

Bo 2017

1.

Why were there exactly ten makkos?

“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart and the heart of his servants stubborn so that I can put these signs of Mine in his midst.’” (10, 1)

"ויאמר יקוק אל משה בא אל פרעה כי אני הכבדתי את לבו ואת לב עבדיו למען שתי אתני אלה בקרבו."

This Pasuk here offers two independent reasons why the makkos (plagues) occurred. The first reason is that the Egyptians see Hashem's signs and the second is that they will speak about Hashem and tell their children about Him. Which reason is it? Additionally, why does the pasuk need to repeat itself and say Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart, we already know this? Another fundamental question we can ask is why was there specifically ten makkos?

The Beis Aharon (85-86) offers two answers. There were precisely ten makkos in order to repay the Egyptians measure for measure. Because the Egyptians harmed us in this way, Hashem punished the Egyptians correspondingly (see Tanna D'bei Eliyahu raba perek 7, Medrish Tanchuma Va'eira os 14, Kli Yakar 7, 17). Another answer is that these **ten makkos testify and correspond to the ten statements in which the world was created. They testify to the fact that Hashem created and conducted all of creation. The Chidushei Ha'Rim explains the Ten Commandments also correspond to the aseres hadibros (Ten Commandments).** The world is split into three different sections: inhabited land, water, and deserts (uninhabited land). Hashem demonstrated that He controls these three sections via the first four makkos. It was revealed that Hashem controls rivers because the water changed into blood and frogs emerged from the water. The makah of lice demonstrated Hashem's authority over the land. Hashem took dirt and transformed it into lice. The makah of wild beasts demonstrated Hashem's rulership over the deserts and wildlands due to the fact that He caused animals to come out of their natural lands. We see Hashem's control over everything and different categories of makkos were needed to demonstrate Hashem's complete rulership. Additionally, Chazal say that there are three legions of payment that Hashem uses to pay back the wicked: water, wind, and fire. Three strengths were used in Egypt. The strength of fire was used for the plagues of boils and hail. The wind blew the locusts and water was used for the plagues blood and frogs. Some incorrectly think that the one who created light didn't create darkness and vice-versa. They base this incorrect opinion on the fact that these are contrary matters. Hashem therefore created hail which consisted of fire and water together. Hashem demonstrated his rulership over everything. Similarly, we find this by darkness. For the Egyptians it was dark, but for the Jews it was light. The death of the firstborns as well showed Hashem's control. He was able to keep the Jews alive, while simultaneously killing the Egyptians. This is why we specifically needed ten makkos; in order to show Hashem's power over different areas of the world. These makkos attempted to teach ten different levels of our faith of Hashem. They revealed Hashem's hashgacha and control over everything. The makkos also instilled emunah within the Jews as well. The makkos helped them prepare for receiving the Torah.

It was difficult for Moshe to understand why Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart specifically after the makah of hail, when Pharaoh admitted that Hashem is true and that he and the Egyptians are

wicked. Hashem then said “come to Pharaoh” בא אל פרעה. The Bal Haturim explains the gematria of בא is three. This alludes to the last three makkos related in parshas Bo. The Ateres Adar (commentary on Bal Haturim, footnote 3) says furthermore that the gematria of the pasuk "אֲרֵבָה (208) אֱלֹהִים (823) בְּקִרְבּוֹ (310)." (823 + 36 + 310 = 1169) equals the gematria of (208) אֲרֵבָה (634) בְּכּוֹרוֹת (328) חֶשֶׁךְ. (208 + 634 + 328 = 1170)' Meaning, the signs of Hashem will be seen during the last three makkos. (One of the rules of gematria is that it is permissible to be one digit off. It's called the kollel rule. The word itself can count as one. Thus 1169 really is 1170.) The Beis Aharon says that Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to give these final three makkos. That's why the pasuk offers another reason of ‘they will know I am Hashem’ because this is why we needed ten makkos. One reason is in order to fulfill the midah keneged midah and another reason is in order to be able to tell the children to have emunah and be ready to receive the Torah.

The Nachalas Tzvi (pages 158-159) offers another reason why there were specifically ten makkos. Rashi (beginning of Berashis) quotes the Medrish that says this world was created for the Torah and the Jews. The pasuk (Berashis 1, 31) says “and there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” "וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי." Why does the pasuk place the letter ה before the word ששי? The Gemara in Shabbos (88) says that Hashem made a condition with the creation that if the Jews will accept the Torah then the world would endure, however, if the Jews wouldn't accept the Torah, then the world would be destroyed. The Egyptians wanted to destroy the world. How so? By destroying the Jews; meaning, if the Jews would be destroyed chas v'shalom the world would cease to exist. **There were therefore specifically ten makkos because since they wanted to destroy the Jews, which would result with the destruction of this world, which was created with ten utterances, therefore mida keneged mida they received ten makkos.**

2.

### Is it possible to prove God's existence?

Why were there precisely seven makkos in parshas Va'eira and three makkos in parshas Bo? Furthermore, why specifically by the maaka of hail does the pasuk say they continued to sin? The Bais Aharon (page 85) says there are two types of apikorosim (heretics). The first type is a person who doesn't believe in Hashem because he doesn't know Hashem. A second type of person is one who knows Hashem but intends to rebel against him. Pharaoh said ‘who is Hashem that I should listen to him?’ Before the maaka of hail Pharaoh didn't believe in Hashem because he didn't know Hashem. It is implied from this pasuk that if Pharaoh would know who Hashem is, then he would have listened to Him. This is why Moshe said by the previous makkos that you will know who Hashem is. However, before the maaka of hail Pharaoh believed in Hashem. At that moment his heart was hardened. The pasuk says precisely at this juncture that they continued to sin because now they knew Hashem, but still rebelled against him! Pharaoh was originally included in the first category of apikorosim. However, he then entered into the second category of apikorosim. The second type of apikores is worse than the first. It is for this reason that the makkos are split between two parshios; to identify Pharaoh's changed state. Previously he didn't know Hashem, but now he did and still rebelled against Him.

What do you tell someone who says I don't believe in Hashem? How can you prove Hashem is real? Or what do you say to someone who says I believe in Hashem, but how do you know the Torah is real? Or what do you tell someone who says I believe in Hashem and the Torah, but I don't care? How do you answer someone who asks why are you frum? The Mishna in Avos (2, 14) quotes Rebbi Elazar who says be diligent in the study of Torah, and know what to answer a heretic; know before Whom you toil; and (know) that your Employer can be relied upon to pay you the wage of your labor. ( רבי אלעזר אומר הוי שקוד ללמוד תורה ודע מה שתשיב לאפיקורוס ודע לפני מי ) . אתה עמל ונאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך שישלם לך שכר פעולתך. What's the connection between learning Torah and answering an apikores? The Rabbeinu Yonah says the only way to know what to answer is by learning Torah! One who doesn't know what to answer won't be able to make irreligious people religious. Furthermore, not knowing what to answer makes the Torah look bad. Consequently, others might sway from the proper path.

The Medrish Temura (perek 5), relates a story of someone who came to Rebbi Akiva and asked who created the world. Rebbi Akiva responded Hashem! He responded prove it to me. Rebbi Akiva said come back tomorrow. The next day Rebbi Akiva asked who made your shirt. He responded a shirt maker. Rebbi Akiva said prove it to me. The man said what do you mean? Obviously someone made the shirt! Rebbi Akiva said you can't prove who made the shirt, but you know it was created by someone. So to, it's impossible to prove that someone created the world, but we know that Hashem created it. His students asked Rebbi Akiva what is the proof? **Rebbi Akiva answered just like we know someone made the door on the hinges and someone made the building, so too, we know Hashem created the world.**

The Yalkut Shimoni (Ki Sisa remez 396, also Gemara in Chulin (59b) relates a story of the Ceaser who asked Rebbi Yehoshua if there is a master of the world? He said certainly. The Ceaser asked who this master was. Rebbi Yehoshua said Hashem! The Ceaser asked why He doesn't reveal himself once in a while to show that he is the creator. Rebbi Yehoshua responded that **it's impossible for Hashem to reveal himself because we wouldn't be able to handle Hashem's presence as the pasuk states** (Shemos 33, 20) "you will not be able to see my face, for no human can see Me and live." The Ceaser didn't like this answer. He said if you can't show me God, then I won't believe in Him. Rebbi Yehoshua said ok. It was the middle of the day in Tammuz (in the middle of the summer), when the sun shines its brightest. He said go and look at the sun. **The Ceaser said that it's impossible to stare at the sun! Rebbi Yehoshua said that's the point! The sun is only one of the trillions of Hashem's servants and you can't look at it. Surely you won't be able to look at Hashem's presence!**

**Most times when someone claims they are atheists they are not atheists, they are just uneducated fools.** Ask them why they don't believe in God. Then ask them how much philosophy they have read. Have they read the More Nevuchim (guide to the perplexed), 1000 pages long demonstrating and proving God exists. How about the Kuzari? Did you learn the Kuzari with the Kol Yehuda and the Otzer Nechbad? How about the Chovos Halevavos (shar ya yichud) or any other Jewish or English books proving God? Did you read Permission to believe (Rabbi Kelaman) and If you were God (Rabbi Arya Kaplan)? How about (l'havdil) Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Khmu or Spinoza? Most of them probably haven't ever heard of a quarter of the aforementioned books.

How do you know God exists? **How do you know God doesn't exist?** (see Sifsei Chaim middos chalek alef page 338) **Assuming God exists and someone lives there life as if God doesn't exist then the consequences are catastrophic. Whereas if someone lives under the assumption that God does exist it is not as problematic if God doesn't exist. Have confidence. The best defense is a good offence.**

**Other religions began with one person a 'prophet'.** There have been approximately 1,500 claims of different types of religions since Avraham. They all have the same common denominator that one person claimed Godly revelation and there are no other witnesses. Islam started by Mohamed who they claim flew up to heaven on a horse or a donkey and then taught it to others. There were no witnesses who saw this occur. Their entire religion is based on the testimony of one man. The same type of story occurred with Josef Smith creating the Mormon religion. **There are 50 pesukim that say that there was a national revelation where God spoke to the entire Jewish nation which consisted at the time of 3,000,000 Jews.** Some of those pesukim are "On the third day Hashem came down in front of the entire nation at mount Sini." "The entire nation was shaking." "Moshe took the nation to meet Hashem." "The entire nation saw all of the fire and the voices and the shofar." "Hashem tells Moshe remind the Jews that they saw me talking to them." **The Torah also says that 3,000,000 Jews were fed for forty years in the desert by God. You can't write such a claim unless it's true. This is why other religions didn't make this claim.**

**Billions of people believe in these one man religions, are they all wrong? One billion Christians say that there man was the final prophet and whoever comes after and claims he is a prophet is a liar. Therefore according to this Mohamed cannot be greater than Jesus and all of the Muslims are wrong. Similarly two billion Muslims say the one billion Christians are wrong. At least one of them has to be wrong, its simple logic.** This is analogous to bears running after people in a forest. Everyone is running out of the forest trying to get rid of the bears. They suddenly reach a fork in the road and do not know whether to go right or left. One way leads to safety and the other way leads to the bears catching up and death. Which way do you go? You look to the right and see 5,000 people going in that direction. When you look to the left you see 5 people going in that direction. Logic dictates that you should go with the flow, the majority, and the 5,000. As you are about to choose the direction that the 5,000 chose you realize that there is a school for the blind adjacent to the forest and that they are on a picnic and they are all holding hands. 4,999 of the people are blind following one person who can see. So in reality the ratio is five to one as opposed to five to 5,000. The nimshal is **every religion in the world is following one person. There are billions of people following one person. Whereas regarding the Jews we are millions of Jews following millions of Jews.** Another analogy is the following. There is a story of a Chasedesha Rabbi who had 50,000 followers. He suddenly died. He had three sons. A tremendous argument regarding who should be the next Rabbi broke out. Many of the Chasidim felt the oldest son should be the next Rabbi because he is the oldest. Others felt that since the second son is the talmid chacham therefore he is the most fitting to be the next Rabbi. Others said nobody likes them rather we like the youngest son who is the most charismatic and warm and who possess true potential to be a leader. One day the youngest son announces that he had a dream and he was told by his father that he was going to be the next Rabbi. What could the other two brothers say which would logically disprove what the youngest brother was claiming? The answer is it would have been

must more concrete and definitive and logical for their father to appear to all of them in a dream informing them that the youngest son will become the next Rabbi. An even stronger way to communicate the message that the youngest son will be the next Rabbi would be if their father would appear in a dream to the sons and all of the 50,000 Chasidim informing them that his youngest son will be the next Rabbi. The nimshal is obvious and the same as mentioned above. Acharay lerabim lehatos and that the Jews who are the minority should go after the other religions who are the majority doesn't apply because in reality like we explained above the Jews are the majority, 3,000,000 to one (the founder of their religion).

**The Torah itself says that no other religion will claim a national revelation. This shows that the author of the Torah knew the future because even now and 1,500 religions later no one has made this claim of national revelation. The Torah says we will be an eternal nation and we will be hated (aka anti-Semitism) and we will be small in number and dispersed. This is accurate.**

**Every other religion disagrees on all most everything for example what is God and what is the purpose of life. There is one concept that they agree upon which is that the Jewish people received the Torah from Hashem.** They just believe that God changed his mind later on and choose a new way. (Through Jesus or Mahmud)

The question on this is it says in 24 different places in Tanach that the Torah is a bris olam and eternal covenant forever and that God will not change his mind? Also in safer devarim the Torah discusses a Navi sheker meaning a false prophet. If a man comes along even if he performs miracles and tells you not to perform certain mitzvos, he is a false prophet and you shall kill him. (Now a days we do not kill people because of this) How do these religions explain the section in the Torah which discusses false prophets? Why didn't God appear to 3,000,000 Christians and Muslims like he did to the Jews? Lastly, if God changed his mind then why didn't he come back and inform the Jews about his changed decision?

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.