

## SCHEDULE

שבת קדש

Mincha Erev Shabbos	<b>4:54 PM</b>
-Friday Night Learning	after 7:30 PM
Daf Yomi— By R' Teichman	7:30 AM
Shacharis— Followed by Kiddush	8:30 AM
-Sof Zman K'S-	9:50 גר"א < 9:14 ג"א
B'NOS - Hosted @ Ohel Moshe	2:15 - 3:15
Mincha - Followed by Shalosh Seudos	4:50 PM
Maariv -	6:04 PM
Avos U'Banim -	7:00 PM

### Weekday Minyanim & Shiurim

#### Sunday

Daf Yomi— By R' Teichman	7:30 AM
Shacharis	8:30 AM
~ No Halacha Shiur This Week	
Mincha / Maariv	5:05 PM

#### Monday - Friday

Daf Yomi— By R' Teichman	5:45 AM
Shacharis:	
Monday, Thursday	6:40 AM
Tues, Fri.	6:45 AM
Wednesday ראש חודש	6:30 AM
Mincha (Mon—Thur)	1:45 PM
<del>Mincha/Maariv</del> —	<u>- See You Next Year!</u>
Maariv (Mon-Thur)	9:45 PM

Rabbi Teichman's Thursday Night Shiur After Maariv, and folding tables after that!!

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### Shul Contacts

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Rabbi Zvi Teichman

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Issue#219

## Escaping Reality

At the end of the first assault against Pharaoh and the Egyptian nation, with the plague of Blood, despite the distress, stench and discomfort foisted on his people, Pharaoh is able to simply shrug it all off.

וַיִּפֶן פַּרְעֹה וַיָּבֹא אֶל בֵּיתוֹ וְלֹא שָׁח לְבוֹ גַם לִזְרוֹת (שְׁמוֹת ז' כג) *Pharaoh turned away and came to his palace. He did not take this to heart either.*

Was Pharaoh so callous to his people to so arrogantly ignore their pain?

Why does the verse stress his going to the palace before pointing out his apathy?

Lastly, what is the verse referring to when it adds that he paid no heed: לֹא שָׁח לְבוֹ, to this *either*? What "else" was he being indifferent to that the plague of blood was a party to?

The *Sifsei Cohen*, Rabbi Mordechai HaCohen of Tzefas a 16th century Kabbalist and disciple of Rabbi Yosef Karo quotes a most fascinating *Zohar*.

During the episode when Sarah under the guise of being Avraham's sister and possessing such remarkable beauty was taken by Pharaoh, the Torah records within one verse, Pharaoh's name, three times.

וַיִּרְאוּ אֹתָהּ שְׂרֵי פַרְעֹה וַיְהַלְלוּ אֹתָהּ אֵל פַּרְעֹה וַתִּקַּח הָאִשָּׁה בֵּית פַּרְעֹה (בראשית יב טו) *When the officials saw her, they lauded her for Pharaoh, and the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house.*

Why the repetition when it is evident who the subject in the sentence is?

The *Zohar* reveals that the verse is referring to three different Pharaohs.

Evidently the first Pharaoh was so smitten with Sarah's magnificence and subsequently crestfallen when God intervened by afflicting him with a debilitating disease that prevented him from cohabiting with her, he couldn't be placated.

He first commissioned an artist to paint a mural of Sarah in his bedroom depicting a likeness he could gaze at, allowing him to dream about her. When that didn't calm him down he had a actual lifelike image of her formed on a board that he took to bed with him.

Each successive King; the Pharaoh in the days of Yosef and the one that was confronted by Moshe, thus a total of three, would gawk with pleasure at the portrayal while accompanied by minstrels and entertainers that would enhance their enjoyment.

It was to confront this perversion that Pharaoh was struck specifically, as Moshe had warned him, וּבַחֹדֶר מִשְׁכַּבְךָ וְעַל גִּמְטוֹתָי (שְׁמוֹת ז' כד), *and in your bedroom and on your bed.*

In no other plague was this infiltration of his bed accentuated.

The *Sifsei Cohen* goes on to explain that it was to this "diversion" that is referenced earlier in the plague of Blood that Pharaoh "escaped" to.

He fled from the stress of the situation by indulging in a pleasurable activity that would numb the anxiety.

Pharaoh thus retreated to his "man cave"; the palace, distracting himself from the tension outside, by triggering the release of endorphins through a pleasurable activity, that would artificially dull the pain, enabling him to "ignore" the turmoil in his kingdom.

Perhaps this is why the Torah records his first entering the palace before it reports that he shunned the effects of the plague.

This might also explain the "גַּם לִזְרוֹת", since this was his tool used to deal with angst that he employed regularly whenever he felt uneasy with troubling circumstances. Here too, he implements this strategy in fending off the seriousness of the situation at hand, casually brushing away Moshe's exhortations.

The *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu (chapter 7)* ascribes the punishment of the plague of frogs as retribution for the Egyptians having dispatched their Jewish slaves to fetch all sorts of reptiles and insects, "וּבְשֹׂדֶק עַמָּהֶם כַּמוֹ שְׂאֵנוּ רֹצְצִים", *so that we may entertain ourselves with them as we wish!*"

Empty entertainment is a means we employ to escape from reality. A good game of basketball is a great stress reducer. But it never resolves our problems. A movie, a show, a book, surfing the internet mindlessly or just simply scouring worthless magazines are all activities we engage in to escape. Eating and intimacy when not placed in a purposeful context also serve as synthetic islands of "happiness". We utilize these avenues too often to evade reality.

The persistently annoying croaking of the numerous frogs coupled with the overwhelming stench their dead carcasses left, didn't allow the Egyptians the opportunity to escape "reality" in the games they played and the entertainment they would normally ensconce themselves in..

Pharaoh who could usually flee to the comfort and distraction of his "fortress of solitude", run to his private bedroom, pull himself comfortably under the covers of his bed and all the selfish indulgences that it symbolized, wouldn't be able to evade reality this time.

The *Vilna Gaon* (ביאור על כמה אגדות) teaches that the frog is the only animal in the world that gives forth its voice incessantly day and night. It symbolizes the Torah scholar who dedicates himself to the sweet song of Torah day and night.

The enjoyment of a life filled with Torah in all its forms is the sole pursuit of pleasure that brings us to a more accurate reality. It counters the false enticement that physical gratification provides.

*Reb Avraham Broida of Tarnopol once found himself in an inn amongst a group of maskilim, heretics.*

*As he set himself on the side to pray the afternoon prayer of Mincha, they engaged in frivolous talk, raising their voices in boisterous conversation. Reb Avraham began to raise his voice louder with greater fervor. When he was done they asked him why he was screaming.*

*He responded, "the Torah retells how after each plague Moshe raised his hands in prayer and entreated God to stop the plague. Only after the plague of frogs does the Torah state that Moshe resorted to crying out loud as well, וַיִּצְעַק מֹשֶׁה אֶל, and Moshe cried out to God." "Evidently", Reb Avraham rejoined, "when frogs are croaking one must pray louder to be heard!"*

We live in a world that seeks to seduce us with illusory happiness. So often we pursue pleasurable activities as an escape from our troubles. We continue on an endless journey trying to discover the elusive elixir that will gratify us and remove the worries we are running away from. When that is the objective, we are in danger of becoming addicted to the drug called pleasure in all its forms with consequence of withering away in exhaustion.

We have a tradition that the Ten Plagues correspond to the Ten Commandments.

The second command is לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים *You shall not recognize the gods of others.*

The plague of frogs teaches us that there is only one power and one reality. When we assert there are pauses in our life where we submit to "other" realities, we are guilty of transgressing this command.

The temptations "croak" loudly around us seeking to entertain us and promise us joy.

We must raise our voices loudly intoning the exquisite song of Torah if we are to discover genuine and absolute pleasure in our sojourn through life in finding true reality.

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צְבִי טַיִיכְמָאן

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