



Kinder Torah®



For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table
Parshas Va'eira

The King's Heart

“Menachem, did you hear the news?”

“Good or bad?”

“Famine, disease, plague, death, blight, and terrible destruction.”

“Oy vey, Efraim. That sounds awful. When and where did all of this happen?”

“Three thousand years ago in Mitzraim.”

“Efraim, you have a good sense of humor. I always appreciate your jokes. For a minute, you really had me worried. Now that you brought up the subject, I would like to share with you something that I learned today about the plagues in Mitzraim.”

“Wonderful.”

“Try to imagine the plague of *tsefardeah* (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 Mitzraim, in all of his 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?”

“It was very humiliating.”

“Paroh calls to Moshe and Aharon and asks them to pray to Hashem to remove the frogs from him and from Mitzraim. Then he will send out the nation to worship Hashem.”

“Great.”

“Moshe and Aharon did their part, but Paroh did not keep his half of the deal.”

“Why?”

“Because Hashem hardened Paroh's heart. Over and over again, after each plague, Hashem hardened Paroh's heart.”

“And the entire nation of Mitzraim was destroyed.”

“Exactly. Shlomo HaMelech, wrote in Mishle (21:1) “The heart of the King is in Hashem's hand.” The king cannot just think about himself. His decisions affect all of the people. Hashem controls his heart to make the choices that are right for the entire nation. Therefore, Hashem hardened Paroh's heart.”

“But Paroh's decisions allowed

Mitzraim to be destroyed.”

“Our sages give several reasons for that. One thing is for sure. It was the will of Hashem based on the deeds of the Mitzrim.”

“Menachem, is this still true today?”

“Yes.”

“How comforting.”

“In what way, Efraim?”

“These are times when the Jewish people are in great danger. It appears that our fate is in the hands of a few world leaders. Now we know that their hearts are in Hashem's hands. They are really being controlled by Him.”

“Right, Efraim, but He still wants something from us.”

“What, Menachem?”

“The true service to Him that has saved the Jewish people from disaster time and time again. *Tefillah* (prayer), *tshuva* (correcting our mistakes), strengthening our Torah learning, strengthening our mitzvah performance, and giving more *tsedaka* (charity). This is what our Torah leaders are calling for.”

Kinderlach . . .

Let's do our part to help our people. Let's do things the right way and try to avoid something terrible. When you daven, open your heart to Hashem and ask for His mercy. Try to do a new mitzvah today, one that you haven't done before. Put a little more effort into your learning, and a little more of your allowance into the tsedaka box. Who knows? Your mitzvah may be the one to tip the scales, and soften the king's heart.

Who Runs the World?

The Steipeler writes (in Chayey Olam) that the *eser makkos* showed that Hashem is in control of everything in the world. The *makko of dam* (blood) showed that Hashem rules over the water. *Tsefardea* (frogs) showed His rule over the creatures of the water. *Kinnim* (lice) demonstrated Hashem's rule over the ground. At His will, the dirt turned to lice. The plague of *orov* (wild animals) demonstrated His control over the land animals. *Dever* (cattle disease) illustrated Hashem's *hashgacha* (guidance) of the lives of

animals. Only the animals of the Mitzrim were afflicted, not those of the Jews. *Shechin* (boils) showed that the health of a person is in the hands of Hashem. Only the Mitzrim became ill with boils, and not the Jews. The *makko of borod* (hail with fire inside) showed that Hashem controls the rain, and can change the weather and convert it to hail. He also controls “natural laws” as we see that the fire and ice made peace and coexisted in the *borod* to do the will of Hashem. *Arbeh* (locusts) illustrated Hashem's sovereignty over flying creatures and wind. A strong east wind brought the *arbeh*, and a strong west wind swept them away. The *makko of choshech* (darkness) exemplified Hashem's rule over the light. Lastly, *makkos bechoros* (death of the first born) showed that life and death are in the hands of Hashem.

Kinderlach . . .

Paroh needed *eser makkos* to recognize Hashem's rule over the world. We can try to see Hashem's control without suffering *makkos*. When we plant a seed in the ground, we see how Hashem takes care of it by watering it with rain and giving it plenty of sunshine. Before long, He makes a beautiful tree grow. Hashem makes that tree sprout an apple, which we then eat to give us strength to do mitzvos. And He makes that apple taste so good. He gives us good health so we can learn Torah. Boruch Hashem, we see that He is controlling everything.

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