

Parsha Q&A



Parshas Vaera

For the week ending 28 Teves 5759
15 & 16 January 1999

Parsha Questions

1. Did Hashem ever appear to Avraham and say "I am Hashem?"
2. What does "orlah" mean?
3. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?
4. How long did Levi live?
5. Hashem told Avraham that his descendants would live as strangers for 400 years (*Bereishis 15:13*). When did this period begin?
6. Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother?
7. Why are Yisro and Yosef both referred to as "Putiel?"
8. After which plague did Hashem begin to "harden Pharaoh's heart?"
9. Why did Pharaoh go to the Nile every morning?
10. Give two reasons why the blood was chosen as the first plague.
11. How long did the plague of blood last?
12. Why did the frogs affect Pharaoh's house first?
13. What did Moshe mean when he told Pharaoh that the frogs would be "in you and in your nation?"
14. Why didn't Moshe strike the dust to initiate the plague of lice?
15. Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to bring about lice?
16. Why didn't the wild beasts die as the frogs had?
17. What two miracles took place when Moshe hurled the soot upward to begin the plague of boils?
18. The *dever* killed "all the cattle of Egypt." Later, boils afflicted their cattle. How can this be?
19. Why did Moshe pray only after leaving the city?
20. What was miraculous about the way the hail stopped falling?

Sherlox Holmes and the Bloody Mystery

"Whenever someone does something out of the ordinary," said world famous detective Sherlox Holmes, "it arouses suspicion."

"Speaking of the out-of-the-ordinary," said Watstein, "I'm perplexed. Regarding the first of the ten plagues, Moshe warns Pharaoh that the Nile waters will 'turn to blood (Exodus 7:17).'"

"What's so perplexing?" asked Sherlox. "G-d can do anything."

"It's Rashi that's perplexing. Rashi explains that before G-d punishes a nation, He first punishes their gods. The Egyptians worshipped the Nile; thus, as the first of the ten plagues, G-d smote the Nile waters by turning them to blood."

"At last the Nile gets its just dessert!"

"But what's wrong with the simple meaning of the text; that G-d was punishing the Egyptians by ruining their water supply? What forces Rashi to say that G-d was 'punishing' the Nile?"

"Whenever someone does something out of the ordinary," said Sherlox, "it arouses suspicion."

Answer

"What's the first thing an invading army usually does to the enemy's water supply?" asked Sherlox.

"They cut it off," said Watstein, "but what's your point?"

"So why didn't G-d do the same to the Egyptians? Why didn't He simply cut off their water supply?"

"Hmm...you mean, if G-d merely wanted to punish the Egyptians, He could have simply dried up the Nile?"

"Exactly," said Sherlox. "A dry Nile would punish the Egyptians just as a bloody Nile would, without departing so far from nature."

"I see," said Watstein. "Rashi is bothered by the added miracle of the Nile turning to blood. What purpose did it serve? Rashi answers that G-d wasn't punishing the Egyptians only. The extra-ordinary measure of turning the water to blood was also 'punishing' their god, the Nile."

"Extraordinary, Dr. Watstein."

(Based on *Maskil L'David*; *Sherlox* is by Reuven Subar, inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek's "What's Bothering Rashi")

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Parshas **Vaera** — 28 Teves 5759, 15 & 16 January 1999

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I Did Not Know That!

“G-d will distinguish between the livestock of the Children of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, and nothing belonging to the Children of Israel will die.” (9:4)

In order to avoid the plague of cattle disease, some Egyptians sold their cattle to Jews. But since their sale was not sincere but was intended solely to avoid the ill effects of the plague, their cattle died anyway.

Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

6:2	Subtle and Sensational Miracles
6:6	Four Dimensions of Redemption
6:9	Why Moshe was Ignored
6:10	The Meaning of “ <i>Leimor</i> ”
7:3	The Free Will of Pharaoh (also see <i>Sifsei Chachamim</i> on Rashi)
8:6	Why Pharaoh said “Tomorrow”
8:18,25	Uniqueness of Fourth Plague
9:3	The Cattle in the Field

Sforno

7:3	Pharaoh's Hard Heart
8:12	Structure of the Plagues.
9:14	Effects of the Plagues

Kli Yakar

6:26-27	Aharon and Moshe
7:17	Three Sets of Plagues
8:27	“ <i>Mesiras Nefesh</i> ” of the Frogs

Answers to this Week's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 6:9 - Yes.
2. 6:12 - Sealed.
3. 6:13 - With the respect due a king.
4. 6:16 - 137 years.
5. 6:18 - With the birth of Yitzchak.
6. 6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon.
7. 6:25 - Yisro fattened (*pitem*) cows for idol worship. Yosef scoffed (*pitpet*) at his evil inclination.
8. 7:3 - After the sixth plague — *shechin*.
9. 7:15 - To relieve himself. Pharaoh pretended to be a god who did not need to attend to his bodily functions. Therefore, he secretly used the Nile for this purpose.
10. 7:17 - a) Because the Nile was an Egyptian god. 8:17 - b) Because an invading army first attacks the enemy's water supply, and Hashem did the same.
11. 7:25 - Seven days.
12. 7:28 - Pharaoh himself advised the enslavement of the Jewish People.
13. 7:29 - He warned that the frogs would enter their intestines and croak.
14. 8:12 - Because the dust protected Moshe by hiding the body of the Egyptian that Moshe killed.
15. 8:14 - The Egyptian sorcerers' magic had no power over anything smaller than a barley kernel.
16. 8:27 - So the Egyptians would not benefit from their hides.
17. 9:8 - 1) Moshe was able to hold four handfuls of soot (two of his own and two of Aharon's) in one hand. 2) This small amount of soot spread over the entire land of Egypt.
18. 9:10 - In the plague of *dever* only the cattle *in the fields* died. The plague of *shechin* affected the surviving cattle.
19. 9:29 - Because the city was full of idols.
20. 9:33 - The hailstones stopped in mid-air and didn't fall to the ground.