

WHAT'S GOING ON?

- **Applications for the Mazkirut 5781** are open! If you are interested in applying and would like more information about the process please contact Rafi at mazkir@bauk.org by 6th February. Please feel free to be in touch with any member of the Mazkirut if you have questions about the role.

- Applications for **tafkidim on Summer Machane** are OPEN! Apply now at bauk.org to make a difference this summer!!

- **Summer Machane** applications are open! To apply, please go to bauk.org/camps. For more information, please email camps@bauk.org.

- **Israel Machane** applications are OPEN! Applications close 31st January. Head to bauk.org/israel for details of how to apply.

- **Student Bet Midrash** continues every **Thursday night at Kinloss!** Come along at 7.45pm for a great opportunity to hear amazing speakers, eat great food and learn with friends or madrichim! This week 30th January we will hear from **Rav Yoni Birnbaum**. Email Chana at chinuch@bauk.org for more details or if you have any questions.

- To get involved with our **Women's Megilla Reading** please contact chinuch@bauk.org.

- This Sunday saw the first session of our brand new Student Bet Midrash **Women's Jewish Educator Programme** - תלמוד ולמד.

Participants were addressed by Chief Rabbi Mirvis and Shalvie Friedman.

- **Shabbat Hairgun** season is beginning! To sign up head to bauk.org/shabbat-hairgun. To get involved with your local sviva please contact Zoe at svivot@bauk.org.

- **Mazal tov** to **Josh Zeltser** (Svivot Worker 5778) on his recent Aliyah!!!

- **Mazal tov** to **Dena Schwartz** (Chinuch Worker 5777) on her engagement to DJ Newman!!!

- Sign up now for **Mas Chaver** for 5780! To apply head to bauk.org/mas-chaver.

- Be sure to like our **Facebook page (Bnei Akiva UK)** and follow our **Instagram (bneiakivauk)** to get regular updates with what is going on in the Tnua.

- Visit bauk.org/feedback for contact details for all Mazkirut members and to leave any general feedback!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Why did the Avot merit to inherit Eretz Yisrael? (See **Malbim on 6:4**)

2. Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to imitate the plague of lice? (See **Gur Aryeh on 8:14**)

SHABBAT SHALOM!!!

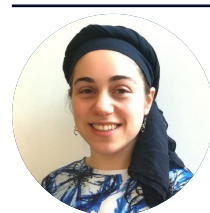
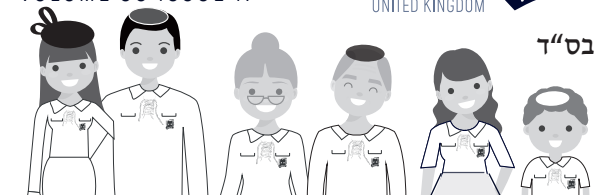
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SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF BNEI AKIVA UK

PARASHAT VAERA
28TH TEVET 5780
24TH & 25TH JANUARY 2020
VOLUME 30 ISSUE 17



WHY DID WE HAVE TO BE SLAVES IN EGYPT?
HANNAH ABRAMS
SHEVET NA'ALEH

The Yerushalmi, in Rosh HaShanah 3:5, explains a cryptic pasuk at the beginning of our parasha (Shemot 6:13). Hashem tells Moshe and Aharon to command both Bnei Yisrael and the Egyptians to let the Jewish people go. The inclusion of Bnei Yisrael in this command seems superfluous - why would Hashem command Bnei Yisrael to let themselves go?

The Yerushalmi explains that Hashem was commanding Bnei Yisrael for the future. This pasuk is actually referring not to the immediate liberation of Bnei Yisrael from the Egyptians, but to the section of laws governing the release of Jewish indentured servants at the Yovel year, (Vayikra 25). At the very moment that Hashem was releasing Bnei Yisrael from slavery, He was also planting the seeds of their future ability to free their own slaves. In other words, He was giving them the ability to feel the pain of others. Throughout the Torah the phrase "do X mitzvah because you were slaves in the land of Egypt" is an oft repeated idea. Underlying a large amount of our mitzvah observance is the premise that we should do X to others because once we were actually in their shoes.

But I wasn't a slave in the land of Egypt. I have been living in freedom (BH) all my life. How can I base my love of my fellow humans on an experience that happened to someone else?

The key is to distinguish between two different levels of feeling the pain of others, (Maharal,

Derech Chaim 6:6). The first level is to love your fellow person, to draw on your own experience and feelings to try to feel their pain. However, this will always be limited. We cannot truly understand the pain of a slave if we have never been one, and therefore if we rely only on love of our fellow humans, we will not be able to help them in the optimal way. The second level is to be able to put yourself in someone else's shoes, not drawing on your own experience, but simply opening your heart to whatever other people need. This way, one does not have to have been a slave in order to understand that a slave would want to be free. Even if I haven't personally experienced slavery, it doesn't mean that I shouldn't try to feel the emotions of a slave, and try to empathise. The Torah is telling us to strive for this even greater level of feeling another's pain - feeling it, even if we haven't personally experienced it.

But I still have a problem. If we say that the second level is the one we as non-slaves should strive for, what is the point of Hashem giving even one generation of Jews the experience of slavery and commanding them to remember it and act on it?

Perhaps because it is very difficult to achieve the second level of empathy, especially when we are trying to empathise with people with whom we have nothing in common. The Torah is teaching us that it is easier to reach into our collective memory, to empathise with people like us (our forefathers/mothers, Bnei Yisrael who were slaves in Egypt) in order to empathise with the rest of the world. That's my answer. But I am sure that there are many more...

HANNAH WAS A SGANIT ON HAROEH/GIMMEL MACHANE 5778 AND NOW LIVES IN NEW YORK.

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Cambridge In: 16:13 Out: 17:29	Birmingham In: 16:20 Out: 17:36	Jerusalem In: 16:36 Out: 17:51

VAERA 5780: TO CAPTURE A FEELING

RAV JOEL KENIGSBERG | RAV SHALIACH



When Hashem commands Moshe and Aharon to approach Paroh to demand the Jewish people's release, the Torah says something strange:

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל-אַהֲרֹן וַיֹּצִיֵם אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶל-

פְּרַעֲה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:
"And Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon regarding Bnei Yisrael and Paroh the King of Egypt, to release the Jewish people from the land of Egypt." (Shemot 6:13)

It wasn't just Paroh who Moshe and Aharon had to address with the instruction to free the nation of slaves, it was also Bnei Yisrael themselves.

But the question is obvious – Bnei Yisrael were the slaves who needed to be released, not release anybody else. What exactly was their command?

One approach, suggested by the Netziv, is that Bnei

Yisrael too had a part to play in letting themselves out. Ultimately, four-fifths of the nation never made it out of slavery – those who didn't want to leave. It's all good and well commanding Paroh to open the gates of bondage, but so long as Bnei Yisrael wanted to remain there and wouldn't step away, they simply wouldn't leave. The first step was making them aware that where they were wasn't where they were meant to be. That even after generations of slavery in Egypt, there was another destination – a greater goal that they had to look forward to.

But the Yerushalmi says the pasuk refers to something else:

א"ר שמואל ב"ר יצחק, על מה ציווים? על פרשת שילוח עבדים

The command Bnei Yisrael were given, according to the Yerushalmi, had nothing to do with Yetziat Mitzrayim. It was a command for the future. One day when they would be living in their own land, there would be circumstances under which Jews

would have their own slaves. But they had to remember those circumstances were necessarily limited. An "eved ivri" could only be retained for a maximum of six years. Beyond that, there was a mitzvah from the Torah for him to be released. It was this mitzvah that Bnei Yisrael were given before they left Egypt.

But why bother now? Certain mitzvot were transmitted to Bnei Yisrael before they received the Torah at Sinai, but generally they were ones that were immediately applicable – like Shabbat, or honouring parents. Freeing slaves was a mitzvah that couldn't and wouldn't be relevant for years to come. Why introduce it now to a people who until that point couldn't even fathom the concept of their own redemption, let alone that of others?

The answer is that in order to be able to release a slave, one has to be able to remember what it was like to be a slave. At that moment Bnei Yisrael understood exactly what the longing to be free was all about. If questioned at the

time when they were dreaming of their personal freedom, whether they would in future withhold their own slaves from going free – the answer would be absolutely not.

But over time people forget. Somebody accustomed to a personal slave and all the duties he performs, would not easily be able to let that person go to live a life of his own. Receiving the command at that time was a way of taking the transient experience of liberation and permanently etching it into their minds for years and generations to come. A way of making sure that far from a fleeting moment, this would be a life-changing event.

The challenge for us is to do the same with the day-to-day experiences in our own lives. To capture the moments of inspiration and turn them into memories that will continue to inspire, to uplift and to change us forever.

Shabbat Shalom!

**FAR FROM A FLEETING
MOMENT, THIS
WOULD BE A LIFE-
CHANGING EVENT**

A TASTE FROM THE ARCHIVE: VAERA 5757

GIDON STERN

(Based on a shiur by Rav Menachem Leibtag)

What was the purpose of the ten plagues? One might think that they were performed in order to induce Bnei Yisrael's departure from Egypt. However, a closer look at the pesukim shows that the whole story involves only Moshe, Aharon, Paroh and the Egyptians, while there is almost no mention of Bnei Yisrael at all! Furthermore, Hashem could have employed much easier and quicker methods if the aim was simply to guarantee their exit, for instance causing the Egyptians to oversleep one morning while the Bnei Yisrael slipped away unnoticed! Why the need for these ten unusual events? Clearly, then, the emphasis is not on Bnei Yisrael at all but rather on the Egyptians. But was it just a harsh punishment for their excessively harsh treatment of Bnei Yisrael or is there added significance to the particular choice and structure of the plagues?

In the Haggada, Rabbi Yehuda devises a mnemonic for the plagues - "detzach adash bachav". Does this particular split have any significance? Several commentators expalin that each group of three had a unique purpose, and only when combined together could the ultimate purpose be fulfilled.

This purpose is alluded to at the very first showdown between Moshe and Paroh. After Moshe informs Paroh that Hashem demands the release of Bnei Yisrael, Paroh retorts that he has never heard of a God called "Hashem" and Bnei Yisrael aren't going anywhere. Clearly, Paroh and the Egyptians were in need of some education about Hashem. Thus, the aim of the ten plagues was to provide this - in three stages. At the onset of each set of three plagues Moshe expresses clearly to Paroh the educational aim that they will convey.

Stage one: Moshe introduces the first three plagues by exclaiming to Paroh: "bezot teda ki ani Hashem" - after these you will realise that there is indeed a God called Hashem. The plagues of blood, frogs and lice clearly illustrate this. The success of this stage is evident when, after failing to perform the third plague with their black magic, Paroh's magicians accept that this must be "the finger of God". Stage one accomplished.

Stage two: Now, the Egyptians must realise that not only does Hashem exist, but he takes an active interest in what goes on in the world - i.e.

hashgacha. Moshe expresses this intention to Paroh before the fourth plague, saying that the aim of the next three is to indicate Hashem's presence "b'kerev ha'aretz" - in the midst of the earth, and not just up in the heavens. This lesson is achieved by the Egyptians' realisation that the plagues of wild animals, epidemic and boils did not affect Bnei Yisrael at all. Paroh even sends out messengers to confirm this, and sure enough Bnei Yisrael were untouched. Thus, it was clear that Hashem did not just act randomly but overlooked what was happening and only punished those deserving of it. Stage two accomplished.

Stage three: one lesson still remained. The Egyptians now accepted Hashem's existence but they did not yet acknowledge His uniqueness. After all, they also had 'powerful' gods. The aim of the last three plagues was thus to correct this misconception - and this they did. Since the world was created, there had never been hail as there was during plague seven. Nor had such a multitude of one species of locust, as seen in plague eight, ever been witnessed before. The Torah tells us that it never would be in the future. The darkness of plague nine was so thick it was almost tangible. The uniqueness of Hashem was clearly evident. Stage three accomplished.

The education was now complete. Paroh's initial denial of Hashem's existence was shown to be unfounded and his hashgacha and uniqueness had been clearly demonstrated. Now it was time to actually take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt and the tenth plague accomplished this - as well as punishing the Egyptians severely for their actions. Although the educational methods used in Egypt were extremely harsh, once Bnei Yisrael received the Torah, the challenge of educating the world about Hashem would not require plagues but would be accomplished by the establishment of a perfect society in Eretz Yisrael being a "shining light to the nations".

THIS ARTICLE WAS FIRST PRODUCED IN SHABBAT LASHEM VOLUME 3 ISSUE 14, 11TH JANUARY 1997.

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