

Va'eira 2015

1.

Why was the staff used during the first three makkos exclusively?

“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Say to Aharon, ‘Stretch forth your staff and strike the dust of the land, and it shall become lice throughout the land of Egypt.’” (8, 12)

"וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה אֱמַר אֶל אַהֲרֹן נְטֵה אֶת מִטְּךָ וְהָיָה לְכַנָּם בְּכָל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם."

Nachalas Tzvi page 151:

**Why did Hashem only command to have the staff used during the first three makkos (plagues) exclusively?**

We can answer this question based on a Zohar who says that the staff was engraved with Hashem’s name. Through this strength the makkos occurred. Since the Egyptian sorcerers were able to duplicate the first three makkos and didn’t want to believe that they were from Hashem, **Hashem told Moshe to use the staff with His name on it, in order to show that the miracles were from Him. However, from the makah of arov (wild animals, forth) and onward, since the sorcerers admitted it was from Hashem, therefore it wasn’t necessary to use the staff.**

2.

Frogs and mesiras nefesh

“And Hashem did in accordance with Moshe’s word and He removed the swarm of wild beasts from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; not one remained.” (8, 27)

"וַיִּעַשׂ יְהוָה כְּדִבְרֵי מֹשֶׁה וַיִּסַּר הָעֶרֶב מִפְּרֹעָה מֵעַבְדָּיו וּמֵעַמּוֹ לֹא נִשְׁאַר אֶחָד."

Rashi explains (quoting the Shemos Raba) that the way the animals were removed differed from the manner in which the frogs were removed. **The frogs died and were left there. Conversely, the animals, they disappeared. The reason for that was in order that the Egyptians wouldn’t be able to benefit from their skins!**

The Kli Yakar explains that the reason the frogs remained was not in order to punish the Egyptians with a smelly and disgusting odor which emitted from the dead frogs, because if that would be so then the locusts should have stayed as well (the pasuk (10, 19) relates that all of the locusts were removed as well).

**Rather, Hashem wanted to teach us that someone who gives his life in order to sanctify Hashem’s name will be saved. We see this from the fact that all of the frogs that went into the ovens of the Egyptians, didn’t die;** as the pasuk says (8, 9) “the frogs that were in the houses, courtyards, and fields died.” The pasuk excludes the frogs that entered the ovens because they survived! Due to the actions of these frogs, Chananya, Meshael, and Azarya deduced that they should throw themselves in an oven for Hashem (they made a kal vechomaer, see Daniel perik 3 and Gemara in Pesachim 53b).

**Hashem will find a way to kill those who aren’t moser nefesh (willing to give up their life) when required. This is why the frogs that didn’t jump into the oven died. That’s the reason**

**why the dead frogs remained in order to demonstrate that those who sacrifice themselves for Hashem will survive, and those who don't, will die!**

The animals and the locusts disappeared in order that the Egyptians wouldn't attain any benefit from the skins of the animals, or eat the locusts (since they used to eat them salted). The Shemos Rabbah (13, 7) relates that not even one locus remained. The Medrash explains that even their locusts that they had in jars and in their possession disappeared!

There is a whole siman in the Shulchan Aruch (Yora Daya siman 85) which is dedicated to speaking about grasshoppers. The Taz (85, 1) writes that nowadays the custom is not to eat any type of grasshopper, even if we know that this insect is called a 'הגב' or 'a grasshopper' and we know its kosher. The reason for this Halacha is that we are not experts with the names of the grasshoppers. Similarly, the Yad Ephraim explains that a grasshopper can only be consumed if there is a certain tradition that it is ok to eat it. Similarly, the Aruch Hashulchan (os hay) writes that he has never heard of anyone who eats grasshoppers. Conversely, the Caf Hachaim (os vav) writes that many Sephardim eat grasshoppers and that this is actually a Yemenite custom. The Meidane Hashulchan (os tes) discusses what the Halacha would be if one goes from a place where the custom is to eat grasshoppers to a place where the custom is not to eat grasshoppers and vice versa. Regardless, the reason why there were no remnants of locusts was in order that the Egyptians will not derive any benefit from the grasshoppers.

**We see from here the obligation which is incumbent upon a person to be moser nefesh for Hashem.** As the Gemara in Shabbas (104a) says, someone who wants to be pure will receive special help from Hashem. Similarly, the Gemara in Berachos (20a) asks; why earlier generations merited to have miracles occur unlike later generations that did not? The Gemara answers that it was because they were moser nefesh. Similarly, the Gemara Yuma (86a) states that desecration of God's name occurs when you sin and cause others to sin. This coincides perfectly with the Gemara in Brachos (35b) and Rashi there. When a person doesn't recite brachos on food, not only is he sinning, but he is also causing others to sin by them thinking that it is ok not to recite a beracha. Therefore, a Kiddush Hashem is one performing mitzvos and causing others to do mitzvos as well!

**When we are moser nefesh for Hashem and influence others to perform mitzvos then we will be zocheh (merit) to miracles and siyata dishmaya.** It is also interesting and noteworthy to point out that usually we try to apply to our lives the Mishna is Avos (4, 1) that states, a chacham (wise person) is someone who learns from everyone else. The chidush (insight) that we can derive based on the aforementioned information is that we should also learn from insects and animals.

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