

Bashert and destiny deny Torah fundamentals of Free Will and Reward & Punishment: if we are destined, we cannot choose otherwise. But we know we can, so destiny is false. And if all is bashert, why should we receive punishment? Clearly, bashert is a false belief.

1997
2007
10
YEARS

JewishTimes

Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices

Volume VII, No. 11...Jan. 4, 2008

WWW.MESORA.ORG/JEWISHTIMES

Download and Print Free

IN THIS ISSUE

PARSHA: VAEYRAH	I-3
DESTINY	I,4-6
NO MAGIC	7
USE OUR MINDS	8
10 PLAGUES	9-12

SUPPORT THE JEWISHTIMES

EDUCATING 10,000S WORLDWIDE



WWW.MESORA.ORG/DONATE

CANDLE LIGHTING 1/4

Boston	4:05	Moscow	3:50
Chicago	4:13	New York	4:22
Cleveland	4:51	Paris	4:47
Detroit	4:53	Philadelphia	4:29
Houston	5:16	Phoenix	5:14
Jerusalem	4:29	Pittsburgh	4:47
Johannesburg	6:45	Seattle	4:12
Los Angeles	4:37	Sydney	7:50
London	3:45	Tokyo	4:22
Miami	5:24	Toronto	4:35
Montreal	4:04	Washington DC	4:39

Weekly Parsha

Vaeyrah

RABBI BERNIE FOX

“When Paroh will say to you, “Provide for yourself a mofait (wonder).” And you will say to Ahron, “Take your staff and throw it before Paroh. It will

(continued on next page)

Fantasy

DESTINY

ASTROLOGY & BASHERT

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

We hear these reassuring catch phrases all the time:

- “It’s bashert”.
- “It’s meant to be”.
- “Everything is for the good”.
- “Everyone you meet is for a reason”.

These statements are intended to pacify others for their unrealized desires or upset feelings, like those still yearning to find a mate. The consoler misguides the consoled; “It’s an issue with the world...not with you.” Thereby, the consoled party is indemnified, and sadly, loses yet again, another rare and valuable chance to introspect and make real changes towards success. Unfortunately, both parties do not wish to consider the reality that the problem might be self-inflicted.

(continued on page 4)



(Vaeyrah cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



The JewishTimes is published every Friday and delivered by email. Subscriptions are FREE. To subscribe, send any email message to: subscribe@mesora.org

Subscribers will also receive our advertisers' emails and our regular email announcements.

Contacts:

We invite feedback or any questions at this address: office@mesora.org
Ph(516)569-8888 Fx(516)569-0404

Advertising:

<https://www.Mesora.org/Advertising>

Donations:

<https://www.Mesora.org/Donate>

Content at Mesora.org:**JewishTimes Archives:**

<http://www.Mesora.org/JewishTimes>

Philosophy Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Philosophy>

Weekly Parsha Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/WeeklyParsha>

Audio Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Audio>

Interactive, Live, Audible Sessions:

<http://www.Mesora.org/TalkLive>

Database Search:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Search>

Articles may be reprinted without consent of the JewishTimes or the authors, provided the content is not altered, and credits are given.

become a tanin (serpent).” (Shemot 7:9)

The wonders that Moshe and Ahron performed in Egypt are referred to with two terms. These terms are ote and mofait. What is the difference between these terms?

Sforno explains that these terms have very different meanings. These meanings can be understood through better appreciating Moshe's situation. Moshe claimed to be the messenger of a G-d. This G-d was represented as the absolute ruler of the universe. Moshe's credibility depended upon his response to two issues. He must prove that he was the messenger of Hashem. He must also prove that Hashem is omnipotent.

The term mofait is best translated as wonder. A mofait provides evidence of the Almighty's authority over the physical universe. Paroh denied that Hashem possessed this power. Paroh required a mofait. He could only be convinced by a wondrous act that would testify to the awesome power of the Almighty. The transformation of Ahron's inanimate staff into a living creature served this purpose.

The term ote means sign. Bnai Yisrael accepted the existence of a Creator. The Creator rules the universe He formed. However, Moshe was required to establish that he was the messenger of Hashem. They needed an ote or sign that Moshe was Hashem's servant. Moshe's ability to alter nature indicated that he had been empowered by Almighty.

Sforno notes that the same act can function both as an ote and mofait. The purpose of the act will determine the term by which it is described. Therefore, the transformation of the staff before Paroh was a mofait. The same act performed in front of Bnai Yisrael was an ote.[1]

“And the magicians said to Paroh. “It is the finger of the L-rd.” And Paroh's heart became hard and he did not listen to them as Hashem had spoken.” (Shemot 8:15)

Paroh's magicians could not duplicate the plague of Lice. They told Paroh that this plague was the “finger of the L-rd”. Rashi seems to indicate that the magicians were attesting to the authenticity of Moshe's claims. This plague was

caused by the G-d of the Jewish people. Moshe was His agent. Hashem was intervening in nature to save His people.[2]

Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra disagrees with this interpretation. The magicians did not say that the plague was from Hashem. They counseled that the cause was the L-rd. Ibn Ezra explains that the Egyptians did not deny the existence of a Creator. They understood that this Creator ruled the universe through a system of natural law. The issue in dispute was the Torah concept of a Creator with a providential relationship to His people. This understanding of G-d is expressed by the Tetragrammaton – the name we pronounce as “Hashem”. The Creator fashioned



a universe in which natural disasters occur. Floods, earthquakes, terrible storms destroy cities and even civilizations. The magicians did not understand such phenomenon to be providential. The magicians acknowledged that this plague was not merely an illusion or impressive trick. It was the work of the Creator. But, they claimed, it did not support the concept of Hashem.[3]

Nachmanides offers a third interpretation. The magicians accepted Moshe's claim that the plague was from Hashem. They did not use this name. It was a foreign term to the Egyptians. Speaking among themselves, they would not refer to G-d with

an unfamiliar name. However they claimed it was only the “finger” of G-d. The plague caused discomfort and some suffering. However, it was not catastrophic. They advised Paroh to be calm – to recognize the limited effect of the plague and maintain his resolve.[4]

“And I will separate on that day the land of Goshen, that my nation stands upon, so that there will not be there wild beasts; so that you will know that I, Hashem, am in the midst of the land.” (Shemot 8:18)

G-d tells Paroh, through Moshe, that the upcoming plague of Wild Beasts will affect only the Egyptians. Bnai Yisrael will be protected from the infestation.

Nachmanides explains that Bnai Yisrael were also spared the suffering caused by the pervious

(continued on next page)

plagues. The waters of Goshen were not affected by Blood and Frogs. There was no outbreak of Lice in Goshen. However, this aspect of these plagues was not stressed. Moshe could not point to this localization as proof of the plagues' Divine origin. It was understandable that these plagues were localized phenomena. However, the infestation of Wild Beasts should not have been localized. There was no natural reason for the beasts to stop at the border of the Jewish province. Only providence could explain this behavior.[5]

Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra disagrees. He maintains that the Jews were not exempt from the effects of the previous plagues. Bnai Yisrael also suffered from lack of water and infestations of frogs and lice. These plagues did not threaten lives. Hashem did not insulate His people. However the wild beasts were an actual danger. This infestation would result in death not mere suffering. In order to protect the lives of His people, G-d shielded the Jewish people from this plague.[6]

“And Moshe said to him, “When I leave the city, I will spread my hands to Hashem. The thunder will cease. There will not be any more hail. This is so you will know that the land is Hashem's.” (Shemot 9:29)

Our pasuk describes the conclusion of the plague of hail. Paroh beseeches Moshe to pray to Hashem. He should appeal to the Almighty to end the plague. Moshe responds that he will comply. However, he adds an important phrase. He tells Paroh that first he will leave the city. Only then, will he spread his hands to Hashem in prayer. Why did Moshe stipulate that he must first leave the city?

Rashi quotes the Midrash Michilta in response to this question. The Midrash explains that the city was permeated with idols. Moshe would not pray in this abominable environment. First, he would remove himself from this city of idolatry. Only then, would he pray to Hashem.[7]

Moshe was waging a battle against idolatry. He was asserting that Hashem is the only true G-d. The deities of Egypt were false gods. He would not pray in a place dominated by these idols. Perhaps, he feared that his prayers might be misinterpreted as appeals to the abominations of the Egyptians. He would leave the city and its idols. He would pray to Hashem only in a place free of these false gods.

The commentaries are troubled by the Midrash's comments. This was not the first occasion on which Moshe prayed on behalf of Paroh and the Egyptians. On these other occasions, Moshe did not stipulate that he must

first leave the city. Why, now, does Moshe add this requirement?

Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin Zt"l – the Netziv – offers an answer to this question. His answer is based upon a previous passage. Let us consider this pasuk.

As we have explained above, Moshe was not immediately successful in winning the support of Bnai Yisrael. His initial appeal to Paroh resulted in an intensification of the bondage. Bnai Yisrael sharply criticized Moshe for this outcome. Moshe sought an explanation from Hashem. The Torah uses an interesting phrase in describing Moshe's communion with the Almighty. The Torah says that Moshe "returned to Hashem" and sought His counsel.[8]

Netziv asserts that this phrase should be understood somewhat literally. Moshe actually went somewhere. He went to a place that he had designated for prayer and prophecy. He had established a synagogue – a Bait HaKeneset. Moshe retreated to this sacred place to commune with the Almighty.[9]

Netziv explains that this provides a partial answer to our question. Actually, each time Moshe prayed to Hashem he carefully considered his environment. He was consistently concerned with the problem of praying to Hashem in place associated with idolatry. In order to address this issue, Moshe established a special place that was sacred and devoted to the worship of the Almighty. Each time Moshe prayed or sought prophecy, he retreated to his Bait HaKeneset.

Netziv acknowledges that this insight does not completely answer our question. Why did Moshe now insist on leaving the city? Why did Moshe not follow his established practice? He should have entered his synagogue and prayed to Hashem?

Netziv explains that the answer is provided by another stipulation made by Moshe. He told Paroh that his prayers would be accompanied by a physical demonstration. Moshe would spread his hands to Hashem. Netziv explains that Moshe intended to spread his hands towards the heavens. This could not be done inside a building. Moshe intended to pray outside.

Moshe could not fulfill this requirement in his Bait HaKeneset. Therefore, he was confronted with a problem. He would not pray to Hashem in a place associated with idolatry. Yet, his accustomed refuge was indoors and consequently inappropriate for the prayer he planned. Moshe solved his dilemma by leaving the city. In this manner, he was able to pray outside in a proper environment.[10]

Netziv's insight provides an explanation for an amazing halacha. Tur explains that one should

always pray in a Bait HaKeneset. He adds that the synagogue must have a minyan a quorum of ten males. Bait Yosef observes that there is an obvious implication in Tur's formulation of this halacha. If a synagogue does not have a minyan, one is not required to pray there. Bait Yosef questions this formulation. He explains that many Sages maintain that one should pray in a Bait HaKeneset regardless of the presence of a minyan. He explains the reason for this position. A synagogue is designated for prayer.[11]

Why is this designation important? According to the comments of Netziv, we can answer this question. Prayer involves making an exclusive commitment to the service of

Hashem. Like Moshe, we live in an environment that is dominated by the expressions of other religions. It is appropriate for us to remove ourselves from our ambient surroundings when demonstrating our exclusive devotion to Hashem. The synagogue provides this opportunity. It is our refuge. It is a place completely designated for the service of the Almighty. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 7:9.

[2] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 8:15.

[3] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 8:15.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 8:15.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 8:18.

[6] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 8:18.

[7] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 9:29.

[8] Sefer Shemot 5:22.

[9] Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv), Commentary Hamek Davar on Sefer Shemot 5:22.

[10] Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv), Commentary Hamek Davar on Sefer Shemot 9:29.

[11] Rabbaynu Yaakov ben HaRash, Tur Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 90.

We don't hear these phrases after one wins a lottery, or some other financial or personal success. "Hey, my daughter got engaged!" is not usually followed by, "It's meant to be". Or when a businessman is trying to close a deal with a higher rate for himself, does he tell the other party, "It's bashert that you should sign the contract"? No. When it comes to issues that matter to us, like money, we don't rely on the "bashert" clause. This should teach us that we truly don't accept the notion of bashert. Bashert is only used to make us feel better by alleviating responsibility. (I'll address the famous Gemara soon about mates being matched "divinely".)

People also use these phrases when seeking some confirmation for their own indecisiveness. Since they are in doubt, they seek to reassure themselves that "everything happens for a reason". This phrase is also stated in response to undesirable events. But what prompts this statement? Which of our psychological components is satisfied with this statement, but remains troubled until the statement is made?

We also mull as what the plain meaning is of these statements. Are people claiming that there is some intelligent, driving force guiding every single event in our lives? So in the cases when undesirable events befall us, are we correct to say it is caused by this force? And if this is the claim, what is the proof of its veracity? And is it found in Torah? Or does Torah reject these views? And why don't people say when they passed a test, or were promoted, or experienced some positive change...that it was "meant to be"? Why is it only the undesirable events that meet with this response?

A wise rabbi once taught the answer to this question: ego. One's ego always takes credit for the good fortune, and does not wish to lose any opportunity to do so. So our successes are not followed by "it's bashert". And the same ego wishes to blame reality – it's meant to be – when evil occurs. The self is never attacked. God forbid we blame ourselves.

Torah Sources

In his Guide, Maimonides teaches that the evils that befall man are one of three types: 1) nature caused to man – i.e., tsunamis; 2) evils that man causes to man – i.e., wars; and 3) self inflicted evils, such as poor decisions. Maimonides teaches that this third category is the largest cause of our evils. This means that our lack of education, intelligence, or analysis of our actions and values eventuates in undesirable results...what we call evils. But the evils are avoidable, as Maimonides teaches.

God too endorses this, as He told Cain (Gen. 4:7) that all was in his power: he could follow his instincts and kill Abel, or he could refrain. He told Cain he could rule over his drives. God did not say that if Cain killed Abel, "all is meant for good" or that "it was bashert". God actually said that Cain would be punished if he sinned. (Unkelos) And in all cases throughout history, is it wise to say that all who died by enemy hands experienced something "meant for a good"? Then why complain to the Nazis? God clearly desires that man obey him, and avoid punishment. God does not say the punishment "is bashert".

It is apparent from these sources and from history that man is undeniably the cause of most of his evils. It is actually quite harmful if we reiterate these baseless catch phrases to pacify ourselves. For with such pacification, comes avoidance of introspection as to how we might remove ourselves from undesirable situations. When one says to himself or to another, "All is for the good", he fools himself, and also creates a mindset of passivity, where the one pacified accepts to wait and see how things will pan out. But if Maimonides is correct, and we are the cause of our troubles, then sitting and waiting will doom us to further anguish. The solution is not going to come from some fantasy, external source as people imagine. For since the real cause of our trouble was "internal"...then changing our ways is the real solution. Taking responsibility, accepting self-blame, and then making change is how we can resolve the problems at hand.

Man is insecure. He cannot accept that he is actually the driving force in his actions, as God told Cain. Man wants some safety net to alleviate all responsibility, assuring all will turn out OK. We already identified from where this feeling originates: infancy. Our parents assured us all was OK. They kissed our wounds, picked us up, hugged us, comforted us, whispered to us, and attended to everything we ever needed. While some people's psyches mature with their bodies, many others may grow physically, while their psyche is stunted, and is intolerant of independence. They cannot become independent, and always seek some assurance...they need mommy and daddy. People can express their need for the parent in many fashions. Some people cannot progress with their financial or personal lives, keeping them closely tied to parents. And others make it financially, but read horoscopes or accept religious notions of guardian angels, Jesus, Rebbes, et al, as they seek a 'parental' figure to replace their true parents. They can't make a

clean break as God desires. Consciously the person sees his parents are equal to him. But unconsciously, he cannot abandon the security he once enjoyed as an infant with parental care.

Denial of Fundamentals

In truth, this idea of "destiny", that our lives are pre-programmed, where "all is meant to be" rejects the fundamentals of Free Will, and Reward and Punishment.

Since we have free will, what we choose that causes us pain, can be averted. And thereby, the pain we suffer is not "meant to be", but self-inflicted. We also cannot say that if we err and deserve punishment, that this is "for the good". God does not prefer we are punished, so it cannot be for the good. If we can cause most of our troubles, we can also cause most of our fortunes...if we select alternate options based in wisdom.

There's no destiny.

The future is unwritten.

We each have free will.

We are punished for our sins.

God gave us wisdom to choose our own paths.

Had all been decided, then we can simply sit at home and fly autopilot, since some force of "destiny" will make things happen...regardless of my will. We will also suffer no punishment, since it was "destiny" and not me! But if I admit I have free will, then it is not destiny. It cannot be both...just as something is either black or white, so also, we either have free will and select our path, or we have no free will. And since everyone accepts by force of reason that we each possess free will...we must rationally conclude that "we" cause our choices and experiences, not some imagined force called "destiny".

Man can be frightened at the realization that nothing in his life is charted. So insecure is man that many cultures were built around fortune-tellers, witches, horoscopes, and those who predicted future events. And of course, as these practices are false, Torah prohibits them all. Pharaoh's astrologers are a perfect example. If man allows his emotions to reign free, he will find great insecurities. He will seek to remove his doubts about the future, with any type of charlatan. But as Jews, our path is to embrace our lives and accept full responsibility. We can – if we so desire – lead lives based on wise decisions, and avoid most troubles others experience.

(continued on next page)

(Destiny continued from page 4)

Fantasy

The troubles we face are only due to our ignorance. We fail to calculate all factors, or anticipate all possibilities that might result from our decisions. "Who is a wise man? One who knows the outcome of his actions." (Ethics) If we do examine all options and results, we will be most secure from troubles. But most people don't take such care when making decisions, when speaking, and when acting in general. Speaking back to a boss, allowing our frustrations weaken us from trying again, and giving up, are all emotional responses – not wise reactions. These emotional responses will eventually hurt us. One who complains is not analyzing his errors so as to avoid that mistake in the future. One who complains is reverting to an infantile state where he simply wants sympathy. People complain so as to be heard. But sympathy does not correct an error. So it should not be sought. Newton and Einstein did not complain about failed experiments, but analyzed their errors. We should do the same.

Talmud

The notions of "meant to be", "destiny", and "bashert" are quite appealing since they rid us of responsibility and thus, blame. These notions have many followers, which often times convinces others of their veracity. But all are baseless, since numbers of adherents proves nothing. Even when the Talmud states that "All is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven", it means that free will is in man's hands, while all else is under God's control. But "God's control" too must be understood. This does not mean that a leaf that fell from the tree at 9:32 AM was "willed" by God at that moment. Nature exists, as Maimonides teaches.

"All is in Heaven's hands" does not mean that the person I met at the coffee shop today was "placed" there for my meeting. Doesn't he have free will to be there? Then, as the Rabbis stated, HE decided to be there, not Heaven. It was HIS free will that caused our meeting. This must dispel the notion that "everyone I meet is for some reason". All areas of our lives are to be governed by reason. Let us not become so insecure that we accept the foolish masses when they make such claims. They make these claims to inject a fabricated meaning into their otherwise dull existences. They have a craving for God to be in their life, so saying "it was bashert" elevated a mundane event into imagined, Biblical proportions. It satisfies that ego again.



Tarot cards: used to "predict", and yet no card manufacturer or 'professional' has ever won the lottery.

Faulty deck I guess...

Talmud Avoda Zara 3b also says "All is in the hands of Heaven except cold and heat". This means that man has some ability to avoid weather patterns. Weather is something that has a "cycle", therefore, man can forecast to some extent, since its behavior is predictable.

Now, why does this Rabbinic statement exist? I believe it is to show the other half of our first quote. We cited the statement "All is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven". This statement is to teach one idea: that man alone is not subject to any coercion. Whereas all else is outside man's direction. But...this does not mean that when "all is in Heaven's hands" that all else is being directed by God's specific intent, like that leaf example above. No. The second statement that "All is in the hands of Heaven except cold and heat" comes to compliment the first Rabbinic statement. Cold and heat are in fact not part of "fear of God". Therefore, according to the first statement, this is under God's control. But the second statement says that cold and heat are NOT under God's control! How do we explain this contradiction? The answer is that the "laws" of weather are due to God and not man. But man's "interaction" with them – as predictable phenomena – enable man to avoid them, and thus, the "sensations" of cold and heat are due to man's decisions. Man can avoid extreme temperatures. This resolves the contradiction.

But there is another idea here. The fact that the Rabbis said weather is not under man's control, and is under God's control, teaches us that "In the hands of Heaven" does not mean, "purposefully intended for man". It means "nature", as we've stated. This means that matters out of our hands can occur simply due to natural laws...and not God's specific intervention in our lives.

Weather proves this point. When it rains, it's not a Divine message to stay home. If one says that, he actually violates Nichush: making signs for one's self. So when events occur that involve us, it is not wise to say, "it is bashert", since the Rabbis did not say so. And reality does not support this claim. Claiming something is "meant to be" or "bashert" may actually be a violation of Nichush, if we act on it.

Other areas of life, like whom I will meet today, how many cars will cross that bridge, how many large and small clouds will fly overhead, have no rhyme or reason...as far as

(continued on next page)

(Destiny continued from page 5)

Fantasy

man can see. The contributing variables are far too many, so we cannot explain all the above. The truth is, there may be 1000s of factors that contributed to the shape of a cloud, for example. All “natural” factors. So to say that since the cloud is shaped like a mountain, it’s OK to travel to the mountains, is foolish, and prohibited by Torah. A reason why we tend to say such events are ordained by God, is simply because we lack the depth to calculate all factors. If we knew the factors, we would realize this is simply nature at work.

Consider this second example: I meet someone new. Either it was his choice to be where I was, or there was a highway accident that forced him my way, or he missed an exit sign while talking on his cell phone, so he ended up at my exit, and we met...you get the picture. The variables are too many. This can be explained as “in Heaven’s hand” as well...Heaven meaning “natural law”. I hope these examples show us all how foolish it is to say, “we meet every person for some reason”. Nothing in reality indicates this is true. So as a people living by reason, we should not accept it.

Finally, the Talmud says, “Man is matched [to a woman] according to his ways”. Then the Talmud says, “40 days before the formation of the embryo, a heavenly voice calls out saying, ‘The son of this man is to marry the daughter of that man.’” (Sota 2a) That latter quote sounds like a “bashert” phenomenon...doesn’t it?

The Talmud recognizes the contradiction: man is either matched due to his ways (character) or by some “Heavenly voice”. Which is it?

The Talmud answers: one is matched by a heavenly voice applies to one’s “first marriage”; and being matched according to one’s character applies to one’s “second marriage”. This needs explanation.

One’s first marriage means when one initially is attracted to the opposite sex. And this, the Talmud states, is based on a “voice” calling forth 40 days before his embryo is created. What does that mean?

A Rabbi explained: 40 days before the embryo is created, means the causes of attraction are created in the womb. It is genetic, and natural. “Heavenly” voice, again means nature. So long before the baby is ready to exit

the womb, all causes are at play that cause attraction later in life. The reason the second marriage is not due to this is because man should – at that point – have learned a lesson that attraction is not to be the exclusive factor in choosing a wife. He chose based on attraction the first time, and where did he end up? Thus, the Talmud is referring to someone who has learned a lesson, and now selects a mate based on character, not simply attraction. This explanation makes perfect sense. No need to come onto Divine will, unless of course the woman is an “Isha Mascaless”, a wise woman. On this, King Solomon says, “A house and riches are [inherited] from fathers; but from God [is given] a wise woman”. (Proverbs 19:14)

Summary

The bottom line is that we must accept only those principles that are proven. Destiny, bashert and all others mentioned are not proven, and have actually been exposed as false.

We must not be duped by foolish masses. We must not be impressed by catch phrases, regardless of who says them, or where they are printed. We must analyze ourselves, and accept that as imperfect beings...we make mistakes! A lot of them! We must desire to repair repeated, damaging behaviors, and not blame anything external to ourselves. We must know – as Maimonides taught – man’s evils are mostly self-inflicted. So changing the self is how you will become happy. And God told Cain to pick the right path...nothing was destined!

If we think this way – a rational way – then we will benefit from the world God created, in a rational way. It is only he or she who complies with God’s natural design, that will benefit the most. Think of it as placing a square cube into a square hole: it fits. But if we chose to ignore how the world works, including how our psyches work, then we are not living in line with reality. We are attempting to place a sphere into a square hole: it won’t go. We must fail. And the finger must be pointed at ourselves, not at imagined excuses like destiny and bashert. ■



**The chamsa:
Jewish version
of the rabbit's foot**

Fantasy



RABBI JOSHUA MAROOF

Of course, practicing magic, conjuring up spirits and consulting astrologers are all strictly prohibited by the Torah:

"There shall not be found among you one who passes his son through the fire; a diviner, an astrologer, one who reads omens or a sorcerer. One who charms animals, one who inquires of Ov or Yideoni, or one who consults the dead. For anyone who does these is an abomination of Hashem; and, because of these abominations, Hashem, your God, banishes the nations from before you."

Famously, Maimonides explains that these activities are forbidden because they are nonsensical:

"And all of these things are matters of falsehood and lies, and they are the very means through which the idol worshipers fooled the nations of the world into following them. And it is not proper for the Jewish people, who are exceptionally wise, to follow after these vanities, nor to entertain the possibility that they have any benefit. As the Torah states, "there is no divination in Jacob, nor charming in Israel." And it is stated, "For these nations that you will inherit listen to the omen-readers and charmers; but you, not so has Hashem, your God, given you."

Anyone who believes in these things and things like them, and thinks in his heart that they are true and wise but that the Torah has prohibited them;

he is one of the fools and those lacking knowledge, and is grouped among the women and children whose minds are imperfect. But those who possess wisdom and sound mind know by clear demonstration that all of these things that the Torah prohibits are not things of wisdom; rather, they are emptiness and vanity that fools stray after, and all of the paths of truth have been corrupted because of them. Because of this the Torah states, when it warns us about these vanities, "Perfect shall you be with Hashem, your God."

In the Rambam's view, which is shared by many other authorities, these behaviors lead to a way of thinking which is inimical to Torah. "Magical thinking" is, in fact, one of the key elements of idolatrous belief and worship.

At the same time, there were some Rabbis that maintained that the practices prohibited by the Torah are actually effective, but that Hashem forbade our involvement in them for a different reason. Most notable among proponents of this view is Nachmanides, the Ramban:

"And now, know and understand regarding magic, that the Creator (may He be blessed) created everything from nothing and made the upper realms the guides of what is beneath them; and He placed the power of the earth and all that is in it in the stars and constellations according to their motion and direction, as has been demonstrated in the science of astrology...However, it was one of His great wonders, that He placed within the upper realms alternate ways, and forces by which one might change the governance of the realms beneath them...But it is the regular governance of the constellations that the Creator (blessed is He) desires, which He placed in them to begin with, and this would be the opposite. This is the secret of magic and its power, such that the Rabbis said regarding magical practices that they "contradict the Council Above"; in other words, they subvert the simple forces of nature, which is a contradiction to the upper realms to some extent. Therefore, it is proper that the Torah prohibit them so that the world will be left to its normal function and its natural state, which is the desire of the Creator..."

"There are many who belittle the reading of omens and say that they have no truth to them at all...But we cannot deny things that have been clearly demonstrated before witnesses."

Note that the Ramban is operating within the framework of God's Unity. He could not possibly

have entertained the notion that magical activities tap into forces that are completely independent of Hashem. Rather, he believed that whatever could be accomplished through these rituals was "built in" to God's creation from the outset.

This concept must be stressed because the Ramban's position is so often misunderstood. People frequently assert that "the Ramban believed in magic", as if he acknowledged the existence of a separate realm of evil forces that could be harnessed against the will of the Creator. This perspective is not only wrong, it is heretical!

Close analysis of the words of our Rabbis offers an important clarification. Both Rambam and Ramban maintain that all of existence reflects the design and wisdom of the Almighty, and that no force can operate independently of that design. Their dispute revolves around whether the magical activities proscribed by the Torah are really effective or not.

According to the Rambam, anything scientific is ipso facto permitted. Therefore, if magical rites were actually efficacious, the Torah would have allowed them. The problem is that whatever impact they do have is only imaginary. This is why they are prohibited.

Ramban disagrees with the Rambam and asserts that not everything "real" is necessarily permitted. Activities that undermine or subvert the course of nature are forbidden, precisely because they really work. Ramban thought that the occult practices described in the Torah operated through "loop-holes" in the Creation that enabled man to tamper with the Universe to an extent that is inappropriate. This is why, according to Ramban, we are not allowed to engage in them.

Genetic engineering and cloning afford us modern applications of these theories. It seems likely that the Ramban would view these procedures as unacceptable meddling with the course of nature, while the Rambam would argue that, since they have a scientific basis, they are permitted.

There is one more fundamental issue that must be explored here. From his commentary, it is clear that the Ramban's attitude toward the occult was based upon the scientific knowledge that was available to him. He felt that the power of magical practices and the reliability of astrological predictions had been confirmed experimentally. The question is - what would the Ramban say about magic, astrology, etc., today?

Modern science has systematically discredited astrology, superstition and magic. There is not a single shred of empirical evidence that supports their validity. Thus it is almost certain that, were he alive today, the Ramban would change his view of the occult and agree wholeheartedly with the Rambam. ■

God Desires We Use Our Minds to Know Him

RABBI REUVEN MANN

*Rabbi of Cong. Rinat Israel
Plainview, NY*

In this week's Parsha Vau-era, we read about the encounter between Moshe and Pharaoh. God instructed Moshe that when Pharaoh demanded proof that God had spoken to him, he should throw down his staff and it would turn into a snake. Moshe proceeded to do this before Pharaoh. Then something strange and unexpected occurred. Pharaoh summoned his magicians and they did the exact same thing. As might be expected, Pharaoh was unimpressed with what Moshe had done and obstinately refused to obey God. The episode concludes with the words, "And Pharaoh hardened his heart and did not listen to them as God had spoken."

The question arises: What was sinful about Pharaoh's behavior? He certainly had a right to demand proof that God had appeared to Moshe. Moreover, he was correct to ascertain that the deed was truly miraculous. Thus he summoned his magicians and they were able to achieve the same result. We must ask: Why did God give Moshe a sign, which could be duplicated by others? Isn't a miracle by definition a supernatural phenomenon, which is beyond the scope of human power and thus can only be attributed to Divine intervention?

If we study the text carefully, we can find the answer. Superficially, the act of Moshe and that of the magicians appear to be similar. However, they were different. The Torah says, "And the Egyptian magicians did this with their 'secret devices'". When a skilled magician performs a trick, he controls the environment in which it is executed. He sets up a

stage, keeps the audience at a certain distance and manages all of the "props". It is very impressive but we know it is an illusion based on a very skillful sleight of hand. The miracle of Moshe was done in the open without any secret devices. A truly honest observer would recognize and acknowledge the difference. The Pasuk also points out that the staff of Moshe swallowed those of the magicians. Thus the act of Moshe was clearly superior to his opponents. If Pharaoh was genuinely interested in the truth, he would have investigated the matter carefully and recognized the difference between the genuine miracle of Moshe and the deceptive magic of the illusionists.

Yet we may ask: Why did God give Moshe a miracle that could be somewhat duplicated? Why not give him something, which could not be imitated at all? The answer is that God wants man to recognize Him through the use of his mind and exercise of his free will. He doesn't want us to be emotionally coerced into accepting Him. Great miracles impress the emotions but since they don't engage the mind, their effect soon dissipates. Real change is achieved only through genuine knowledge and understanding. God wants us to use our minds in searching for Him, discovering Him and serving Him. Pharaoh sensed the significant difference between the miracles of Moshe and the counterfeit displays of his servants. That is why the Pasuk says that "he hardened his heart and did not listen..." Had he not been stubborn, he would have seen the truth.

Judaism is unique in affirming the supreme value of knowledge in the service of our Creator. We must, therefore, strive to cultivate a love and appreciation for the Divine Wisdom contained in our Torah.

Our Parsha has great relevance to the contemporary situation. In every area of significance; religion, societal morality, rightful ownership of Israel, we are challenged by false philosophies which masquerade as truth and ensnare the unlearned. Like Pharaoh, we must choose between the authentic and the illusory. May we fulfill the ideal of the Havdala prayer. May we have the wisdom to discern between the true and the false, the holy and the profane, Israel and the nations. ■



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Ibn Ezra: The 10 Plagues



Exodus, 8:12, Ibn Ezra directs our attention to the performers of the Ten Plagues:

“Know, that by the hand of Aaron were the first three plagues and these signs were in the lower matter as I explained earlier, because two (of them) were in water, and the third was in the dust of the earth. And the plagues performed by Moses with the staff were in the higher elements, just as his (Moses) status was higher than Aaron’s status. For example, the plague of hail and locusts were brought by the wind, and (so too) the darkness, it was in the air; also the plague of boils was through him (Moses). Only three (plagues) were without the staff; the wild animals, the disease of the animals, and the death of the firstborns. And one (plague) with no staff was through Moses, with a little connection with Aaron, and it was the plague of boils.”

Ibn Ezra focuses our attention on his first word, “Know”, which urges the reader to think into this specific commentary. He intimates that there is more here than meets the eye. He does not simply list each plague with its performer, or describe the involvement of the staff. We are not interested in dry statistics when studying

God’s wisdom. Here, Ibn Ezra is teaching important principles. Beginning with the word “Know”, Ibn Ezra is teaching an important lesson.

Each of the Ten Plagues was used as a tool to teach Egypt and the world the following: 1) Aaron and Moses were each assigned specific plagues, in the lower and higher realms respectively, and they performed a similar number of plagues independently, 2) The staff was present in only certain miracles, 3) Moses joined with Aaron in a single plague of boils, 4) God distinguished between Egypt and the Jews through two plagues, in which no staff was used, and which was placed in the center of the series of plagues.

In his Laws of Idolatry, 1:1, Maimonides teaches that early man already began projecting greatness onto the heavenly bodies. Man thought, since the planets, stars and spheres minister before God, they too are worthy of man’s honor. Eventually, man’s sin increased as he replaced simple honor of stars with his worship of them as deities, until God was no longer recognized. Star worship reveals man’s false estimation that the heavens deserve to be

worshipped. Man feared not only the spheres, but also the heavens. Jeremiah 10:2-3 reads, “So says God, ‘To the ways of the nations do not learn, and from the signs of the heavens do not fear, because from them the nations fear. Because the statutes of the peoples are false, because a tree from the forest they cut, fashioned by an artisan with an adze.’” Jeremiah teaches that man did in fact fear the heavens. But their fear stemmed from a false projection - not based in reality. Jeremiah’s lesson is insightful: he equates the fear of heavens with the idolatrous practice of prostrating to wooden idols. He wished to teach that the heavens do not hold any greater powers than wooden sculptures. Man’s idolatrous emotions project the same imagined authority onto both, the heaven and the trees.

The primitive view of the heavens determining man’s fate, was not alien to the Egyptians. God corrected this error with one aspect of His plagues. Commanding Aaron to perform the plagues limited to the earthly realm, and for Moses to perform those of the “higher”, heavenly realm, God discounted the dangerous esteem man held towards the heavens. God showed that the only difference between the heavens and Earth is the level of understanding required to comprehend their natures, as the wiser man - Moses - addressed the heavenly plagues, and Aaron addressed the earthly plagues. Laws controlled both realms, and both could be understood. Understanding a phenomenon removes one’s false, mystical estimations. Realizing they are ‘guided’ means they are subordinate to something greater. These realms did not “control”, but were “controlled”, teaching the Egyptians that their views were false. The Egyptians erred by assuming that the heavens were a governing and mystical realm. Earth, to Egypt, was not divine. God corrected this disproportionately high, heavenly grandeur. God did so in two ways: 1) by showing the heavens’ subordination to a Higher will, God demoted heaven’s status from the divine to the mundane, and, 2) by aligning the plagues with Moses’ and Aaron’s participation, Egypt would understand that not only are the heaven’s not divine, but they are in equal realms, just as Moses and Aaron are of somewhat equal status. Additionally, Moses and Aaron each performed three miracles independently to equate heaven and earth, dispelling a false supremacy of heaven and meteorological phenomena. Hopefully, the Egyptians would comprehend that both heaven and Earth are equally under God’s control, and that neither one is significantly

(continued on next page)

greater. Egypt would then realize that something higher was responsible for all creation. God wanted the good for the Egyptians. The 'good' means knowledge of what is true. As it says in the Torah (Exod. 9:16) with regards to these plagues, "...in order that they tell of My name in the whole world."

Interestingly, the three plagues designed in the heavens were hail, locusts and darkness. Why these three? Perhaps to address three errors of the Egyptians. Egypt assumed meteorological phenomena to be divine, so God responded with a hail/fire plague to display His exclusive control in this area. Wind was also a heavenly phenomena, but now they experienced an unnatural wind blowing the entire day, the entire night, until the next morning when it delivered the terror of locusts destroying all vegetation remaining of the hail's previous destruction (Exod 10:13). Finally, with the plague of darkness, God displayed control over the primary focus in heaven - the sun. Weather, the atmosphere and outer space were all shown as false deities and under the exclusive control of Israel's God. Additionally, the plague of "darkness" had one other facet - it was palpable, perhaps to show that it was not a simple solar eclipse.

Ibn Ezra also made specific note of two plagues where no staff was used. These two also included the lesson of national distinction: Exod. 8:18, "And I will distinguish on that day the land of Goshen that My people stand on it, to prevent from being there the wild beasts..." Exod. 9:4, "And God will distinguish between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt, and nothing will die of the Israelites." Why were both of these plagues designed to distinguish Egypt from Israel? I believe the answer is that by designing not just one plague - which could be viewed as a freak incident, but two plagues which differentiated "Egyptians" and "Jews" - the goal was to teach that God works differently than Egypt's view of the 'divine'. The Egyptians thought that to please their gods was man's correct obligation, and precisely how gods operated - a natural outgrowth of a child/parent relationship. How would such an infantile idea be corrected in order to teach God's true system? By Egypt witnessing punitive measures only on their 'side of the river', they were awakened to a new idea: objective morality. They were held accountable. They also realized something even more essential: their relationship to their gods was one where their gods benefited from man's actions. Egypt felt that their gods need man to

serve their needs, which were projections of man's own needs. But Judaism teaches that relating to God is not for God, but really only for man. God does not need man. Man must do that which is proper for himself, and if he does not, he will not only be punished, but he will lose the true good for himself. The Egyptian's exclusive receipt of these two plagues - a system of "reward and punishment" - awoke them to a realization that service of God means not catering to a god's needs, but rather, an alignment with proper ideals and morality. This is a drastic difference from Egypt's primitive notion of worship.

Simultaneously, these two plagues attacked the very core of Egyptian gods; animals. Their own animals died, and then, wild animals attacked them. It was a devastating blow to their esteemed deities. Their deification of animal gods was destroyed. Pharaoh's response (Exod. 8:21), "sacrifice to your God" confirms his lowered estimation of animals, to the point that he encourages Moses to slaughter them, and to do so to his God. In other cases, Pharaoh does gesture to free the Jews, but only here in connection with the animal plagues does Pharaoh say "sacrifice to your God." I believe the Torah includes these words of Pharaoh to inform us that the plague had the desired effect on Pharaoh. God understands what will affect man, and so it does. The Egyptians were all the more confused when they saw that Israel was not affected, even though they did not serve animals. In Exod. 9:7, Pharaoh himself sends messengers to see if Israel was harmed. This plague of the animal's death concerned him greatly.

Why were these two animal plagues bereft of the staff? Perhaps the staff carried with it some element of cause and effect; man would hit something, and only then would the plague commence. Perhaps, God wished to teach that He is in no way bound by the physical. A plague may occur with no prior cause. Removing the staff might effectively teach this lesson, as nothing was smitten to bring on the plague.

I heard another explanation for the use of the staff: Although God did not need it (He needs nothing) for Moses and Aaron to initiate the plagues, it's presence was to remove any divinity projected by Egypt onto Moses and Aaron, lest onlookers falsely believe these two mortals possessed some powers. By seeing the staff incorporated into the miracles, Moses' and Aaron's significance was diluted in Egypt's

eyes. But wouldn't people then believe the staff to have those powers? I believe for fear of this erroneous notion, God created a miracle where the staff itself turned into a snake. This was to show that it too was under the control of God.

Why did the plague of boils require Moses and Aaron to work together? My friend Jessie made a sharp observation. She said that just as Moses and Aaron addressed both the higher and lower forms of matter in their respective plagues, the plague of boils executed by both Moses and Aaron included the higher and lower matter - ashes are from Earth, and they were commanded to be thrown towards the heavens (Exod. 9:8). Her parallel revealed another facet of the boils, as God's plagues contain many strata of insights. I believe the boils' combination of realms was to teach that heaven and Earth do not operate in two separate, encapsulated systems. The very act of throwing ashes towards the heavens teaches that both Earth and heaven work together. This was a necessary lesson in the reduction of the heaven's exaggerated status. By showing this further idea that the heavens participate in earthly phenomena, the heavens' false, divine status was stripped that much further. Just as his subjects will view a king who spends time with commoners in a less regal light, so too the heavens now lost their reputation by participating in earthly matters. Moses could have collected the ashes himself, but by working with Aaron, together, they underlined this point.

One question remains: Why are the two animal-related plagues placed in the middle of the series of the Ten Plagues? ■



When studying the 10 Plagues, it is quite easy to get "distracted" by their miraculous features, thereby losing sight of the verses' subtleties. More than anything, the Torah is intended to reveal God's wisdom. To this end, millennia of Torah students, Sages and Rabbis have toiled in Talmud, Mishna and Scripture, training their minds, and as they learned the same areas year after year, they unlocked arrived at greater depths of God's wisdom. We must be sensitive to what at first seems like unimportant data, and

(continued on next page)

ask ourselves why God deemed “this” verse or idea to be included: “What is its lesson?” Let us take the plague of the mixture of wild beasts from last week’s Parsha Vaeyrah as an example (Exod. 8:16-28):

“And God said to Moses, ‘Arise in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he goes to the river and say to him, ‘Send My people that they will serve Me. For if you do not send My people, behold, I will send unto you, unto your servants, and unto your people and into your homes the Mixture [of wild animals] and the Mixture will fill the houses of Egypt and also the land that they are on. And I will distinguish on that day the land of Goshen on which My people stand, that there will be no Mixture, in order that you shall know that I am God in the midst of the land. And I will place a salvation between My people and between your people: tomorrow this sign shall occur.’ And God did so, and the Mixture came heavy [on] Pharaoh’s house and his servants’ homes, and [in] the entire land of Egypt the land was destroyed due to the Mixture. And Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, ‘Go sacrifice to your God in the land’. And Moses said, ‘This is not proper to do so, for it is an abomination to Egypt to sacrifice to God our God; for behold, if we sacrifice the abomination of Egypt in front of their eyes, will they not stone us? A journey of three days we will travel in the desert and we will sacrifice to God our God as He has told us.’ And Pharaoh said, ‘I will send you and you will sacrifice to God your God in the desert, however, do not travel too far, pray for my sake.’ And Moses said, ‘Behold I will exit from you, and I will pray to God to remove the Mixture from Pharaoh, from his servants and from his people tomorrow, however, let Pharaoh not lie, not sending the people to sacrifice to God.’ And Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to God. And God did as Moses’ word, and He removed the Mixture from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people...not one was left. And Pharaoh hardened his heart also this time, and he did not send the people.”

A number of questions arise:

1) Why did God deem the Mixture as one of the 10 Plagues? What is specific to this plague that it was perfectly appropriate for afflicting Pharaoh and Egypt? What were its lessons?

2) Unlike other plagues, here alone we see an emphasis of “sacrificing” to God, mentioned six times. Is this significant, and if so, how?

3) Why does God refer to this plague as (Arove) “Mixture”? Is this title significant?



4a) Pharaoh says, “Go sacrifice to your God in the land”. Moses said, “This is not proper to do so, for it is an abomination to Egypt to sacrifice to God our God: for behold, if we sacrifice the abomination of Egypt in front of their eyes, will they not stone us?” Besides the practical ramifications of shielding the Jews from Egypt’s attack, is there another idea Moses instills in Pharaoh, with his “own” address?

4b) In general, aside from God’s administering of the Plagues, we find Moses addressing Pharaoh in his own words. Was Moses instructed to do so? We certainly do not see so in the text. And if he was not instructed, why did he address Pharaoh? Another instance is Exodus 9:31 and 9:32, where Moses is about to pray to God to halt the Hail. But before he does so, he tells Pharaoh, “the stiff plants broke from the hail, while the softer plants survived”(paraphrased). Why this interruption, and again, why was Moses addressing Pharaoh? We do not read that God commanded Moses to address him, other than the announcement of the plagues, and their description as per God’s words. Why the additional address by Moses?

5) When commanding Moses to warn Pharaoh, God instructs him to say the following: “And I will distinguish on that day the land of Goshen on which My people stand, that there will be no Mixture, in order that you shall know that I am God in the midst of the land.” We wonder what is this rarely seen objective of “distinguishing” Israel from Egypt. Is this God’s primary goal with this Mixture of beasts, and that is why it is stated? If so, what is the underlying message? “Distinguishing” cannot be a lesson in itself. “Distinction”, by its very definition, is concerning some ‘area’ of distinction; as in a distinguished scholar, where his ‘knowledge’ is distinct from others. So we must ask, in what area did God distinguish the Jews via this plague? This question is compounded by the next verse where God states He will render a salvation for the Jews, not to be harmed by the Mixture. The distinction is made again. Why?

Moses’ Role

I believe Moses address to Pharaoh teaches us a number of ideas. One idea stated by a Rabbi, is that Moses was necessary for the plagues, but not that God could not perform them without Moses. The Rabbi taught that Moses was necessary, so as to communicate the deeper ideas contained in each Plague. God did not merely plague Egypt with arbitrary

(continued on next page)



God sent multiple species of beasts that destroyed Egypt, including snakes and scorpions as Rashi stated, the very beasts we find on Pharaohs' headdresses. Thus, the Egyptians should no longer deify that which causes them much grief.

miracles, but with signs and wonders which addressed certain flaws in Pharaoh and the Egyptian culture. They were intended to reveal insights necessary for the potential repentance and perfection. Without someone as wise as Moses, the perception of the plagues' underlying ideas would be missed.

Purpose of Prophets

This also teaches that God desired that Pharaoh realize another concept: there is immense wisdom out there, and it can only be arrived at with use of the mind. God needs no emissary, but God sent Moses as a primary lesson to Pharaoh that man (Moses) arrives at true knowledge only when using the mind...as Moses portrayed to Pharaoh.

This is quite a fascinating idea to me. We are so ready to accept Moses' leadership and role as emissary, but we overlook the very basic question: Why did God desire to send Moses, or send prophets in general? God could have accomplished the plagues on His own. This is a Torah and Maimonidean fundamental: Prophets were sent, not because God needs anyone or anything, but because God wishes to teach man at every turn. And with the sending of prophets, man must realize that a great level of wisdom is required to understand our reality...God's created reality. The prophet is being sent, for he – to the exclusion of others – is fit to understand God, and teach man. This was a primary lesson to Pharaoh: “Your life of idolatry is based on the absence of reasoning, and you require education, through Moses.” The most basic lesson to Egypt, and to all cultures today that are idolatrous, is that the mind is not being engaged. If people did use their minds, even to a small degree, they would wonder why they are bowing to stone gods, and deifying men like Jesus.

Animal Behavior

Moses too understood this; he understood his role and that is why he addressed Pharaoh: to explain the underlying messages, and have the effect on Pharaoh and Egypt desired by God. In the plague of the Mixture of beasts, Moses tells Pharaoh that sacrificing to God in Egypt will get the Jews stoned to death. Moses means to address the very concept of animal worship. I believe this explains why God – in this plague alone – mentions the word “sacrifice” six times, for it is this plague that was sent to address the very problem of animal worship: sacrifice is the antithesis of animal worship! So the repetition of “sacrifice” in this plague alone indicates that sacrifice is central to the purpose of the plague

of the Mixture. (God uses word repetitions in other Torah instances too, as subtle suggestions of an underlying Torah theme.)

Now, as Egypt deified animals, Moses directed Pharaoh to recognize this flaw. He told Pharaoh the Egyptians could not stand idly by as animals were sacrificed. For this reason, the Jews were required to offer the Paschal lamb to earn God's salvation: they had to demonstrate their disregard for animal deification, and their trust in God's salvation from any stoning, and His deliverance of the nation to Israel.

But how did this plague attempt to correct Egypt's animal deification? It was through psychology. God sent multiple species of beasts that destroyed Egypt, including snakes and scorpions as Rashi stated, the very beasts we find on Pharaohs' headdresses. Thus, the Egyptians should no longer deify that which causes them much grief. When a person is alarmed at some phenomenon, he tends to no longer gravitate towards it, and this I believe was one of the objectives in this plague: to sever ties between man and animal.

Why were a “mixture” sent, and not a single species? A mixture was used as it generates a feeling of disdain toward animals “in general”, not just a single class, which would allow the Egyptians to retain their deification feelings for all other beasts. This explains why this plague was called “Mixture” (Arove). For the Mixture targeted this concept of diluting the Egyptian deification of elevated species, by generating disdain for animals in general.

One last question is why God desired to distinguish the Jews in this plague, in the “land of Goshen”. The Rabbis answer (Ibn Ezra 9:1) that God displayed His control over all creation: Earth, the heavens...and all that occurs in between, such as man's actions. Blood, Frogs, and Lice emanated from the Earth. The Mixture, Animal Deaths and Boils occurred “on” the Earth. And Hail, Locusts and Darkness occurred in the air or the heavens. God successfully displayed His control over all creation, by categorizing the plagues in this manner. (Nothing else exists but Earth, heaven, and all events) Of course, God also wished to smite the Egyptians' god, the Nile River with Blood, and there are many other facets to these plagues that we have not begun to detect or examine. As we stated at the very outset, God's wisdom is never ending. But man's is...so I will end with one last question: Why was the next plague Animal Deaths? Was it to act as a follow-up some how to the Mixture?

Write in with your thoughts. ■

Advertise with Us

*My warmest wishes
to my friends*

*Rachel
& Josh*

on your engagement!

*Warm wishes to
Sol & Chummie,
Rebbe & Rebbetzin,
and to Mr. & Mrs. Licht!*

—Marshall

A MARINE,

**YEHOSHUA AHARON
BEN EPHRAIM FISHEL**

WILL BE STATIONED IN IRAQ STARTING
MID-AUGUST FOR 8 MONTHS.

WE ASK YOU TO HAVE HIM IN YOUR TEFILOS
FOR A SAFE MISSION AND RETURN.

**Funding for small
to medium sized,
private or public
companies.**

**Private Transactions
Reverse Mergers
Block Trades
Convertibles
Stockloans
Shells
Pipes
IPOs**

B

**Salamon
Brothers**

516.371.9440

salamon.brothers@verizon.net

Kidney Needed *(Reprinted from an email list)*

I am writing to appeal to all of you to help me with the following two items. My dad is in desperate need of a kidney transplant and I need everyone's help. One please keep Ephraim be Esther in your tfillot and if you say thillim please keep him in mind. The next item is harder and I am asking your help to post in shul or community email message boards. He needs a kidney donor with type A or O blood for a transplant. If you know of anyone who wants to donate a kidney or have any information at all that could help please contact me asap. The recipient will pay all expenses and lost wages associated with the donation. Please distribute this information as word of mouth is the best networking. I can be reached 24 hours a day by email or at any of the numbers below. Tizku lmitsvos.

—Marc Hoschander

t-646-366-1772 f-646-366-1776 c-917-612-2300
mhoschander@approvedfunding.com