

Chayus

A Shabbos Stimulus

THE EDA AND DAVID SCHOTTENSTEIN EDITION

In Loving Memory of Itta bas Yosef Mordechai ז"ל and Tzvi Daniel ben David ז"ל Ainsworth

Dedicated by David & Eda Schottenstein

הקהל

Hakhel

Everyone Is Equal

[T]he mitzvah of *Hakhel* is when] all of Israel; men, women, and children, do one mitzvah together. In addition, the purpose of this mitzvah is to fear Hashem. The main emphasis is not on the learning and understanding of Torah, which lead to different levels of understanding, since every person comprehends on their own level, rather only to fear Hashem. This... being the entire purpose of mitzvos in general.

The main point of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai was the revelation of Hashem that effected a nullification (*bittul*) of the people. In a similar manner *Hakhel* is compared to the day the Torah was given. It is as though right now Hashem is again giving the Torah. The purpose not being the intellectual understanding, rather the intention of the heart, the feelings of awe and fear.

(*Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech*, 5747)

סיפור חסידי

Once Upon a Chasid

By Yanki Tauber

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And the river shall swarm with frogs. They will come up and enter your home, your bedroom, and your bed..., your ovens, and your kneading bowls (Va'eira 7:28).

Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah (The three who refused to bow to Nebuchadnazer's image, even under the threat of being cast into a fiery furnace (Daniel 3)) learned self-sacrifice from the frogs, who entered the ovens of the Egyptians to carry out the will of G-d (Talmud, Pesachim 53b).

The world maintains that if one cannot go under (circumvent an obstacle) then one is to go over; but I say, in the first place, go over (Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch).

At a gathering on July 1, 1985, marking the 105th anniversary of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneerson's birth (Tammuz 12th on the Jewish calendar), the Lubavitcher Rebbe related the following incident from the life of his illustrious predecessor and father-in-law:

It was during Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok's younger years, when the czarist regime still ruled the Russian Empire. A new decree against the Jewish community was in the works, aimed at forcing changes in the structure of the rabbinate and Jewish education. Rabbi Sholom DovBer dispatched his son, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok, to the Russian capital of Petersburg to prevent the decree from being enacted. When Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok asked how long he was to stay in Petersburg, his father replied, "to the point of self-sacrifice."

Upon his arrival in Petersburg, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok learned that the decree had already reached the desk of Stolypin, the interior minister of Russia and arguably the most powerful man in the Russian Empire. The ruling Czar's intelligence (or lack thereof) made him a virtual rubber stamp for whichever minister the prevailing political climate favored; at that particular time, His Highness was led by the nose by Interior Minister Stolypin, a heartless tyrant and rabid anti-semitic who was personally responsible for many of the devastating pogroms which were 'arranged' for the Jews of Russia in those years. Living in Petersburg was an elderly scholar, a former teacher and men-

tor of the Interior Minister. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok succeeded in befriending this man, who was greatly impressed by the scope and depth of the young chassid's knowledge. For many an evening the two would sit and talk in the old man's study.

One day, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok told his new friend the purpose of his stay in Petersburg and pleaded with him to assist him in reaching the Interior Minister. The old scholar replied: "To speak with him would be useless. The man has a cruel and malicious heart, and I have already severed all contact with this vile creature many years ago. But there is one thing I can do for you. Because of my status as Stolypin's mentor, I have been granted a permanent entry pass into the offices of the interior ministry. I need not explain to you the consequences, for both of us, if you are found out. But I have come to respect you and what you stand for, and I have decided to help you."

When Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok presented the pass at the interior ministry, the guard on duty was stupefied: few were the cabinet-level ministers that were granted such a privilege, and here stands a young chassid, complete with beard, sidelocks, chassidic garb, and Yiddish accent, at a time when to even reside in Petersburg was forbidden to Jews. But the pass was in order, so he waved him through.

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok entered the building and proceeded to look for Stolypin's office. Those whom he asked for directions could only stare at the strange apparition confidently striding the corridors of the interior ministry. Soon he located the minister's office at the far end of a commanding hallway on the fourth floor of the building.

As Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok walked toward the office, the door opened and Stolypin himself walked out and closed the door behind him. The rebbe's son and the interior minister passed within a few feet of each other. Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok made straight for the office, opened the door, and walked in.

After a quick search, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok located the documents pertaining to the decree in Stolypin's desk. On the desk sat two inkstamps, bearing the words 'APPROVED' or 'REJECTED' above the minister's signature and seal. Quickly, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok stamped the proposed decree 'REJECTED' and inserted the papers into a pile of vetoed documents which sat in a tray on the desk. He then left the room, closed the door behind him, and walked out of the building.

לקוטי שיחות A Sicha

By: ProjectLikkuteiSichos.org
Adapted from the works of the **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

The Plague of Frogs

The Verse: Describing the initiation of the second plague of frogs, the verse states: "*And Aharon stretched forth his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frog came up and covered the land of Egypt*" (*Shemos 8:2*).

The Rashi: *And the frog came up—It was one frog, and they [the Egyptians] hit it, and it split into many swarms of frogs. This is its Midrashic interpretation. For its simple meaning, it can be said that the swarming of frogs is referred to as singular, and likewise, "and the lice were (וּתְהֵי הַכִּנָּם)" (verse 13), (i.e.,) the swarming, pedoilyere in Old French, so too, וַתַּעַל הַצְּפַרְדֵּי, grenoylede in Old French (swarming of frogs).*

The Questions: Why does Rashi give primacy to the Midrashic interpretation by placing it first, over the simple meaning that justifies the singular usage when referring to "swarms of frogs"?

If Rashi is insistent on the idea that there was originally only one frog, why did he not cite the Talmud's more rational, natural explanation, that the one frog whistled and summoned the swarm (*Sanhedrin 67b*)?

This is more consistent with the plain understanding of the verse than a seemingly unnecessary miracle of one frog being struck and morphing into a swarm.

Earlier, Rashi wrote that the Torah uses the singular noun to refer to an entire species (*Bereishis 32:6*). Why does he not offer the same explanation here?

A Rejected Explanation: Perhaps Rashi prefaced the Midrashic explanation because it is faithful to the literal meaning of the singular noun, "frog."

This cannot be the case, however, as follows:

Rashi uses two phrases to identify an explanation that is faithful to the straightforward meaning of the text. A) "Its simple meaning is..." B) "The straightforward interpretation of Scripture is..."

Rashi uses "A" when the explanation strictly applies to the meaning of the word. He uses "B" when the explanation is the simplest way of understanding the entire story in context.

The strength of the Midrashic explanation is that it is compatible with the literal meaning of the word

“frog.” However, its weakness is that it is not alluded to in the continuation of the narrative, where no spontaneous spawning of frogs is alluded to. The second explanation, that swarms of frogs rose from the river, fits neatly into the broader narrative.

If this is the case, then in our context, Rashi should have prefaced the second explanation with the phrase, “the straightforward **interpretation of Scripture is...**” being that this second explanation is compatible with the continuation of the narrative. Instead, Rashi prefaced this explanation with “its simple meaning is,” implying that this explanation is somehow compatible with the literal word of “frog” itself.

The Explanation: In G-d’s command to Aharon to initiate the plague, He said, “Say to Aharon, stretch forth your hand with your staff over the rivers... and bring up the **frogs** on the land of Egypt” (*Shemos 8:1*). Rashi was bothered: G-d commanded Aharon to bring up “frogs,” in the plural. How did he fulfill this command by calling forth a single frog?

Rashi’s first explanation, that the frog itself split into swarms of frogs, satisfies this question. The frog itself became many frogs. This is why Rashi did not cite the Talmud’s more natural explanation of the frog signaling for other frogs to leave the river, because this would still leave Aaron with only summoning one frog, falling short of G-d’s instruction.

According to this explanation, the verb in the phrase, “and the frog **came up**” carries two meanings: 1) The frog ascended from the river, 2) that the individual frog **caused** many frogs to “**come up**.”

But this presents the challenge of one word con-

taining two meanings. Rashi therefore offers a second explanation according to “its simple meaning,” which allows the verb “**came up**” to retain just one meaning, like every other word. In this explanation, the word “frog” itself implies a swarming of frogs. Now the verb “came up” only refers to the swarming of frogs which then covered the land of Egypt.

The Deeper Dimension: According to the Midrash, Aharon initiated the fulfillment of G-d’s command, but the command was completed by those who struck the frog, eliciting the swarming of frogs that was G-d’s original intention. According to the simple explanation, Aharon completed G-d’s command.

In the “Midrashic” or symbolic realm (Remez) of reading the story, the plagues were meant to inspire Pharaoh to free the Jewish people. The punishment aspect of the plagues is not paramount here, and therefore, even one frog ascending from the river may be enough to grab Pharaoh’s attention. Therefore, according to the Midrash, Aharon did not raise swarms of frogs from of the river but only one.

According to the simple meaning of the story, the plagues were meant to punish Pharaoh and subdue him. Therefore, Aharon had to fulfill the full extent of the plague, calling forth swarms of frogs to terrorize Pharaoh.

The lesson from the Midrash is that when it comes to punishment, it is wise to do the bare minimum that is required. The lesson from the simple meaning is not to leave a mitzvah unfinished, but to complete what you began.

Likkutei Sichos vol. 16, p. 79ff

גאולה
Geulah

Yalkut Moshiaich uGeulah al HaTorah
Translated by Yaakov Paley

Personal Redemption Leads to The Redemption

The ultimate purpose of the era of Moshiaich is the revelation of G-d’s light, but it is reliant upon our divine service during exile. We must work to awaken the love of G-d that is concealed within each Jewish heart; we must reach a point where we experience a genuine and powerful desire to experience the love of G-d in a revealed manner within us.

We contemplate the words of *shema*, experiencing feelings of *mesiras nefesh* for G-d as we recite the word *echad* (“One”), and we then face G-dly revelation and closeness during the *amidah*. That is why we recite *go’eil Yisrael*, “Who redeems Yisrael,” in the present tense during the *amidah*. For the revelation and closeness in prayer is a daily miniature redemption.

These daily redemptions are a direct preparation for the complete redemption, when we will see G-dliness with our eyes and rejoice in His proximity.

Ohr HaTorah

The Root of All Nations

“From Zion, the finery of beauty, G-d appeared” (Tehillim 50:2). Mystically, this verse indicates that G-d established Zion as the foundation and life force of the rest of the world. Every nation, therefore, derives its spiritual energy from one portion of the land of Israel and individuals among the nations derive their spiritual energy from specific Jewish people.

The Philistines, for instance, derived their spiritual energy from the prophet Samson, which explains his unique ability to defeat them as well as his unique attraction to their charms. And when Moshe selected individuals to engage the Midianites (Bamidbar 31:3) he chose only those who were spiritually responsible for Midian’s life force, thereby ensuring an easy victory.

Pharaoh is called the Great Serpent (Yechezkel 29:3). When Moshe turned his staff into a serpent, Pharaoh was duly unimpressed. “You are bringing straw to a city full of straw,” he told Moshe. In a land of sorcery, such as Egypt, miracles are unimpressive. And in a land ruled by the Great Serpent, a miracle revealing a staff to be a serpent only bolsters Pharaoh.

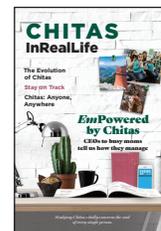
But then the serpent turned back into a staff, “and Aaron’s staff swallowed Pharaoh’s” (Va’eira 7:12), illustrating that even the Great Serpent derives its life force from the Jewish people and Zion. Pharaoh understood this as a sign that he would ultimately fall to the Jewish people. Stubbornly, however, he “turned and went home, and put even this out of his mind” (see Vaera 7:23).

Par. 77-78

מורה שיעור לחת"ת ורמב"ם לשבת Shabbos Chitas / Rambam Guide

Book	Section
Chumash – Rashi*	Va’eira, 7th Aliyah
Tehillim*	Chapters 135 – 139
Tanya*	Likutei Amarim Chapter 17. עמ' כג - אם לא מי שהוא... עד עמ' 46 - במ"א.
Rambam – Sefer Hamitzvos*	Positive Mitzvah #208; Negative Mitzvah #271 and #272
Rambam – One Chapter*	Sefer Mishpatim – Hilchos Nachalos, Chapter 1
Rambam – Three Chapters**	Sefer Nezikin – Hilchos Geneivah Chapters 4 – 6

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