

PARSHAS VA'ERA

By HARAV YAAKOV FEITMAN

KEHILLAS BAIS YEHUDAH TZVI

Interest in Sorcery and witchcraft has made something of a return with the various Harry Potter sagas. However, it has remained in the realm of fiction and imagination. So what happened to all the *chartumim* and *lateihem* (7:22) of ancient Egypt? Was it all fantasy, like Harry and his wand? Surely, what the Torah tells us eternal and true, so where did all the sorcerers go? Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l answers with a fundamental rule which explains much about Jewish history. Shlomo Hamelech tells us in Koheles that “*zeh l'umas zeh asa Haelokim* – Hashem made one thing correspond to another” in the world. In order to maintain man's free will, Hashem implanted into the world a careful balance. When there was a Moshe Rabbeinu, there was a Bilaam. When there were famed Greek philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, there were the great *Chachomim* to counteract them. I once heard from a Gadol that another example of this was that when the reform had their eloquent speakers such Abba Hillel Silver, Balfour Brickner etc., we had noted Magidim and golden-tongued orators. However, now that our enemies are no longer spell-binding demagogues, we, too, rarely have the great speakers of old. Rav Yaakov zt"l concludes that when we had *nevuah*, they had sorcery. Now that we no longer have *nevuah*, sorcery, too has disappeared.

Rav Kamenetzky went on to quote that the Rambam (Peirush Hamishnayos Avodah Zarah, chapter 4) states that there are no longer any creatures such as sheidim. The problem is that the Gemara in numerous places speaks of them as if they were quite real. To answer this apparent contradiction, Rav Yaakov concludes that if there are no longer regular open miracles, the sheidim, too, must go out of business. Rav Kamenetzky recalled that when he visited Kelem, he saw a note written by Rav Elchanan Wasserman. It concerned the famous mission from the Chofetz Chaim which he joined to release a young woman from the *dybuk* (spirit) which was tormenting her. Reb Elchanan quoted the Chofetz Chaim that this would probably be the last such “exorcism,” since as the *ruchnius* – spirituality – in the world has diminished, so would the powers of the nether world and there would therefore no longer be any dybuku.

Perhaps we may find another important lesson here as well. We often hear somewhat cynical expressions such as “no good deed goes unpunished.” This is not a Torah concept and should be repudiated. However, what *is* true is that if we are doing something good, important or spiritually crucial, the Satan often stands in our way. What *is* true is that evil becomes nervous, self-protective and even paranoid when it sees virtue triumphing. And so, we should not be dismayed if our efforts to improve ourselves or the world around us are fraught with barriers, obstacles and critics. It is often the last throes of evil which appear to be strong but they are actually powerless in the face of that which is right. All of the Parshios of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* record ups and downs, triumphs and challenges when attempting to leave Mitzrayim to get into Eretz Yisrael and shed bondage for the freedom of learning Torah. May we always have the courage and wisdom to complete that which we begin until the final ending comes soon iyH with Moshiach Tzidkeinu Bimeheirah B'yameinu.

A GUTTEN SHABBOS AND A GUTTEN CHODESH

HALACHA OF THE WEEK 5779

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This week we will explore the subject of “Segulos” – legitimate ways of obtaining certain goals according to the Torah

Question: Is shiluach hakein –sending away the mother bird etc. a segulah for anything in particular?

Answer: Rav Chaim Kanievsky shlita holds that it helps for a proper shidduch (Segulos Rabboseinu, page 220).

Question: Is there an acceptable segulah for an easy birth, especially for a woman who has had difficulty in the past?

Answer: Rav Ovadya Yosef zt”l (Chazon Ovadya Succos, 449-450) writes that many women have been helped by eating the pudding or jelly of an esrog which was used for the Mitzvah on Succos. In fact, he reports that this also helped women to become pregnant.

Question: What is the best segulah for parnasah, for being able to support one’s family?

Answer: The Tasfbetz (256) records that reciting the Parshah of the Mann (from Parshas Beshalach) is the best segulah for Parnasah.

Question: I have heard that the afikomen can be a segulah for certain things. Is this true?

Answer: The Klausenberger Rebbe zt”l held that “wearing” a piece of the afikomen can be a segulah for a refuah sheleimah (Lapid Aish 2:638).

Question: If someone is often depressed, what segulah is tried and true?

Answer: Rav Ovadya Yosef zt”l (Shabbos 2:447) writes that partaking of Melaveh Malka regularly can cure depression. As always, see below, one must do all the proper hishtadlus in medical matters first.

Question: Is there any special tefilah to be said for having healthy children?

Answer: Rav Moshe Sternbuch shlita (Teshuvos Vehanhagos 4:203 suggests that the woman should say Tefilas Chanah (Shmuel I 2:1-10) every Friday night before Hadlakas Neiros.

Question: Is there a tefilah which is a segulah for general hatzlacha for someone who is just not “having any good luck with anything”?

Answer: Rav Moshe Levi zt”l suggests saying Kapital 65 in Tehillim five times a day.

Question: Is there a segulah for Yiras Shomayim for someone who is having trouble with this midah?

Answer: Rav Chaim Kanievsky shlita suggests learning Seder Taharos (Derech Sichah 1:532)

One should remember that the best segulos are learning Torah and performing Hashem’s mitzvos. Furthermore, one should not ever be obsessed with segulos, only using them in addition to self-improvement and working on one’s midos (see Shevet Halevi 2:149; Lehoros Nossan 1:47-48; Be’er Moshe 2:96). Furthermore, the Rashboh writes in a teshuvah (1:413) that there are indeed efficacious segulos but one should primarily just daven to Hashem for mercy. Saying tehillim with tears is the greatest segulah for many things and just davening daily with kavanah helps for many problems. May everyone have all of their prayers fulfilled.

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