



## הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד  
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,  
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### Parashat Bo

## Hashem Interacts With Man In Accordance With His Behavior

### Questions:

- 1- The *pesukim* by *Makkat Arov*, Wild Beasts, as well as *Makkat Barad*, Hail, state that Hashem made miracles so that Pharaoh and the Egyptians should know that Hashem is G-d. How can it be that all of the miracles and wonders that Hashem performed during the Exodus were to show His power and might to Pharaoh, and so that people should speak about the wonders He performed? Is this the purpose of the creation of the world, i.e., that Egypt should recognize that Hashem controls the world? 2- The *Alshich* asks that the *pasuk* (*Shemot* 10:2) begins with the singular expression, and concludes with, "And you should know that I am Hashem," in the plural. Why does the *pasuk* begin in the singular expression and end in the plural?

### A Punishment to Pharaoh For His Heresy

The *Midrash Sechel Tov* (*Shemot* 8:18) quotes the *pasuk*, "So that you will know that I am Hashem throughout the land." This is so you will not say that the *Shechinah*, the Divine Presence, is in the Heavens and not in the land. Rather, Hashem's Honor and *Shechinah* fill the entire land, and the same way that He controls the Heavens, so too, does He control the earth. All of the words of rebuke that accompanied each plague were to contradict Pharaoh's original heretical statement, "I do not know Hashem." The *Rabbeinu Bachaya* (*Shemot* 9:14) explains that when Hashem said, "So that you should know that there is none like Me in all of the land," He was teaching that He exists, controls everything, and is all-powerful. The fact that He exists was mentioned in the Plague of Frogs. There Hashem said, "So that you should know that there is none like Hashem," in other words, there is no other existence amongst the elements of creation like His existence. The fact that He is the Controller of the World was stated by the Plague of Wild Beasts, "So that you will know that I am Hashem throughout the land," in other words, Hashem controls the world like a king in his land. The fact that He is all powerful is mentioned in relation to the Plague of Hail, "So that you will know that there is none like Me throughout the land." In other words, Hashem was saying that there is no one as powerful as He. Moshe mentioned this to Pharaoh because Pharaoh denied each of these three things; he denied Hashem's existence, His Providence, and the fact that He is all powerful.

### The Yetzer Hara's War Against Man

I believe that there is an additional way to explain the above mentioned questions: Man generally believes that the world runs according to nature and that there is no way to control nature, nor to combat the natural disasters and tragedies that occur within nature – because people do not contemplate Who is standing behind the camouflage of nature. Therefore anything which belongs to the realm of the supernatural is not considered, because they do not believe that nature can be altered in any way. This was the perspective of Pharaoh, who represents the *yetzer hara*, as the *sifrei Mussar*



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teach us. Pharaoh asked, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice?" This is because Pharaoh believed that everything runs according to the laws of nature alone. However, the Exodus, whose purpose was to uplift the Jewish Nation, showed Pharaoh and them that Hashem is hiding behind nature, as it were. Everything is truly in His Hands. This is why He displayed His supernatural Providence. Because only by witnessing supernatural Providence would it prove to them that there was a Creator and Controller of the world.

### All the Miracles of Egypt Were to Teach Man the Way to Serve Hashem

Now we can explain a different aspect to the mitzvah of remembering the Exodus from Egypt and all of the miracles and wonders that Hashem performed in Egypt with a Mighty Hand. They were for the sake of teaching Pharaoh and the Jews, about Hashem's supernatural form of Providence. The Plagues taught us that Hashem also punishes and rewards in a way that is above and beyond nature, because everything is in His Hand. But it all depends upon man's deeds. If he puts in supernatural effort to fulfill Hashem's Torah, then he will be subject to the same Providence. Indeed, I found that it states this in the *Midrash Socher Tov (Parashat Bo)* on the *pasuk*, "And they will know that I am Hashem." The midrash expounds that this is as the *pasuk* states (*Yirmiyah 32:19*), "Great in counsel and mighty in deed, Your eyes watch all the ways of man to give each man according to his ways and the results of his actions." We see explicitly stated in the Midrash that the purpose of all the miracles and plagues which struck Pharaoh and the Egyptians were to bring the Jewish Nation to realize "that I am Hashem throughout the land, **who will repay each man for his deeds.**" Everything depends upon the way we act. The Ramban therefore explains that this is why in the Plague of Wild Beasts, Hashem showed the Jewish Nation how He was distinguishing them from the Egyptians, in that they were not affected by the Plague. Savage beasts emerged from the forest, but they avoided the land of Goshen, where the Jews lived. They saw with their very own eyes how Hashem interacts with them in a supernatural way. This applied to each and every Plague, as the *midrashim* explain; the Jews saw how Hashem interacted with them in a way that was supernatural. This is how the Alshich explains the *pasuk*, "And they will know that I am Hashem." He explains that the Plagues were to teach the Jews that Hashem is the Judge as well as the One who exhibits mercy. They should not think that punishment is not imminent simply because they are presently enjoying a life of comfort and ease. They should also not react angrily when they are beset with misfortune despite the fact that they are acting righteously. Because in the case of the righteous, the retribution that Hashem is meting out is truly mercy, and only to benefit him. Both attributes of mercy and strict judgment are truly one. This is what the *pasuk* intends when it says, "And they will know that I am Hashem." This is the primary lesson learned – that everything depends upon Hashem and all every form of Providence in this world is from Him. Hashem eradicates the gentiles to instill us with this faith in Him.

We therefore see why there are so many mitzvot that recall the Exodus from Egypt. This is in order to connect the fulfillment of Torah and mitzvot to the Exodus. From *Yetziat Mitzrayim* we saw that it is not nature which controls the world; rather, it is Hashem alone who controls nature and can change nature



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to subject man to a Providence that is miraculous. But it is all dependent on man; if he puts in effort and self-sacrifice to fulfill the Torah and mitzvot, Hashem will act with him in the same manner.

### Enlightening Words of the Arizal for Our Times

Nevertheless it is still the way of the *yetzer hara* to weaken man's resolve by telling him that he is worthless compared to the giants of the previous generations. How can he learn from them that Hashem will similarly interact with him on a level that defies nature? Just because they deserved it doesn't mean that he will! Therefore we will mention the illuminating words that the Arizal said to Rav Chaim Vital, which are so therapeutic for our weak generation [this appears in the Arizal's *Shaar Hagilgulim*]. Rav Chaim Vital once asked the Arizal how it could be that the Arizal had told him that his soul was a very lofty one; for the smallest Jew of the previous generation was righteous and pious, and he doesn't even reach up to his heel! The Arizal answered him that the greatness of one's soul is not dependent upon man's deeds; rather, it depends on the particular generation in which he lives. For a seemingly minor mitzvah performed in this generation is equal to several great mitzvot performed in earlier generations. For in present generations the power of impurity is very strong, without limit, which was not the case in earlier generations. The Arizal said that had Rav Vital lived in the earlier generations, his deeds would have been loftier than some of the earlier tzaddikim. Therefore Rav Chaim Vital should not be distressed at all, said the Arizal, because it is beyond a doubt that his soul is loftier than even a number of *tzaddikim* from the times of the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim*.

We see then that the good deeds performed in our time are worth ten times as much to Hashem as the deeds of the earlier generations. Everything is measured according to the trials of that particular generation. Therefore it is not the least bit surprising that even though an individual's deeds cannot compare in the slightest those of the earlier tzaddikim, he may nevertheless be viewed by Hashem as even greater than them.

### Words of Mussar

We have learned a new, amazing insight into the mitzvah of remembering the Exodus from Egypt. This mitzvah teaches us that there is no other power in the world apart from Hashem. He is Almighty, and it is not nature which is the determining factor in this world; rather, everything is determined by Hashem, who hides, as it were, behind the mask of nature. But everything depends upon man's Divine service. If a person serves Hashem with self-sacrifice and exerts effort in Divine service to fulfill the Torah and mitzvot, Hashem responds accordingly, interacting with him as well in a way that defies nature. Even in our generation we will see miracles, wonders, salvation, and comfort. But if a person only studies Torah, prays, or does mitzvot when it is convenient for him, but when it is difficult he immediately excuses himself saying that it is too hard, then Hashem deals with him in a similar manner, and he is subjected to the laws of nature. Therefore, even those who are weak should gird their strength, as the Arizal taught us, that in our generation there is inestimable worth to each and every ounce of effort that man invests in his Divine service. As our Sages teach us, "According to the merit is the reward." Through this, man



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will merit having salvations, miracles, and wonders performed for him. It should be His Will that we all strengthen ourselves to perform His Will with pure dedication. We will then merit seeing the fulfillment of the *pasuk* (Micha 7:15), "Like the days of your leaving Egypt, I will show you wonders" - speedily in our days, *amen ve'amen*.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Rav Mordechai Malka