemara relates the miracle that the candle lit the entire Shabbat!

The Ben Yehoyada asks: What was she worried about? After all, she had already lit the candles, and she SAW that they were burning from the vinegar! He explains that she was concerned because it is forbidden to derive benefit from miracles, and this was clearly a miracle. Perhaps she was had not fulfilled the mitzvah with these Shabbat candles?! However, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa answered her—there's no difference! The fact that oil burns is also a miracle! What we perceive as nature is, indeed, a miracle as well. The law forbidding us to benefit from a miracle only applies where the miracle is perceived as something out of the ordinary, and supernatural. However, when one's Emuna is so strong and clear to see that EVERYTHING is under Hashem's control, then there is no difference between miracle and nature.

Every time we say a blessing we are supposed to have two ideas. First to internalise that G-d is the Master of the world and only then proceed to ponder that He is, was and will be. Once we have made him Master of the world then we can think of past present and future.

With regards the saying of Hashem Melech – we are in fact coronating G-d with our very

words. We are emphatically stating He is the King. We must know first that He is the King, only then can we speak about past and future.

It is this constant knowledge and understanding that existed with the Avot and that Hashem now portrayed to Moshe.

Tosfot (Berachot 11a) asks an interesting question: Why don't we repeat Birchot HaTorah each time we learn during the day, just like on Succot we make the blessing "Leishev BaSuccah" every time we sit in the Succah for a meal? Tosfot explains that Torah study is different from the other commandments because one's mind does not abandon thoughts of Torah. Since a person's obligation to study Torah applies all day long, as the verse states "Vehagita Bo Yomam Valaylah" (– you should meditate in it [the Torah] day and night), it is as if one's learning is not interrupted during the day.

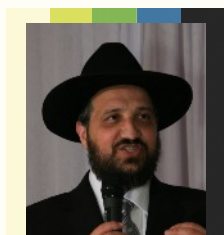
That is the ultimate way forward. Having G-d on our mind constantly – Shiviti Hashem Lnegdi Tamid.

This was the message to Moshe at the outset in redeeming Am Yisrael, a journey that would be supernatural and majestic.

Let us live and exclaim the words Hashem Melech – He is our King.

There is no difference between miracle and nature it all emanates from Hashem and through this realisation we will be able to experience both.

Shabbat Shalom



RABBI
MORDECHAI FHIMA

Where Was The Free Will Of Pharaoh?

In Parashat Va'era, Hashem performs a wealth of miracles in the first seven *makot*. We become so awed by the wonders of Hashem that we rarely hone in on a fundamental principle in Judaism that seems to be challenged by the *psukim*. A careful reading of the text discloses that after the final two *makot* in the *parsha* the *pasuk* says that Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart. If we believe as Torah Jews that Hashem gives man *bechira chofshit*, free choice, how can Hashem

forcibly control Pharaoh's emotions and cause him to refuse to set Bnei Yisroel free? Many *mefarshim* attempt to reconcile this difficulty, and try to explain how "V'Ani

as a natural consequence of his actions, and those who understand Hashem's intervention as a great chessed.

Rashi explains that when it became obvious before Hashem that Pharaoh would not perform complete *teshuvah*, Hashem hardened his heart so that he could inflict numerous punishments upon him. This is the normal way of Hashem, to punish evildoers who are beyond repentance, so that through their punishment His greatness can be revealed, and fear of God can be instilled in others. The Rambam writes that Hashem was simply exercising his *midat hadin*. If a person sins greatly enough Hashem can withhold *teshuvah* from him, in order that the individual suffers from his actions. When a sin is so severe, one can land beyond the sphere of Hashem's *rachamim*. The judgment, therefore, is that Hashem must stop the possibility of the sinner doing *teshuvah* so that he can receive the deserved punishment. Expanding on the same principle, the Ibn

The concept of Hashem hardening Pharaoh's heart follows the idea that when one puts himself on the path of sin, Hashem opens up the way for him.

Achazek et lev Pharaoh" in verse 21 chapter 4 can be understood. Their approaches can be divided into two basic categories; those who see the hardening of Pharaoh's heart

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Ezra says that *bechira* at its core means rising above what you are granted by nature. The way to do this is by clinging to Hashem. Pharaoh who did not acknowledge Hashem's greatness could not rise above his nature. Based on this idea, the Ibn Ezra understands why some *psukim* say that Pharaoh hardened his own heart, while other *psukim* say that Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart. The two are essentially the same because Hashem can dictate our emotions, but leaves room for us to rise above them. If one does not rise above them, like Pharaoh, it is as if the person himself chose that fate.

The Akedat Yitzchak says *chas veshalom* that Hashem would close the gates of *teshuvah*! The concept of Hashem hardening Pharaoh's heart follows the idea that when one puts himself on the path of sin, Hashem opens up the way for him. When it was clear that Pharaoh would not perform full *teshuvah*, Hashem created an opportunity for him to sin by spacing out the plagues, as opposed to sending them all straight with no breaks. The time in between the *makot* presented Pharaoh with the opportunity to muster up the strength to resist sending out Bnei Yisroel. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart can hence be interpreted not as a closing off of Pharaoh's *bechira* but as an arranging of circumstances, which lead Pharaoh to respond the way he did. Remember, even according to this approach Pharaoh could have climbed above what Hashem decreed.

Rav Dessler brings his own beautiful idea on this topic, which falls into the first category as well. He relates Hashem's dealing with Pharaoh to the well-known concept that the greater a person is, the greater is his evil Inclination. Hashem increases a great person's *yetzer hara* so that his free will is not canceled. Think how easy and robotic doing good would be if a great person had a miniscule *yetzer hara*! Rav Dessler continues to say that a primary difference between a *tzadik* and a *rasha* is that the *tzadik* consistently chooses good and the *rasha* does not. When Pharaoh witnessed Hashem's miracles his *yetzer hara* grew to counteract this potentially spiritually enlightening experience. It is a normal way of God that the evil inclination increases as we grow. When the *pasuk* writes that Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart it

means that Hashem caused Pharaoh's *yetzer hara* to grow.

The Ramban and the Sforno fall into the other category of *mefarshim* those who view the hardening of Pharaoh's heart as a chessed. By responding as He did, Hashem was looking to grant Pharaoh more *zechuyot* than he would have gotten had he fully controlled his own decisions. Had Hashem not engrained in Pharaoh the will to resist, he would have freed Bnei Yisroel not as recognition of Hashem's greatness, but as a response to his immense physical suffering. Hashem wanted Pharaoh's *teshuvah* to be for the loftier reason-acknowledging Hashem's power. If Hashem looked to give Pharaoh, the self-worshiping oppressor of the Jewish people *zechuyot*, imagine how Hashem must look to give his chosen nation more merit!

Now if a sinner were to come and claim that their persistently stubborn behavior were a result of Hashem responding to them through hardening their hearts like He did to Pharaoh, it would be critical to point out the differences to him. Pharaoh's emotions only fell under Hashem's jurisdiction after he chose to harden his own heart and blind himself to Hashem's power five times repeatedly. It was only after Pharaoh habituated himself to such behaviour that Hashem cleared the way for him to fall deeper into his sinful conduct. Yet, according to the Akedat Yitzchak, Pharaoh could have nevertheless risen above what Hashem had decreed! Even if one holds like the Ramban that the gates of *teshuvah* were closed off from Pharaoh, this was only after he became so absorbed in evil that it was apparent he would not repent sincerely. Most evil doers are not near this level. And it is important to bear in mind the Sforno and Ramban who say that Hashem searches to find merit even in haters of the Jewish people. With these ideas in mind we should find the strength to rise above that which has become habitual to us and to continue to move forward in our ability to recognize Hashem's *nissim v'ni'laot* even in our days.

Shabbat Shalom.



1. If you take the first two letters of the hebrew name of the parsha, (Vav & Alef), it has the gematria of 7 alluding to the first seven plagues that appear in this parsha. The gematria of the Hebrew name of Parshas Bo, is 3 alluding to the last three plagues that appear in it.

2. The common understanding is that it is frogs. However, Rabbeinu Chananel holds it is crocodiles.

3. The Gemora (Pesochim 53b) learns Chananya, Mishoel and Azarya learnt from the frogs' actions of jumping into the ovens to be willing to be thrown into the furnace for carrying out the will of Hashem.

4. The Midrash brings two opinions – R Yehuda nad R' Nechemia. They both agree that each plague lasted for one month. One holds that the first three weeks was the warning and then one week of the plague. The other holds the reverse – one week of warning followed by three weeks of plague.

5. Some see it from Moshe's *mata*, his stick since it was moved around before performing lots of miracles.

6. The plague of *borod*, hailstones. It had stopped in midair and continued to fall when Yehoshua was chasing the enemy who came to attack the *Givoinim*.

7. The Malbim says that the ten plagues are to be split into three groups of three while the tenth one of Makos Bechoiros is separate since with it the Jews were sent out. Each group had the first two plagues preceded with a warning with the third plague without any warning. The first plague's warning was given in the morning and the second plague's warning was given at midday.

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HALACHA
RABBI DOV LEVY
KOLLEL NETZACH YISRAEL

Tevilat Keillim

The vessel must be immersed in mikveh water entirely at once.

If a bit of the pot was sticking out the water can I push that bit underneath as I lift the rest out?

No, the whole pot has to be under the water at the same time. If any part is above the water tevillah is void.

Can I hold the pot whilst immersing it or do I have to let go of it for a second?

As long as you wet your hand before grabbing the pot and you hold it loosely in the water, you don't need to let go of it.

Can a child do tevillah?

It's preferable for an adult to immerse the item which the bracha is to be made on. Where there are several vessels to be immersed, so the bracha has already been made, a child's tevillah is valid.

Is the tevillah of a Non-Jew valid?

Ideally one should not get a Non-Jew to immerse vessels. If he did, with your instruction, it's preferable to do the tevillah again. However since there are major authorities who hold that the tevillah of a Non-Jew is valid, you should not make a bracha when immersing the vessels a second time.

Mazal Tov!

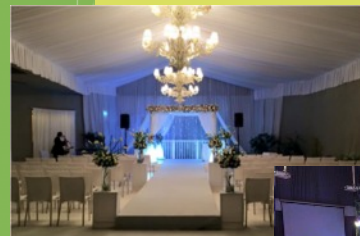
- Jeremy Stein & Lizzy Galpert on their engagement
- Orli Needham and Robert Ferris on their engagement
- Edmond Hanassab and Michelle Tamir on their engagement
- Morris & Esther Shasha on the birth of their baby girl Aurelie
- Leor & Shyli Melehi on the birth of their baby girl
- Zac and Ayallah Gold on the birth of their baby girl
- Moshe and Shoshi King on the birth of their baby girl Eliana Rachel

TAL's 40th wedding!

Wishing a hearty Mazal Tov to Daniella Woolf and Raphael Cwajgenbaum on their recent wedding in attendance of previous Chief Rabbi Lau. Daniella has been an instrumental part of the TAL team and we were proud to personally arrange and be a part of this wonderful match.

Since inception TAL has helped and successfully been involved in forty weddings!

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