

עטרת השבוע



ATERES HASHAVUA

THE WEEKLY TORAH PUBLICATION FROM THE STUDENTS OF

MESIVTA ATERES YA'AKOV

The Ruth & Hyman Simon High School

לז"נ
שרה שיינדל
בת אריה משה

פרשת וארא
כ"ה טבת תשע"ד
DECEMBER 28, 2013

Candle Lighting: 4:16

First זמן קריאת שמע: 9:01

Second זמן ק"ש: 9:37

Sunrise: 7:17

Latest זמן תפלה: 10:23

שקיעה: 4:35

Earliest Havdalah: 5:25

(50 minutes)

All times are for Lawrence, NY only

THE KING AND I: A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS

By Rabbi Shmuel Oratz, 9th Grade Rabbi

Before we allow this week's drama to unfold let us introduce the Cast of Characters:

The King- The king in our *parsha* is *Pharaoh Melech Mitzrayim* who has cruelly enslaved the *B'nei Yisroel*.

I- Therein lies the rub. Our drama revolves around the ultimate question of existential identity:
Who is I?

Act I

Scene I

Pharaoh while handing over the reins of his reign to *Yosef*, also lets him know who is boss: " ויאמר "I am in charge. You could run the country, but I am the ruler." פרעה אל יוסף אני פרעה"

Scene II

Pharaoh in the Nile. (and in denial): " לי יארי ואני עשיתי "; "The Nile is mine and I created it."

Scene III

Pharaoh during *makas barad*: " ה' הצדיק ואני ועמי הרשעים "; Seforim point out that the *roshei tayvos* of ה' הצדיק ועמי הרשעים is the name of Hashem; *yud*, then *hey*, then a *vov* and a *hey*; *Pharaoh*

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FOR THE LOVE OF G-D!

By Yehudah Auerbach, 12th Grade

" ושרץ היאור צפרדעים ועלו ובאו בבתך ובחדר משכבך... ובתנורך ובמשארותיך" (שמות ז' כ"ח)

"And the sea will swarm with frogs, and they will go in your houses, and your bedrooms...and your ovens and your gates." (Shemos 7:28)

The *gemara* in *Pesachim* 53b relates the amazing *Yiras Shomayim* that these צפרדע had to jump into the ovens and be burned alive just to be מקדש the name of Hashem. The *Midrash* retells the story of Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah, who also risked their being burnt alive, and who learned it from these amazing frogs.

The story is that in ancient times, the wicked king, Nevuchadnetzar, ruler of Bavel, built an enormous gold statue, which was magnificent, and wanted all of the nations of the world to bow down to his statue. He chose three *tzaddikim*, Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah to be the representatives of the Jewish people to bow down to the idol. These *tzaddikim* were extremely troubled about what to do and went to implore from Daniel to ask Hashem if they should bow and cause a possible massive *chilul* Hashem, or risk their lives and not bow down, and cause a massive *kiddush* Hashem. He sent them to the Chizkiyahu, who told them that he had a *mesorah* from his *rebbe*, the *navi* Yeshayah, that they should never do any thing which even appears to be *avodah zara* no matter what. Chizkiyahu asked Hashem what they should do. He cried out "*Ribbono shel olam!*" Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah are willing to give their lives for your sake! Will you save them?" Hashem answered that he would not and that's the message that Chizkiyahu relayed to the three. He also said that regardless, whether or not Hashem would save them, we give our lives for the sake of sanctifying His Name. They left and then Hashem revealed to Chizkiyahu that He would indeed rescue them, but He didn't want them to know. As the story goes, Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah went to

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almost allowed himself to acknowledge the name of Hashem completely, but the **אני**-the **I**-got in the middle, as if to say; Hashem is righteous, **as am I**, and my nation is evil. (This man was still in denial.)

Intermission

The Ba'al HaTanya once came to the house of his *rebbe*, the Mezritche Maggid, and knocked at the door. Upon being asked, "who is there", the Baal Hatanya replied, "*ich*"-"it is I", a response which was ignored. This repeated itself a number of times, with the Baal Hatanya saying "it is I" and being ignored. Puzzled as to why his *rebbe* did not allow him in, he had no choice but to leave. The next morning, the Maggid summoned his disciple and instructed him to travel to a nearby village and attend a *bris*. The Ba'al Hatanya could not fathom the Maggid's intentions, but followed his *rebbe* faithfully.

After the *seudas bris*, as the Ba'al Hatanya was leaving, there was a sudden uproar. As the *baalei simcha* were cleaning up, they noticed a valuable silver spoon was missing. Having noticed the Ba'al Hatanya, a total stranger, at the *bris* they concluded that he must have stolen it. They grabbed him and insisted that he was the thief, hitting him and demanding he return the spoon. The Ba'al Hatanya protested his innocence, "*nisht ich*"-"not I", he repeated, until they finally released him.

Later, he came to his *rebbe*, seeking an explanation for these recent strange events. "When you came to my door", explained the Maggid, "and said 'it is I', you were ignored. There is only one 'I', one 'אני', and that is Hashem. Each time you were hit and had to say '*nisht ich*' it was a rectification for each time you said '*ich*'."

Act II

Scene I

The beginning of *parshas* וזארא "ויודבר אלקים אל משה ויאמר אליו אני ה' " And a few *pesukim* later: "יאמר לבני ישראל אני ה'"; and again twice more in the next few *pesukim*, "אני ה'"

Scene II

At the conclusion of *makas arov*: "למען תדע כי אני ה' בקרב הארץ"; let it be known who is the 'I' Who is in charge.

At the beginning of *parshas* בא "ויאמר ה' אל משה בא אל פרעה כי אני הכבדתי את לבו"; let Pharaoh know Who is the true 'אני' Pharaoh is just an actor on His stage.

Also at the beginning of *parshas* בא "בא " וילמען תספר וכו' וידעתם כי אני ה' " recognize, and relate to all future generations that there is only one 'I'.

Finale

Our Cast of Characters is complete. We now know that the **אני** is Hashem, and the ultimate purpose of all the drama, the tragedy, and yes, even the comedy-the **אשר התעללתי במצרים** -the mockery that Hashem made of the *Mitzrim*- is in order for us to learn to say "*nisht ich*"-"not I", and allow Hashem's name to be complete.

This week's drama draws to a close. Next week we leave *Mitzrayim*; exit, stage right.

And as for the Egyptians:


CURTAINS.


Yehudah Auerbach (continued from page 1)

Nevuchadnetzar and refused to bow down to the idol. He proceeded to throw them into a fiery furnace intending to burn them alive, but Hashem sent the Malach Gavriel to save them and they came out untouched, thus causing an massive Kiddush Hashem.

So back to our *d'var torah*; why did Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah learn this lesson of *mesiras nefesh* for *kiddush hashem* specifically from he frogs? Isn't there a pasuk that writes "*unikdashti besoch bnei yisrael*"? Why didn't the *gemara* say they learned from that?

The answer is that the frogs had a choice of who was going to the ovens and who would go to the house of Pharaoh, certainly a more enjoyable experience. However, some frogs said that even though they weren't commanded to go into the ovens of the *Mitzrim* and burn alive, they chose to be *mekadesh shem shomayim* and entered like brave soldiers, knowing they were doing the right thing by publicizing the Name of Hashem. We humans, who have a much more sophisticated knowledge should surely choose a *kiddush Hashem al achas kamma v'kamma!!*

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STORIES OF TZADDIKIM

Chezky Friedman, 12th Grade

The great *tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, Rav Aryeh Levin, zt'l, was well known for his good heart, and kindness. Once in a while, unscrupulous people would take advantage of Rav Aryeh's kindness, by asking him to cosign on loans that they knew they could not afford to pay. Oftentimes, Rav Aryeh would end up holding the bag for a loan that he had cosigned for. The situation got so bad that Rav Aryeh's brother-in-law, Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank zt'l, forbade Rav Aryeh from cosigning on any more loans.

One day, Rav Aryeh was summoned to a court, to answer for a loan that he had cosigned. When Rav Aryeh arrived in court, he was presented with an IOU that he had signed. After a cursory glance, Rav Aryeh realized that the note was a poor forgery. Rav Aryeh looked up, and noticed the debtor burying his head in shame. Rav Aryeh realized that the poor man had been unable to pay the loan, and had forged Rav Aryeh's signature to shift the responsibility to him. Unwilling to embarrass the man in public by exposing his fraud, Rav Aryeh accepted responsibility for the loan, and spent several years paying back the loan he had never guaranteed.

A chassid once came to Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk zt'l and Rav Menachem Mendel rebuked him for not learning and davening with the proper *kavannah*. The chassid protested saying that if he had no problems with *parnasa*, his family, and his health he would be able to have *kavannah*. The Rebbe told him "When I was younger I was a foreman in a factory. One day I came in and found my boss beating one of my employees. As he was being beaten, my employee continued to work. After my employer finished beating him, I asked the worker why he continued to work while being beaten." He responded "If the boss was beating me due to my low productivity level, certainly he would have lain down the blows harder if he saw me not working at all."

"The same", said Rav Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk "applies to you. You have suffering due to your lack of commitment in following Hashem's ways. The way to improve your situation is by increasing your commitment and not by slacking off further!"

HaRav Aharon Kotler zt'l once had a meeting with a certain wealthy philanthropist, from whom he received a sizeable donation for the Lakewood Yeshiva. Rav Aharon blessed the man for his generosity, and praised his *zedakah* to no end. In addition, Rav Aharon encouraged the philanthropist to try, in whatever way possible, to maximize the time that he spent learning himself. The philanthropist responded that he felt this unnecessary, as one who supports the learning of Torah merits the same reward as the person that he supports. As such, the man concluded, he could achieve his *olam ha'ba* by supporting Torah, and without learning himself. Rav Aharon reassured the philanthropist that indeed, he could merit *olam ha'ba* through the support of Torah, and that his reward would be unimaginably great.

"However," Rav Aharon added, "Without the study of Torah, what will be with your *olam ha'zeh*?"

B'DEHILO U'REHIMU - WITH LOVE AND WITH AWE

Naftali Engel, 12th Grade

"ויאמר אליו משה כצאתי את העיר אפרש את כפי אל ה' הקלות יחדלון והברד לא

יהיה עוד למען תדע כי לה' הארץ" (שמות ט' כ"ט)

"Moshe said to him [Pharaoh], When I go outside the city I will spread my hands to G-d. Then the thunder will cease and there will be no more hail, and you shall then know that the earth belongs to G-d."(Shemos 9:29)

Because the city was filled with idolatry, it was not a place fit for prayer to G-d. Therefore Moshe had to leave the city to pray. We too must flee the idolatrous distractions, places, and situations of life in order to pray whole heartedly.

Idol worship may seem a concept that is foreign in our modern lives. Men of old may have worshipped the sun and the moon, but don't we "worship" our jobs and our clients? Don't we make the tragic mistake of imagining markets, or business dealings operating independently from G-d?

Just as we know the sun and moon are tools of G-d; "an axe in the hand of a chopper" (*Moreh Nevuchim*), likewise we must see our business as nothing other than a divine tool by which G-d – and G-d alone – provides for us. Our efforts in business or school do not bring us wealth but these efforts create a vessel in which Hashem will channel His blessings onto us.

So the need to rid ourselves of "Idolatry" - in its subtle contemporary form – is so we can pray. For Hashem implanted within our hearts a flawless Emunah – a belief in Hashem's mighty ways, but it is up to us to use this deeply rooted Emunah for good, and to believe that our efforts in the world simply make us a vessel to accept the blessings resulting from our prayer which can only be whole hearted when we escape our modern "Idols".

(Based on: Likutey Moharan I, 7,1| Sichas Pesach 5724|Yalkut Menachem)

SHABBOS TIDBITS

By Rabbi Yehuda Horowitz, Mashgiach Ruchani

At the beginning of the *parsha* we find the four expressions of *geulah*, which is the reason for drinking four cups of wine at the Seder. The first three expressions of redemption are והוצאתי והצלתי וגאלתי and are written together. The next pasuk states “ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם” which means that *b'nei yisrael* will become the nation of Hashem. The Vilna Gaon asks that this fourth pasuk is not an expression of *geulah*. It discusses the honor of being the nation of Hashem and it should seemingly not be part of the group? Rabbi Yitzchok Knobel שליט”א suggests that a fundamental lesson lies in this grouping. The purpose of our *geulah* was not to alleviate us from any responsibility. Rather, *Yetzias Mitzrayim* freed us from being under Pharaoh, in order that we can be free to serve Hashem. Therefore, ולקחתי is part of the *geulah*.

Rav Brevda שליט”א points out that since *pesach* is the day that commemorates our redemption from Mitzrayim, we conduct a *sefer* and recite the *haggadah*. This seems to be the opposite of the general perception of freedom. On that night, everything that we eat, say and do is dictated with very specific rules. It is really עבדות! That is exactly the point. We are not thankful that we are free from any responsibilities, to enjoy life as an animal would. We appreciate freedom in order to serve Hashem completely.

Every period in life must be looked at in this light. A vacation from regular schedule should be viewed as a means to serve Hashem better, rather than as a goal in itself. The *halacha* is that while someone is digging a grave which is a mitzvah, he is exempt from doing another mitzvah such as *krias shema*. Even when resting in order to refresh himself, he is still exempt from *krias shema*, since this is necessary to continue the mitzvah properly. Rav Pam זצ”ל once said that this is the attitude which we must have when resting from the regular routine of a Yeshiva schedule.

אי”ן בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתורה” פרקי אבות state in the sixth chapter of פרקי אבות, “אי”ן בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתורה.” This means that the true free man is the one who toils in the study of Torah. This freedom pertains to the freedom of choice. Millions of people do things that they know are morally wrong and even dangerous to one’s health, simply because they cannot say NO! The Torah fortifies us with the will power needed to be totally in control. Therefore, ולקחתי אתכם is actually an expression of *geulah*. Now that Hashem gave us the Torah, we are no longer enslaved by our passions.

Many years ago, the Kiviash Rov who was a chain smoker was smoking in his doctor’s office. The doctor told him about studies which were showing that smoking is dangerous to one’s health. The Rebbe respectfully put out the cigarette. After the visit, the doctor reminded him about the importance of breaking his habit. The Rebbe looked at him innocently and said, “Doctor, you don’t have to tell me again, you already said that it may be dangerous.” He never again smoked.

May we be *zocheh* to be truly free to choose the correct path in life, which will enrich us with the true joy of freedom.

Geshmake Gemmatrios

Yehudah Auerbach, 12th Grade

- As Rabbi Horowitz mentioned, in this week’s *parsha*, Hashem gives over the four words of *geulah*, and to remember those four words, we drink four cups of wine. In *mishnayos pesachim* it states that even a poor person cannot have less than four cups of wine. The Ba’al Haturim brings an allusion to this *mishna*. The words והוצאתי והצלתי וגאלתי are equal to 2063 which is the same value as the words זה עני בישראל לא יפחתו לו מארבע כוסות של יין, this refers to the poorer Jews who should have no less than four cups of wine.
- The *parsha* mentions that the son of Aharon HaCohen, Elazar, married a girl from the daughters of Putiel. Rashi comments on this pasuk and reveals that Putiel is actually Yisro, the father-in-law of Moshe. The Steipler Gaon brings an allusion to this. The words מכות פוטיאל, from the daughters of Putiel, is equal to 614. 614 is also the gematria of the words זה יתרו, this is Yisro.



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