

Parshat Vaecira Stupendous Supplication

Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

During the plague of *barad* (hail), Moshe Rabenu leaves the city to pray to Hashem. He raises his hands and says, "The thunder will cease and the hail will no longer be, so that you [Pharaoh] will know that the earth is Hashem's..." Why did Moshe need to leave the city? Was this plague different or was this only recorded here for the first time? What is the meaning of Moshe raising his hands? Why is Pharaoh told specifically here that he will recognize that all the earth belongs to Hashem?

Rashi and Ramban explain that Moshe normally left the city to pray for the removal of the plagues and it would end the following day. Here, Pharaoh asked that the plague end immediately, so Moshe needed to inform him of the protocol. Alternately, in previous plagues there was no need to raise his hands heavenward, so there was no need to leave the city. The Imrei Shefer suggests that the city was so full of noise from the thunder and the falling hail that it would be difficult for Moshe to concentrate. The Mishchat Shemen adds the idea of the *Daat Zekenim* that the main object of Egyptian worship was sheep. Those who feared Hashem brought their livestock indoors in anticipation of the plague, so the city now was flooded with *avodah zarah*.

Why did Moshe need to raise his hands. The Torah records that the hail, ice and fire miraculously coexisted to do Hashem's bidding. Because the plague itself was supernatural, ending it would also require a supernatural approach, explains the Shem

MiShmuel. Similarly, the Lev Tahor explains that this plague with its supernatural element came from a very elevated place and therefore required raised hands to bring the Divine Presence down from heaven, in contrast to most prayer that originates here below and rises upward. Moshe needed to bring the Shechinah down to remove this supernatural plague so that Pharaoh would finally feel that Hashem was coming near to vanquish the Egyptians.

Every plague had a dual purpose, both to punish the Egyptians and to benefit *Bnei Yisroel*. What was the benefit to *Bnei Yisroel*? Rabbi Schwadron z"l quotes a *Gemara* in Taanis. In Shir Hashirim, *Bnei Yisroel* allegorically request that Hashem engrave us as a seal on His heart and on His arm which are not always visible. Instead, Hashem responds that He will engrave us on the palms of His hands, which are always visible. Hashem let His presence rest on the uplifted hands of Moshe as a sign of the unbreakable bond between Him and *Bnei Yisroel*. When Moshe raised his hands, he was symbolically signaling to Hashem that we were ready to solidify this relationship.

Every plague was perfectly meted out measure for measure, says the *Kli Yakar*. The sound of thunder that accompanied the hail was meant to remind Pharaoh of his refusal to recognize Hashem and listen to the gentler sound of His voice. Now Pharaoh would acknowledge that he had sinned, and that Hashem is righteous. Further, Pharaoh spoke *loshon horo* against God by his refusal to acknowledge Him. Hail brought down all four

capital punishments for *loshon horo* has the power to transgress all the cardinal sins. The hailstones pelted the Egyptians, the fire within the hailstones burned the Egyptians, the people were slaughtered, and the flooding waters drowned and suffocated them. Now we can further understand why Moshe needed to leave the city to pray, for Hashem cannot reside in a place where *loshon horo* exists.

The Tiv Hatorah notes that Moshe wanted Pharaoh to understand that all power belonged to Hashem, and Moshe was merely Hashem's emissary, just as the sun, moon and all other things the Egyptians had deified were not gods, but God's emissaries.

Our sincere prayer is an expression of that faith, writes Rabbi M. Wolfson. It is a declaration that Hashem is all powerful and only He has the ability to fulfill my every word. Therefore *emunah* goes way beyond recognizing that Hashem is the Creator. It encompasses the belief that Hashem is constantly involved and can grant us our every need. In this context, we begin with praising Hashem for all He is and all He does, and then follow with our requests. Only with *emunah* can we approach Hashem in prayer. Therefore, we must rid ourselves of all foreign thoughts that prevent us from making that deep connection to Him, interjects Rabbi Sternbuch. Rabbi Pincus z"l adds that we are surrounded by foreign cultures throughout our lives. It is often a struggle to maintain our distinctiveness. Torah study teaches us our uniqueness, keeps us from negative thoughts, and helps us maintain our Jewish identity.

The 3 Pillars on Which the World Stand

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

The third chapter of Avos d'Rav Nosson begins with the well-known adage of Rabbi Shimon Hatzadik. "Al shelosha devarim haolam omed al haTorah v'al havoda v'al gemilat chasadim. The world stands on three things, Torah study, sacrifices or prayer, and kindness. The Tur in Choshen Mishpat asks a question. Rav Gamliel said, "Haolam omed al hadin al hemet v'al hashalom. The world stands on judgement, truth, and peace." So, on which three things does the world really exist? In the period of Shimon Hatzaddik when the *beit hamikdash* still stood, the world existed on Torah, avodah, and gemilat chasadim. After the destruction when we could no longer bring sacrifices, the world continues to exist on din shalom v'emet.

The Torah is compared to a *korbon oleh kulo l'Hashem*, a sacrifice offered completely to Hashem. Chazal say that when a person studies Torah, Hashem forgives his sins as if he offered himself as a *korbon*. The more one learns Torah, the more one understands Hashem and the closer one becomes to Him. Just as a child desires to know more about his parents and ancestors so too do we desire to know about our Father in heaven. The only way to reach that goal is by learning the Torah. In the fourth chapter, Avos D' Rav Nosson teaches that if *talmidei chachamim* are learning Torah and a burial or wedding procession passes by, if their presence is needed, they are obligated to stop learning and join the procession. This shows the greatness of Torah. Normally if one is involved

in a *mitzva*, one is exempt from other *mitzvot*. But here they must cease learning Torah because these two *mitzvot* are Torah. The *kolot* (voices) of Torah and the *kolot* of the *chosson* and *kallah* are not a contradiction. Helping to build a home where children will be born who will learn Torah is increasing and strengthening Torah.

Avos d'Rav Nosson tells the story of Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilia who was giving a Torah lecture to his students. When a wedding party passed, he stopped the shiur to praise the *kallah*. This is what Torah is about. When there is a need to bring joy to a *chosson* and *kallah*, we stop *limud haTorah*. So too performing a last act of kindness for one who passed away is living the teachings of Torah.

Builder of Her Home The Valid Woman Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

In Mishlei it says, "Charm is false and beauty is vain, a woman who fears Hashem she shall be praised." An *isha kesheira* is not doing her husband's will because she wants to appear charming or beautiful. Rather she wants to actualize the *yirat Hashem* (fear of heaven) of her family through both of them. The "what" is what will we do as a family that expresses *yirat shamayim* and the "how" is here's how we'll make it reality. A person who has *yirat shamayim* never sees himself separate from Hashem. He sees Hashem as the cause and his life as the effect. He feels attachment. He recognizes that what he is and will be is all from Hashem and he must do His will. A gift is what you are, not what you have. Your gifts were given to you by Hashem, He gave you aspirations, and it's up to you to do something with them. A wife's mission is to find the part within her husband that has *yirat shamayim* and bring it forth. Many women might say, "This doesn't apply to me. My husband has no vision. His idea of success is the golf course." If your husband is Jewish, there's a part of him that has *yirat shamayim*, that seeks purpose and meaning. Everyone has something you could build upon. You have to find it and give it hands and feet. I know

someone who is in that situation. Her husband is a successful businessman but he's not that interested in Judaism. He plays the piano beautifully. She got him to play before handicapped children and for people who couldn't afford a one-mand band at their *simchas*. It made him discover his spiritual self.

It's natural for a woman to have faith and believe in her husband. Similarly, when the Jews received the Torah they said, "Naaseh V'nishma, we will do and then understand." We are in partnership with You and your will is our will. In *Shir Hashirim* Hashem says to the Jewish people, "Open up to me my lover, my sister, my perfect one, my dove." The Gemara asks, how can we call Hashem our sister? Our sister means we have commonality with him. Hashem won't abandon us until we become the sister, the wife, the perfect one... It says in Tehilim, "B'atara shitra lo imo ..." Hashem so to speak wears the crown his mother put on his head on the day of marriage. The day of Hashem's great *simcha* was the day the *beit hamikdash* was built, the fulfilment of our promise when we accepted the Torah. Just as a mother brings a child into this world, we are

metaphorically called Hashem's mother because we bring Him into this world. So too the wife takes her husband's will and makes it reality.

In the process of creation, the husband provides the flash of inspiration while the woman nurtures it and brings it to completion. A woman is in a constant state of readiness while a man continually renews himself. A man can conceive children well into his older years while a woman cannot. This is because he's continually recommencing while a woman succumbs to aging. Man was created from the earth while a woman was created from man. His creation was an inception, a beginning, and hers is *hashlama*, completion.

In the Hebrew language, oftentimes in the Torah, the word *naarah* which means young girl is written without the final *heh*. We read it *naarah* using just the vowels. Similarly *hee* which means she is oftentimes written as *hu* and read as *hee* with the vowels. This is because there's something within the woman that wants to follow the male within her. Her inner reality says, follow him, make him a part of you.