

Kindert Torah

Parashas Va'eira

Honor

Who can contemplate the terrible deeds that Paroh did? Rav Leib Chasman in his sefer *Ohr Yohel* illustrates as follows. Paroh spoke with *chutzpah* against Hashem. "Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice to send out Israel? I do not know Hashem and I will not send out Israel" (Shemos 5:2). He tortured the Jewish people with back breaking labor and horrible atrocities. For this, he was punished with the *eser makkos* (ten plagues). Each *makko* was more humiliating than the next.

Try to imagine the *makko* of *tse-fardeah* (frogs). They were everywhere, in the homes, in the ovens, even in people's stomachs. The noise from their croaking was deafening. Paroh, the King of Egypt, in his entire splendor, is sitting on his throne in his royal garments, surrounded by his officers. He opens his mouth to speak, but you cannot hear his voice. It is drowned out by the croaking of the frogs in his stomach. Can you imagine anything more disgraceful than that? Is there any honor to his kingship?

How was Moshe Rabbeinu was commanded to treat Paroh? After nine *makkos*, Paroh had the *chutzpah* to say to Moshe Rabbeinu, "On the day that I see your face you will die" (Shemos 10:27). Moshe Rabbeinu left Paroh's presence in burning anger (Shemos 11:8). Before he left, however, he described the last plague of *makkos bechoros* (killing of the first-born). It would be so horrifying that all of Paroh's servants will come running to Moshe, begging him to take the Jewish people out of Egypt. Rashi comments that Moshe did not say that Paroh himself would come running to him. Why? Moshe still had to honor to the kingship of Paroh (Shemos 11:8). He was such an evil king, and he performed acts so horrible that he was terribly punished. Yet, he still was deserving of honor. Rav Chasman points out that this is a powerful lesson in respecting the honor of a human being. If Moshe Rabbeinu had to honor the evil Paroh, how much more so do we have to honor our fellow Jews.

Kinderlach . . .

Do you see how careful we must be to speak to others with kovod (honor)? You may think that this is difficult. If you think about the other person's good points, then honoring him comes naturally. He is older, wiser, wealthier, more patient, or has more mitzvos or fewer sins than you have. Honoring others is the basis of true derech erez and the sign of a real mensch.

Going Up!

"Shalom Imma, I'm home from school!"

"Shalom Chaim! How was your day?"

"Very interesting, Imma."

"Please tell me about it, Chaim."

"Well Imma, Avi and I were walking through the park on our way home from school. We came to a group of park benches, and sat down. Next to us were two elderly men, sitting and chatting about retired life. It was fascinating."

"What did they say?"

"One said that he goes fishing almost every day. He sometimes spends hours in a boat, waiting for a fish to bite his hook."



"What did the other man say?"

"He spends a lot of time just sitting on the park bench, watching the people go by. He said that he worked hard his whole life, and now he wants to spend his last years just relaxing and taking it easy."

"Chaim, we are very fortunate that Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohen did not think that way."

"What do you mean, Imma?"

"They accomplished tremendous things during the years when most people retire. The verse states that Moshe was eighty years old and Aharon was eighty-three when they spoke to Paroh (Shemos 7:7). Rav Zalman Sorotzkin points out that in those days, people's life span was shorter than in previous generations. Dovid HaMelech writes this in his 'Tefillah L'Moshe.' 'The days of our years are

seventy years, and if we are mighty, eighty years.' (Tehillim 90:10). Therefore, Moshe and Aharon were at an age when their strength should have been waning. Did they slow down and take it easy? *Chas v'shalom* (Heaven forbid)! That is not the way of Klal Yisrael. Our wise and elderly people put more effort into their learning and *tikkun ha'middos* (character improvement) with each passing year."

"That is wonderful, Imma."

Where would the world be without these two tsaddikim? Two thirds of their lives had passed, a period of time when lesser people would be taking it easy. Yet they stood up to Paroh, the world's most powerful leader! They led Klal Yisrael out of Mitzraim and took them through the sea! Moshe received the Torah on Har Sinai! Where would the world be without Torah? Stuck in idolatry and witchcraft. Our two great leaders did not spend their later years relaxing. They rose to the highest spiritual levels ever achieved!"

"What an inspiration, Imma! An entire life filled with accomplishment. That is what I want."

"Chaim, Hashem should fulfill your request."

Kinderlach . . .

We are on our way up. We can look at ourselves as if we are near the bottom of a stairwell of a very tall building. Every time we do a mitzvah, we go up a step. If we do it with real enthusiasm, we go up two or three steps. Our goal is to keep moving up. Some steps are harder than others are. Sometimes we are tired, and climbing the steps takes more effort. When we get older, everything takes more effort. Just remember one thing - NEVER STOP GOING UP! Take your time, go at your own pace, but KEEP GOING. That is the way of Klal Yisrael. We are always in the rise. Nothing stops us. Kinderlach, use every moment that Hashem gives you to do His mitzvos with great enthusiasm. See you on the 120th floor!

Parasha Questions

- Which grains were destroyed by the *barad*, and which were not? Why? (9:31,32 and Rashi)
- Which servants of Paroh brought their cattle into their homes, and which did not? (9:20,21)
- Which miracles occurred when Moshe threw the ashes to begin *makkas shechin*? (Rashi 9:8)
- In what way were the makkos similar to a war waged against an enemy? (Rashi 8:17)

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