

## The Case of the Missing Snack

The eighth graders at *Yeshivah Darchei Torah* ate a quick lunch and then headed outside for some ball-playing. Only one boy, Yosef Levy, requested permission of R' Moshe Grossman to remain in their second-floor classroom and read.

When recess ended, the students returned to their room. Shlomo Friedman, hurried to his desk and reached inside for his bag of cookies so that he could grab a quick snack before class. "Yosef!" he yelled. "You were here during recess. Who ate my snack?"

"No one," Yosef shot back. "I was here the whole time and no one else entered the room - and I certainly didn't eat it!"

"Well, I left a bag of cookies in my desk and they're gone! If no one else was here, then you're the only one who could have eaten them!" Shlomo was clearly agitated.

But so was Yosef. "Are you accusing me of stealing your cookies? What do I need your cookies for? I have plenty of my own!"

The boys continued their war of words until R' Grossman entered the room. Immediately, the two hurried over to the Rabbi's desk. Shlomo voiced his accusation, while Yosef hotly denied the charge.

As R' Grossman questioned each boy to ascertain the facts, the door of the room opened and another Rabbi, R' Moshe Mandel, entered. "R' Grossman!" he exclaimed. "You've got to hear this!"

"Please," R' Grossman replied. "I want to hear it, but not now. I'm in the middle of trying to resolve something."

"Well, perhaps I can resolve it for you," R' Mandel responded. "I walked by your room during recess and you won't believe what I saw! A squirrel was scampering along on the window ledge outside and suddenly it hopped in through the open window. It scampered to the fourth row of desks, went inside a desk and came out holding a bag of cookies." R' Mandel pointed to Shlomo Friedman's desk. "I could not believe how it knew exactly which desk held the 'loot.' Either squirrels have an unusual sense of smell, or they have uncanny eyesight. In any case, it quickly scooted back out the window with the bag of cookies. Can you believe it?"

Everyone believed it, including Shlomo, who went over to Yosef and meekly apologized. (More Shabbos Stories)

*The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition*

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לְאָה בֵּת בְּהִיָּה

בס"ד

## Congregation Magen Abraham

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SHABBAT VA'ERA ☆ שַׁבַּת וַאֲרָא

Haftarah: Yehezkel 28:25-29:21

**JANUARY 24-25, 2020 28 TEBET 5780**

Friday Minhah: 4:47 pm

Candlelighting: 4:47 pm

Evening Shema after: 5:45 pm

These times are applicable only for the Deal area.

Shaharit: 6:13, 6:40, 9:10 am

Morning Shema by: 9:05 am

Shabbat Minhah: 4:25 pm

Shabbat Ends: 5:46 pm (R"Y 6:18 pm)

Shabbat Class after Habdalah

Sunday Minhah: 4:50 pm

**For mid-winter break, the 8:10 minyan for Shaharit on Shabbat will combine with the other minyanim.**

**Rosh Hodesh Shebat will be celebrated on Monday, January 27.**

## *A Message from our Rabbi*

”וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאמֶר הֲעִתִּירוּ אֵלַי”

"And Pharaoh called for Moshe and Aharon and said, 'Beg G-d (for me)'" (*Shemot 8:4*)

We are taught by our Sages that the exile of Egypt serves as a model to us for all subsequent exiles. Our current situation in exile not only forces us to live outside of our Holy Land, but also brings with it many difficulties in life. Many of our loved ones and friends suddenly becoming ill from that dreaded disease, the unbearable stress to earn a living and our constant worry about our children. There is no doubt that we need and yearn for a speedy redemption. Let's analyze the Egyptian experience and learn from it.

We are aware that the Israelites were supposed to remain in Egypt for 400 years. However, it was shortened to 210 years. It is interesting to note that there was a special merit that brought this about. It says in the beginning of the *perashah*, "And I will uphold the treaty I made with the forefathers." (*Shemot 6:4*) The promise was made to our forefathers, Abraham Yitzhak and Ya'akov. These great men observed the Torah before it was given to the Jewish people. Why did they observe the Torah even then? because they wanted to go above and beyond that which was required of them. They wanted to do more, not just "get by." Therefore, G-d wanted to treat them above and

beyond, measure for measure. G-d took their children out of exile much earlier than the scheduled time. What a wonderful attitude this would be for us to develop, to seek ways to serve Hashem in a more generous way. We shouldn't be happy with just getting by.

Pharaoh, confronted by a massive plague of invading frogs, told Moshe and Aharon to pray for him to remove this plague. However, he used an unusual word: *Ha'atiru*, which means "beg." Even the wicked Pharaoh knew that a regular prayer, even one offered by Moshe *Rabenu* himself, was not enough to break the decree. The dictionary defines "beg" as: to ask humbly, to beseech. You would think that since the plague of frogs was something that Hashem brought as a temporary plague to soften up Pharaoh, and not a decree etched in stone, then why were such powerful prayers necessary? The answer is that prayers, to be really effective anytime, must come from the depths of our souls, with real tears, with humility. This is what awakens Hashem's mercy. There is no question that the sick and their families are praying these prayers. However, what is needed is for our community as a whole to pray the types of prayers that Pharaoh understood were necessary in these situations. These two ideas, serving Hashem over and above the call of duty, and high quality prayers will go a long way to end this exile speedily in our day, Amen.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Reuven Semah

### *A Snake in the Grass*

”קח אֶת־מִטְדָּךְ וְהִשְׁלֵךְ לְפָנֵי־פַרְעֹה יְהִי לְתַנִּין”

"Take your rod and cast it down before Pharaoh so it becomes a serpent." (*Shemot* 7:9)

Environment has a profound influence on a man. Even the most evil of men can improve when he comes into good and noble company. Conversely, even the best man can turn into a "serpent" when put into an environment where corruption predominates.

Moshe sought to make Pharaoh understand that although they were hated and oppressed in Egypt to such a degree that they had lost all resemblance to human beings, the Jews could become the greatest and noblest among men if only they would be freed from the corrupt atmosphere of Egypt. To accomplish this end, Moshe showed him the "rod of G-d," the rod on which the Ineffable Name was engraved. This was the rod by means of which the greatest miracles of all were performed. When it was cast down before Pharaoh, i.e., when it was placed into the environment of Pharaoh, it turned into a poisonous serpent. But, as soon as Moshe took hold of it, i.e., as soon as it returned to the immediate environment of Moshe, it was transformed back into a "rod of G-d." Such is the strength of the influence of the environment on man. (Wellsprings of Torah)

### *It's Your Choice*

”הִיָּרָא אֶת־דָּבָר יְהוָה מֵעַבְדֵי פַרְעֹה הַנִּיִּס אֶת־עַבְדָּיו וְאֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ אֶל־הַבָּתִּים”

"He that feared the word of Hashem among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses" (*Shemot* 9:20)

In Moshe's warning to Pharaoh preceding the plague of hail, he explicitly stated that any man or animal who remained outside during the hailstorm would surely perish. Nevertheless, the Torah clearly states that the only ones who went inside were those few individuals who were G-d fearing. In contrast to this select group, the majority of the Egyptians disregarded Hashem's word and left their slaves and animals outside. We must remember that this warning came after Hashem's warning already had been confirmed through the six prior plagues. Each of these plagues was effected only after

three weeks of warning and each lasted for one full week. Why, then, were these Egyptians so foolishly obstinate? All that was necessary in order to limit their property loss was to take their portable possessions indoors. Even the most unyielding, inexorable Egyptian should not be so foolhardy as to chance losing his possessions!

The Steipler Gaon explains this phenomenon as a clear indication that apostasy and denial of Hashem's existence is not a result of a lack of knowledge, but is rather the consequence of a deficiency in one's desire to seek and acknowledge the truth. One who aspires to the truth will succeed in his quest, while one who is complacent and self-satisfied will allow the truth to elude him. We may note that misguided philosophies do not originate from prudent intellectual logic, but instead from an evil inclination to continue living a life-style which is antithetical to true belief.

Consequently, it is no wonder that some of the most sagacious thinkers lack the ability to perceive Hashem's existence. It is as our *Hazal* have clearly stated, "In the path that one chooses to go, he is guided." Everyone has the ability to reason with his mind and, therefore, should not allow the passions of the heart to overwhelm his senses. (*Peninim* on the Torah)

### *About You*

"Jonathan is so popular," David said to Isaac. "That's why I am so proud to be his favorite person in the whole world."

"Well," David retorted, "don't pat yourself on the back. I know for a fact that if Jonathan had to spend the rest of his life on a desert island, he would pick me as the friend he would take along."

"You guys are wasting your time arguing about which one of you is Jonathan's best friend," Abraham interjected. "I am the one he likes the most."

Not everyone can convey the idea that they actually care about the well-being of others. Jonathan is one who can. How does he do it?

Jonathan avoids a trap that many people fall into when conversing with friends and associates. He does not spend his words speaking exclusively about himself. He inquires sincerely about the other party's welfare, family members, and activities. His questions are more than a polite "How was your weekend?" He possesses the ability to show others that he really cares.

When you have an opportunity to converse, remember that you are engaged in communication. The dictionary says that communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior. It takes two to communicate. You can use communication to build relationships, but only if there are two parties to the conversation. If you want to be popular, don't waste time talking to yourself about yourself. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

### *Loose Lips*

"Without lips that can open and close, a person would choke whenever he tried to take a drink from a bottle or a cup. Too much of the liquid would pour in and there would be no way of controlling it effectively. But the lips clamp down with every gulp to control the intake and accept only amount of liquid that the throat can tolerate."

When speaking about others, we are taught to be tight lipped. However, once the lips are open, we must be careful with our speech. Loose Lips can sink ships but through self-control, tight lips can grant us eternity. (Norman D. Levy, based on Rabbi Miller's teachings with permission from Simchas Hachaim Gedola Bais Yisrael)