

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAERA

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

BAD? DEPENDS ON YOUR PERSPECTIVE!

So much of your happiness depends on your perspective.

Is a rainy day good or bad? It all depends on the perspective of the person you ask. If you were to ask a bride on her rainy wedding day, she would say it is a bad day. If you were to ask a farmer who has experienced a dry spell, he would say it is a good day. We form our perspective on things based on our experiences, by people we interact with, our culture, and the beliefs we hold.

In this week's Parasha we are shown the right perspective of the way we view G-d's actions when they seem tough. We experience this lesson right at the birth pangs of our exodus from Egypt and it is a lifelong lesson that when developed can enable a more fulfilling life.

The Torah relates how Moshe approached Pharaoh on Bnei Yisrael's behalf to request their redemption from Egypt (Shemot 5:1). Pharaoh denied Moshe's request and intensified the Jews' workload as a result. In response to Pharaoh's cruel actions, Moshe cried to G-d, "Lamah hare'otah la-am ha-zeh? Lamah zeh shelachtani" - Why have You done bad to this nation? Why have You sent me? (Shemot 5:22).

The Rashbam and Ramban suggest that Moshe was not trying to challenge G-d's actions. Rather, he connects the words, "lamah hare'otah la-am ha-zeh" - why have You done bad to this nation, to "lamah zeh shelachtani" - why have you sent me.

Moshe was questioning why Bnei Yisrael were suffering under Pharaoh if they were worthy of being redeemed. And if they weren't worthy of being saved because of their sinful natures then why did G-d send Moshe to lead them out of Egypt? Moshe was not blaming G-d for the Jews' misery because he was aware of the sins they had committed in the past; rather, he was logically asking what his role was in the salvation of the Jewish people.

Rashi however suggests a different path of understanding, that Moshe inappropriately rebuked G-d. Rashi contrasts Moshe's reaction to Avraham's when G-d commanded him, "And you shall bring (Yitzchak) as a sacrifice" (Bereishit 22:2). Instead of questioning G-d, Avraham acted swiftly to carry out G-d's command. Because Moshe rebuked G-d, G-d responded with, "And now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh," (i.e., the miracles and plagues); however, Moshe will not see the Bnei Yisrael conquer and inhabit Eretz Yisrael.

Everything G-d does is for the good. We may not see it, we may not understand it immediately, but there is nothing 'bad' that emanates from G-d.

In fact, G-d had already promised Avraham that his children would be in exile for 400 years. Yet the Bnei Yisrael were in exile under Pharaoh for only 210 years. What happened? Our sages explain that Hashem reduced the amount of years due to the fact that the workload had increased tremendously since Moshe had approached Pharaoh. The hard work that Moshe was complaining about actually saved them being there for a further 190 years.

G-d was telling Moshe you didn't understand, and you will never know the future, but one thing is for sure - it's all for the ultimate good. G-d's ways are hidden and our approach to hard trials should always be that G-d wants the best for us.

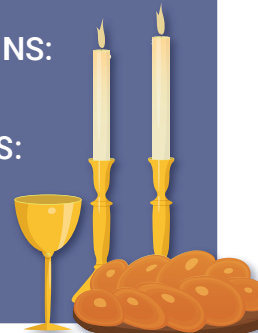
There is a fascinating story mentioned in the Yalkut Sipurim in the name of Rabenu Nissim Gaon about Eliyahu and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi.

Once, when Rabbi Yehoshua encountered Eliyahu Hanavi, he asked Eliyahu if he could accompany him so that he could learn from his conduct. Eliyahu refused, explaining that Rabbi Yehoshua would not understand what he would see. On the contrary, his mortal mind would raise countless questions and there would be no time for explanations. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi begged and pleaded; he promised that he would not ask any questions. Eliyahu finally agreed on the condition that if Rabbi Yehoshua would begin to

28TH TEVET 5783

SHABBAT BEGINS:
16:13pm

SHABBAT ENDS:
17:22pm



DVAR TORAH
Depends on your perspective
By Rabbi Jonathan Tawil



DVAR TORAH
Parsha Insights
By Rabbi David Baadani



DVAR TORAH
Divine Providence
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OUR CHAHAMIM
Rabbi Israel Meir Hacohen
- The Chofetz Chaim



KIDS ZONE
Comic & quiz

Shabbat Shalom



This newsletter contains Divrei Torah and may contain Sheimot - Please dispose of accordingly

THE ORIGINAL COMMUNAL PARASHA SHEET, SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR OVER 11 YEARS!

ask questions, they would part company. And so, they set out together. Toward evening, they reached an old hut. An elderly couple was sitting outside. They were obviously poor, but their poverty did not hamper their enthusiasm to welcome guests. As soon as they saw the travellers, they jumped up and eagerly invited them into their home, offering them a meal and a place to sleep.

The accommodations were somewhat lacking because the people did not have very much. But whatever they had, they willingly shared, doing the best they could to observe the Mitzva of hospitality to guests.

The following morning, the two travellers bade their hosts farewell and set out again. Shortly after they had departed, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi saw that Eliyahu was praying. He listened closely. What was Eliyahu praying for? The elderly couple who had hosted them owned a cow. The cow was the most valuable possession they owned - indeed, the majority of their income came from the cow's milk. Eliyahu was praying that this cow should die.

When Rabbi Yehoshua heard this, he was shocked. The couple had been so kind, so pleasant, so warm. Why did they deserve that their cow should die? But he could not ask any questions; that was the agreement.

Toward evening, they came to a beautiful mansion. Although many members of the household saw them, no one offered them hospitality.

They asked the owner of the house, a very wealthy man, for permission to spend the night. Reluctantly, the man agreed. But he was very cold to them; he did not offer them any food, and he hardly said a word to them.

After they set off on their way in the morning, Rabbi Yehoshua noticed that Eliyahu was praying again. What was he praying for this time? One of the walls in

this rich man's house was cracked and weak. Eliyahu was praying to G-d that this wall should be restored and should remain strong and solid.

Rabbi Yehoshua could not understand. This person had not acted kindly toward them. And yet Eliyahu was praying to G-d on his behalf! But once more, he abided by the terms of his agreement: no questions allowed.

Eventually, the two travellers arrived in a beautiful city; everything about the place reflected prosperity and opulence. They made their way to the synagogue. It was a magnificent structure, designed with elegance and taste. Everything, even the benches, was beautiful.

Rabbi Yehoshua thought that they would have no problem receiving hospitality in such a town. But it did not work out that way. The people were not very kind. When the prayers were over, nobody approached them to ask where they planned to eat or where they planned to stay. Ultimately, they had to spend the night in the synagogue without eating supper.

In the morning, when they were ready to leave, Eliyahu blessed the inhabitants of the city, wishing them that they should all become leaders. Again, Rabbi Yehoshua was puzzled. Why did Eliyahu bless people who had not shown them hospitality?

That evening, they came to another city. It was not as wealthy a community as the first; the shul (synagogue) was nowhere near as beautiful. But the people were very fine, warm and kind. They did everything they could to make the two travellers comfortable. Before leaving that city, Eliyahu told them, "May G-d help that only one of you becomes a leader."

At this point, Rabbi Yehoshua could no longer contain his curiosity. He told Eliyahu, "I know that by asking I will forfeit my right to accompany you, but I

cannot go on like this. Please, explain these four incidents to me."

And so Eliyahu began to explain: "The elderly couple whom we met first were wonderful people who always performed acts of kindness. It was destined for the woman to pass away that day. By hosting us, she was given the opportunity to perform a mitzva. And the merit of her hospitality was great enough for the decree to be lifted, but not entirely. So I prayed that their cow - which meant so much to them and which was their source of income - should die. So the cow's death was really a blessing for them.

"About the wealthy person's home. In that wall, a great treasure lay buried. But the wall was weak and would soon break. Because he was a miserly person and conducted himself so rudely, I prayed that the wall should become strong so that he would not be able to benefit from the treasure.

"What about the people in the prosperous city?" Eliyahu continued. "My prayer that they should all become leaders in the city is not a blessing; if anything, it is the opposite. For the most destructive thing that can happen in a city is that everybody becomes a leader.

"In the other city, where the people were kind, I gave them a genuine blessing: that one, and only one, of them becomes a true leader."

We are finite beings and can never fully understand the ways of Hashem. One thing we do know is that He is all good. At the beginning of exodus Moshe was taught an important message to pass on: G-d sees the BIG picture and G-d desires only good. Sometimes life can only be understood backward, never let this stop you from living forward! Always know there is a BIG picture and that we have the Almighty and His goodness with us!



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT VAERA

The ten plagues that G-d brought upon the Egyptians in Egypt were not only punishments or ways to show Hashem's total control over this world, but also lessons to teach both Pharaoh and his people as well as the soon to be redeemed people of Israel on how the world is run.

The Nile. One of the longest rivers in the

world and the source of life of Egypt, above the surface it looks like a place of peace and life. Underneath the surface however, the Nile was used to cover up horrific crimes and heinous acts; the bottom of the Nile used as a cemetery for countless bodies of Jewish babies thrown into it by criminals thinking no one would ever judge them for their actions.

This is the first plague, its waters turning to blood, the first lesson delivered by the Creator of the world. After decades of loss, fear and trauma, injustice and cover up of a painful truth, the big lie has been exposed and the waters of the Nile have

been revealed as they really are. Not a source of life but death, not heaven but hell, not cold water for a weary soul but blood of innocent helpless souls.

By turning the waters of the Nile into blood, by revealing the truth out of falsehood, the way to redemption, to receiving the Torah and to the unity and wholeness of the Jewish people was paved.

The truth will set the world free.

לע"נ סבי הרה"ג הרב שמעון בעדני בן חביבה
זצוק"ל



RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

Divine Providence

As we proceed through the book of Shemot, we read about the slavery and persecution that the Jews suffered under Egyptian rule. G-d warned Pharaoh, through his emissaries Moshe and Aharon, that if he does not free the Jews, he and his people will suffer terrible plagues. Essentially, Pharaoh believed that G-d had created the world, but thereafter, had left its running in the hands of powers of idolatry. He reasoned that it is below the dignity of G-d, the Creator of the world, to be involved in such mundane matters. The lessons of the supernatural plagues and the miraculous redemption of the Jewish People taught Pharaoh that, on the contrary, G-d is directly involved in the running of the world on a daily basis.

This is why our redemption from Egypt plays such a major role in our religion: Every recital of the shemah, each time we wear tefillin, and every kiddush of Shabbat and festivals reminds us about our exodus from Egypt. Through the miracles of our redemption, G-d made the following statements in a very clear

manner: He created the entire world from nothing, He supervises the actions and destiny of every single individual, and He remains the supreme Ruler of the world, not championed by anyone.

It is part of our basic emunah – faith, to realize that G-d is constantly involved in the life of every single Jew. A person will not bang his finger unless it has been decreed from Above. All the more so, events greater than this, change of circumstances, trials and tribulations are all tailor-made specifically for each person, to learn from them and grow spiritually. A person who thinks about what happens to him in his life and does not merely assume that “it is all a coincidence,” will be able to develop a closer and more personal relationship with Hashem, since he appreciates that he is being guided by Him.

For example, a man may travel abroad on business, and unexpectedly, meet his intended wife. Thus, what he thought was to be a business trip, G-d had planned otherwise. The Zohar teaches that if a needy person stretches out his hand to us for help; it is not because he needs our help, but rather, we are in need of an

opportunity to give. G-d has many ways to take care of people, so if He sent this person to you, that is because you need the merit of giving. When we internalise this approach to life, believing and trusting that G-d runs the world, events will take on a totally different meaning. People may ask: where are “the daily miracles” that we mention and pay tribute to G-d for them in our prayers? The answer is that if we pay attention to the events in our daily lives, we will see that our lives are literally one long miraculous process. Thinking about the sequence of events, “why I just happened to be there at that time”, and “just happened to meet him”, or, “didn’t meet him”, may help us unravel some of the mystery behind the guiding Hand of G-d, that is interwoven into every step of our lives.

Let us start keeping a diary, recording daily any occurrence or incident from which we see G-d’s directly-intervening Hand. With time, we will see that there is too much to write! The more we look for Hashem in our daily lives, the more we will become aware of His providence towards us and enjoy our personal relationship with Him.



OUR CHAHAMIM

Rabbi Israel Meir Hachohen – The Chofetz Chaim

Considering Teshuvah as the Koshering of Body and Soul

Let us begin with the following excerpt from sichot (accounts of) Teshuvah:

Teshuvah resembles the preparations of Shabbat. First, we must purify ourselves from our impurities, and only then can we draw upon ourselves kedusha (holiness). Just as on Fridays, when we begin by washing ourselves before putting on our clothes for Shabbat, in the same way we cannot be imbued with holiness before ridding ourselves of tumah (impurity).

It is written, “This is the law of the Torah that the L-RD has commanded: ...but the gold and the silver, as well as the leather and the metal...” Interpreting the word “but”, our Sages say that to render a vessel kosher, one must first wash it thoroughly and remove all rust if any exists. After this, one must kosher each vessel according to its function. Those that are placed over fire must be heated white-hot, and those in which boiling water is used must be scalded.

It is in the same spirit that one must explain the verse concerning the person

who comes to purify himself and perform Teshuvah. First of all, he must get himself out of the mud and kosher himself by repenting. The first component of this last item, repentance, consists of the following: Regrets for past misdeeds and resolutions for good in the future. What follows next is the second component of repentance: To take action upon himself in the same manner as he sinned. If he sinned through fire (in other words, if he sinned with the flaming desire for the pleasures of this world), his repentance should as well resemble a sacred fire. As the Sages have said, he should repent in the area in which he sinned: “If you have committed piles of averot (sins), replace them with piles of mitzvot, actions in accordance with the commandments of the Torah.” The “koshering” of a Jew is essentially done through the medium of Torah study, for this has a purifying effect on all. Rabbeinu Yona said, “If he was accustomed to studying one page a day, let him study two.”

How do we do Teshuvah? To this question the Chofetz Chaim answers as follows: “First of all, one should resolve to do good in the future, and this only after having voiced one’s regrets for past misdeeds by elaborating through words one’s sins and regrets, and by imposing on oneself some strictures. A doctor, noting that one of his patients has weakened his body by poorly and sparingly feeding himself, begins by warning him against pursuing such harmful practices. He then persuades him to replace those foods that do harm to his body by those which are healthy, and later he prescribes some medication that will heal his damaged organs. It is the same for the soul. The Chofetz Chaim was thus referring to the verse where G-d, addressing Himself to Cain, said, “Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? Is it not so? If you do well, you will elevate yourself.” This verse, he explains, means the following: “Stop doing bad from now on. Only afterwards, grieve over the sins you have committed.”

KIDS zone

QUIZ TIME!



1

Did Hashem ever appear to Avraham and say "I am Hashem?"

6:9 - Yes.

2

What cause did the forefathers have to question Hashem?

6:9 - Although Hashem swore to give them the land, they never actually had control over it.

3

How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?

6:13 - With the respect due a king.

4

How long did Levi live?

6:16 - 137 years.

5

Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother?

6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon.



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