



Parshas Vaera

January 12, 2018

# A Taste of Torah

## Maintaining the Faith

by Rabbi Yosef Melamed

The Ten Plagues are a major theme of the Exodus, and we learn about them in detail during this and next week's parsha. The commentators offer various explanations to answer a basic question: Why was it necessary for G-d to bring about the Ten Plagues in order to free the Jewish People? Why could G-d not have gone straight to the plague of the first-born, which so terrified Pharaoh (as he himself was a firstborn) that he freed the Jewish People? Or better yet, why couldn't G-d have put the idea in Pharaoh's mind to free the Jews and end the exile that way? Why the need for all the miracles, havoc and destruction?

I heard a beautiful answer from Rabbi Yerucham Olshin, Rosh Yeshiva (Dean) of Beth Medrash Govoha. In last week's parsha, Moshe goes to the Jews with the message from G-d that they will be set free. The verse tells us that the nation believed Moshe's message that G-d would redeem them. Immediately afterward, Moshe and Aharon go to Pharaoh and demand that he set the Jewish Nation free. Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv Broida (1824-1898; known as the Alter [Elder] of Kelm) asks, why did Moshe and Aharon go to the Jews before going into Pharaoh? Storming into Pharaoh's palace, filled with guards and sorcerers, brazenly demanding the release of the Jews and coming out alive is nothing short of a miracle! Wouldn't it have made sense to let the Jews observe such a miracle and only then tell them of their future redemption? This would have made belief in their redemption so much simpler.

The Alter of Kelm explains that we can learn an important principle in

the workings of the Jewish Nation. In order for the Jewish People to be freed, it was integrally necessary for them to demonstrate their belief in that redemption prior to the start of the process. Only after showing that they believed in their redemption could their exodus actually be carried out. Only through the merit of their *emunah* (faith) was their salvation a possibility. It was not possible to go into Pharaoh before going to the Jews. The miraculous encounter with Pharaoh happened precisely because of the Jews' belief.

Based on this idea, it is possible to explain the need for ten miraculous and devastating plagues. The Jewish Nation had been oppressed under the harsh hand of the Egyptians for generations. They had been subjected to back-breaking labor, sub-human treatment, and the murder of countless Jewish male infants. It was natural that the Jewish Nation would have long given up of any faint hope of freedom. This would have created a problem. Inasmuch as their redemption required their belief in that redemption first, how would a tormented and oppressed nation muster that belief?

That, explained Rabbi Olshin, was the purpose of the Ten Plagues. The Plagues would serve as a glimmer of hope for the Jews to grab onto. They served as a symbol. If G-d could perform such miracles and mete out such punishments to the Egyptians, then He could surely also bring about the Jews' complete freedom. It was through that hope that their redemption became a possibility.

This idea is found in the commentary

## Stories for the Soul

### No Complaints

Based on a story on [revach.net](http://revach.net)

Rabbi Simcha Wasserman was the son of the great and saintly Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, who had been murdered during the Holocaust. Rabbi Wasserman himself had immigrated to the United States before WWII.

Rabbi Simcha Wasserman was true to his name; he appeared to always be happy. One Pesach, one of Rabbi Wasserman's students hosted him and his wife. During the relaxed atmosphere of one of the holiday meals, Rabbi Wasserman's student questioned him about his past in Europe. Rabbi Wasserman related some of the horrors that he and his family had lived through in Europe, including a pogrom which he had miraculously survived. Despite the traumatic nature of the events he was conveying, his voice remained calm and relaxed. His wife, Rebbitzin Faigel Wasserman, sighed as her husband discussed family who had perished. Rabbi Wasserman gently said to her, "Faigel, we don't complain." Rebbetzin Wasserman, not upset by the mild rebuke, serenely answered, "I'm not complaining."

In this week's parsha, Hashem criticizes Moshe for questioning Him for the suffering of the Jewish People in Egypt, in contrast to the Patriarchs, who had not questioned G-d's despite the challenges they encountered. We must work on realizing that G-d knows what He is doing, even if we don't understand everything.

## Kollel Happenings

### RABBANIT MIZRACHI AT THREE LOCATIONS!

The Women's Division of the Denver Community Kollel present a video for women, *Planting the Seeds* Three Locations & Times! **Sunday**, Jan. 28 at Aish Denver, 9550 E. Belleview Ave. **Monday**, Jan 29 at Beth Jacob High School, 5100 W. 14th Ave. **Tuesday**, Jan 30 at the Halpern Home, 210 S. Oneida St. Sponsored by Kathy Kaufman in honor of the birth of her first granddaughter, Devorah Kaufman, born on Shabbos, the 21st of Kislev, in Yerushalayim, to the proud parents Adam and Shaindy. No charge, suggested donation of \$5 to help cover costs of future video presentations.

### WINTER GARDENS WOMEN'S NIGHT OUT FEB. 12<sup>TH</sup>

The Kollel Women's Division is excited to announce that its 6<sup>th</sup> annual Women's Wellness Workshop will be held on Feb. 12, 2018. *Winter Gardens Women's Night Out* will feature noted speaker Esther Wein, great food and camaraderie. Don't miss the most unique event of the year! For more info or to reserve, visit [denverkollel.org](http://denverkollel.org), email [info@denverkollel.org](mailto:info@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

### SFAS EMES: A PIERCING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It is one of the most widely-studied works of our time. Sfas Emes gives us a glimpse into the infinite depths of Torah and Jewish thought. Kollel Scholar Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky is an expert in this great work, and a master in bringing its timeless lessons into daily life. Join Rabbi Karnowsky on Thursdays, 8:15-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

# Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** Which *Shir Shel Yom* (daily psalm recited each morning) is recited slightly differently than it was in the Temple?

**A:** The *Shir* of Wednesday (Psalm 94) is followed in most Ashkenazi communities by an additional three verses from the next psalm. Some explain this custom (which first appeared in print in 5541/1781) based on a Medrash which links these verses to Psalm 94. Others explain

that this is done so as not to end on the negative note of the end of Psalm 94. This explains the custom (brought in Siddur Avodas Yisroel, 5628/1868) to amend only one extra verse to Psalm 94.

**This week's question:** Does the *Shir Shel Yom* (daily psalm recited each morning) precede the recitation of *Aleinu*, and why?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Yonasan Eybeschutz - Part II

Rabbi Eybeschutz later went to study in the yeshiva of Holleschau (in Moravia), where a relative, Rabbi Eliezer HaLevi Oettingen, served as rabbi. Rabbi Oettingen passed away in 1710, and Rabbi Eybeschutz travelled to Vienna. He was already renowned for his erudition and brilliance, and it seems that Rabbi Samson Wertheimer,

chief rabbi of Hungary and Moravia, a wealthy financier, and court Jew to Austrian Emperor Leopold I, wanted him for his daughter. The plan did not come to pass, and Rabbi Eybeschutz then went to Prague, where he married Elkele, daughter of Rabbi Yitzchak Shapiro, chief rabbi of Prague and Bohemia.

## A Taste of Torah

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of the Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna; 1720-1797) to a line recited thrice daily in the weekday Shemoneh Esrei, where we describe G-d as a *Mish'an uMivtach latzadikim*, Reliance and Trust of the righteous. The Vilna Gaon explains that *Mivtach*, Trust, refers to the ultimate salvation that G-d eventually brings to the righteous. *Mish'an*, Reliance, refers to the miracles that G-d does before the final salvation, so that the righteous will not lose their faith in Him. We find this by the Exodus from Egypt, where G-d performed great miracles prior to the eventual Exodus, as well as by the Purim story, where the rise and glorification of Mordechai preceded the downfall of Haman and the salvation of the Jews.

The Vilna Gaon and the Alter of Kelm both conclude that this principle is true of the future redemption, as well. In order for the future redemption to come about, we first need to demonstrate our belief that G-d can and will redeem us. And just as in the days of the Egyptian exile and the Purim story, Hashem can and will perform miracles to assist in our belief in Him and in His ability to redeem us. These can be outright miracles, and can also be the little, more subtle wonders and kindnesses that G-d does for us on a constant basis. Let us open our eyes to these wonders and miracles, strengthen our belief in G-d and His omnipotence, and thereby merit the ultimate redemption speedily in our times!