



Parashat Vaera



English version

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## PISTOL ON THE WALL

The best producers, artists and authors know how to give the illusion that something inanimate is actually alive. So, too, G-d created the world with the illusion that it is independent of Him. This is what is meant, in the words of the Talmud, that G-d is the best Producer ever. אין צייר means, אין צור כאלוקינו (Berachot 10a).

There is a principle in writing stories and plays that every element mentioned or used must be an integral part of the plot. "If, in Act I, you have a pistol hanging on the wall, then it must fire by the last act" (Anton Chekhov). No element should be mentioned or appear to make "false promises" by never coming into play. Why do producers keep this rule religiously? Because in the real Movie called Life, where G-d is the Producer, everything has a time and place. אל תהי בז לכל אדם ואל תהי מפליג לכל דבר שאין לו שעה ואין לו דבר (Avot 4:3). Nothing is superfluous.

There is something in the Exodus story that seems superfluous. Moshe's Staff. What was so important about this staff that Moshe's becoming a leader started with it, and it is mentioned over and over throughout his life's story? (Amalek, Korah, hitting the rock) In what way was it so integral?

The Pirkei D'R Eliezer (40) tells us that this was not just another staff. This staff was created at twilight before Shabbat, on the sixth day of Creation, as one of the ten things that were created for the sake of Jewish People (Avot 5,6). It was given to Adam, who handed it over to Hanoah, and was subsequently handed down to Noach, to Shem, to Avraham, to Yitzhak, to Yaakov, to Yosef. When Yosef died, his property was confiscated and taken to Pharaoh's house. Yitro, who was then one of Pharaoh's sorcerers, saw the staff, the letters on it, and wanted to possess it. He took it with him and planted it in his garden. No one was able to get close to it. And when Moshe came to Yitro's house, he saw the letters that were on it; he felt a desire to have it, and was able to take it. Yitro saw this and realized that Moshe would become the redeemer of the Jews from Egypt, so he gave his daughter, Tziporah, to him as a wife.

This staff was made out of sapphire. What was written on the staff? דצ"ך עד"ש באה"ב which is the acronym of the ten plagues (Midrash Rabbah, Yalkut Shimoni). It had G-d's Holy Name of YHVH on it (Y.B. Uziel Beshalach 14, 21). What was the point of these inscriptions? And why, with them, was Moshe to use it as a "prop" to bring about the redemption?



In the beginning of the Parasha, G-d told Moshe that, in contrast to how He revealed Himself to the Forefathers, He reveals Himself with His Name, YHVH, to Moshe at the Exodus. In the Exodus, the great revelation was not only that G-d is in control of Creation, but that the whole of Creation is nothing without G-d! YHVH means that G-d is מהוה, that He makes things happen and exist. And nothing exists without Him. This is a basic, fundamental principle in Emunah. And the Exodus was the ultimate Emunah Academy.

Why did G-d bring ten plagues? Why did G-d not wipe out the Egyptians with one strong earthquake? The answer is because G-d wanted to show, once and for all, that there is no other power in Creation other than Him. That even Nature, all of Nature, is a Miracle. We know that each plague took a week, and then, there was a break for 3 weeks. The ten plagues took about ten months. Why didn't G-d just bring plague after plague? Why did He give three weeks' time to allow Pharaoh to have a breather?

The answer is because G-d wanted *the Jews* to learn, from the precision and detail of each plague, that He is the Producer. For example. If an Egyptian wanted a bottle of Mei Eden water from a Jew during the Plague of Blood, the Jew could charge \$1000. If the Egyptian did not want to pay and tried to put a straw into the Jew's cup, the Jew continued to drink water, while the water in the Egyptian's straw turned into blood. These are fundamentals in Emunah: whatever you got in life, and whatever you did not get in life, G-d is the Producer. Down to the last drop. (See שיעורי נס ושבע - דעת)

Moshe's Staff was called a Matteh, not a Makel. Why? Because the Matteh was there to tilt, להטות, to steer the heart of the People to G-

d.(Sfat Emet) That was the Purpose of the Miracles and the staff was to make this point clear. It is a staff that can become a snake, and a snake that can be a staff, because it is all G-d shining differently through the prism. Of course, we all have a Pharaoh inside us, the Yetzer Harah, that tells us not to be impressed. (5, 2) מי יקוק אשר אשמע בקולו? But it is up to us to realize that when something happens to us, G-d has a reason for making it happen. To us. Now. And here. And if something that we wanted to happen did not happen, if we felt we deserved something and did not get it, it is because G-d knows that it is not good for us. Because G-d is the Ultimate Producer. The staff was the baton passed on from person to person to bring the responsibility of this revelation to the person who would reveal it to Humanity. And when Mashiach will come, he will come with this staff. (Y Shimoni Hukat תשנ"ט)

Why do some people have such a hard time believing this? Because they are missing Lesson Two of the Exodus. בני בכורי ישראל. Yisrael is my firstborn son. At this point in time, G-d signed the deal in which Esav sold his firstborn rights to Yaakov (See Rashi Shemot 4; 22). And this is the meaning of דצך Your joy, עדש דיצה means happiness. (גילה רינה דיצה והדוה) - באחב. (אה חב). (Mishnat Chasidim)Your joy in buying the firstborn rights, Milah and Korbanot, freed you from Egypt. ואראך מתבוססת בדמייך.

What is the big idea about being Firstborn? Because sometimes, the other kids in the family feel as if everything is a hand-me-down life. As if all my parents' life decisions were for the firstborn; and then, we all had to follow suit, as if I am just an additional child, and whatever I got or did not is by default. But no.



Every Jew is a Firstborn, and everything in your life was designed specifically for you. G-d, the Producer, has a way of writing the Grand Script in such a way that each person has his own script, one that fits perfectly into the Grand one. The two beliefs, you being G-d's Firstborn and G-d making everything in your life exist, are interdependent beliefs. YOU CAN'T HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER!

This is the reason why spiritual motivation is down by so many people. Because of the belief

## LESSON FROM A FROG

*Anyone who gets angry is considered as one who practices idolatry.* (Shabbat 105b) Why is it like that? The last time I got angry, I did not feel that I do not believe in G-d. Such a thought did not even cross my mind. As a matter of fact, when people get angry, they do not forget that they do not like getting angry. They do not "decide" to get angry. There is just a thought that comes to mind that is an angry thought. And then they get angry. What is the core belief of all angry thoughts? And why is it like idolatry?

The Steipler would explain something interesting about anger. He pointed to "the frog" (ותעל הצפרדע) mentioned by Rashi in the parasha. *There was one frog: they were hitting it, and it would spit out many streams of frogs.* That was it. Just one frog. G-d brought just one frog to the Egyptians in this plague. That one frog got hit by the first Egyptian, who was not happy to see such a thing, and then it spit out more frogs. The Egyptians continued to hit it, and endless streams of frogs jumped out. Had they stopped hitting it and just left it alone, then there would not have been a plague of such enormous proportions; there would not have been so many frogs. If so, why didn't

that "I am just a second child, and my life is in default to the lives of other people". But this is a HUGE mistake. G-d does not play favorites. You are G-d's only child. What you have was given to you by G-d. And G-d is waiting for you to build and activate a relationship with Him on a personal level, just the way He produced your life, on a personal level. And when you are joyous about being G-d's Firstborn, G-d will take you out of your own personal Mitztrayim as well. (1328)

they stop hitting it? – Because they saw that the frog did not listen. It did not behave the way they wanted it to, so they hit it repeatedly to teach it a lesson. Even if the whole of Egypt would be filled with frogs. They believed that *this frog* is going to learn who is boss. (Angry people never think rationally nor do they notice the outcome of their actions when they are angry). But on an even deeper level, they believed that if there was no such frog yesterday in town, it should not be here now, either.

This is what anger is all about. *I am going to teach reality a lesson.* Not only does it not work, *but reality teaches us a lesson.* And the reason is because reality is G-d. Allow me to go beneath the surface of all thoughts.

80 percent of thoughts are past and future thoughts, thoughts that are not actionable. Thoughts that bring us stress. Man is stressed when he wants a choice that he cannot have. G-d gives us free choice only in the present. We have no choice either in the past or in the future. We cannot change anything that is not in front of us. What is in front of us is reality. What was just a minute ago was history, a memory. The future is just our imagination or



dream, until whatever happens -happens. But man has a tendency to think thoughts that are not actionable.

Only G-d is in the past, present and future at the same time, not man. When G-d presented himself to Moshe, He told him to say to the Jewish People א-היה אשר א-היה שלחני אליכם *“I will be what I will be” sent me to redeem you.* In the midrash (*Shemot Rabba 3;6*) we find that G-d actually said ואני הוא עכשיו , ואני הוא לעתיד לבא . *I am the One who was, I am now , and I am in the future.* This is the way that G-d introduced Himself. This does not mean only that G-d is immortal, for immortality is only a display of G-d’s Eternalness, not His Name. The Name of G-d, יהוה contains within it the concept of היה הוה ויהיה . Was, Is, and Will always Be. That is His Name. Why is this His Name? Because G-d is reality, whenever it is. Everything that we hear, see, smell, taste, and feel is G-d. This is why the best question to ask people who come for advice is many times “What are your options ? ” because that question wakes us up out of the past and future and brings us face to face with reality. Once we are in reality, we have choice. Because that is where G-d gives us choice.

Now, someone who does not accept reality is not accepting G-d. Such a person believes that *he should have choice.* He is attached to the thought of “*should*”. This means that he believes that he can have choice over G-d’s choice. And that is a lethal thought.

Imagine a fellow decides, and I have witnessed this, that there should not be a stop sign or red light at this street corner. And he goes against reality. The results? BOOM! Imagine that a parent decides that his child or spouse should be something or someone else? DOUBLE BOOM! When you go against reality, reality will teach you a lesson.

As long as we think that *the way things should be...*, we are in denial. In denial of the Now. We are either under the impression that the past should be the present, or that our previous thoughts of the future will create the Now. But the past, present and future, are all G-d. We feel G-d and notice Him the most in the place where we do not have free choice. And when we do not accept that this is the choice of G-d, we think that our choice can override G-d’s choice. And that is something like serving idols. (916 WORDS)

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