

# SCHEDULE

## שבת קדש

Mincha Erev Shabbos	<b>5:02 PM</b>
Friday Night Learning	after 7:00 PM
Daf Yomi— By R' Teichman	7:30 AM
Shacharis—Followed by Kiddush	8:30 AM
-Sof Zman K"ס- גר"א 9:48 < 9:12א"ג	
B'NOS - Hosted @ Ohel Moshe	2:15 - 3:15
Mincha - Followed by Shalosh Seudos	5:00 PM
Maariv -	6:12 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	5:15 PM

### Monday - Friday

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

Rabbi Teichman's Thursday Night  
Shiur After Maariv

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Issue#219

## The Joker and The King

The final assault on Pharaoh begins with the introduction of the plague of locusts.

Of all the remarkable plagues inflicted, only this one is singled out with the emphasis that an event as such has never occurred before in all of human history nor will it ever be replicated.

Despite that sweeping statement, several centuries later the Prophet Yoel speaks of an unparalleled onslaught of swarming armies of locusts that would afflict the Jewish nation in the land of Israel as punishment for their sins. In similar language, he declares that its like has not been from eternity and never will be again.

The commentaries struggle to reconcile this apparent contradiction. Perhaps the plague in Egypt consisted of one specie while the one of Yoel several. Others suggest that in Egypt the various species of locust all came simultaneously, as opposed to those in the time of Yoel which arrived consecutively, not all at one time. Alternately it is suggested that Moshe referred to the locusts in his time and its uniqueness as it regards to the land of Egypt alone.

How ironic it is that such a significant claim be clouded in so much doubt. What significance is that fact that it is unequalled if it can't be verified anyway?

Another anomaly regarding the plague of locusts appears in the introduction to this scourge.

God informs Moshe that His goal in hardening Pharaoh's heart and resolve not to succumb, is to allow God to bring about the miraculous plagues, *במצרים (שמות י ב) וְלִמְנוּ תִסְפֹּר בְּאָזְנוֹךָ בְּכָל יוֹם אֶת אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלְלִיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם (שמות י ב) וְלִמְנוּ תִסְפֹּר בְּאָזְנוֹךָ בְּכָל יוֹם אֶת אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלְלִיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם* so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I made mockery of Egypt.

In no other plague does God stress the purpose of educating future generations. The accent here on the retelling of these events to grandchildren echoes a similar sentiment expressed elsewhere in Torah regarding the obligation of teaching Torah, not only to one's children but to grandchildren as well.

What is the "Torah" of this unique plague that deems it so vital to be especially transmitted to future generations?

It also seems from the verse that it isn't about the plague per se that makes it so special, but rather vis-a-vis the resultant mockery it made out of Pharaoh that must be related.

Rashi interpreting the word *התעללתי*, translates it to mean *שחקתי*, I laughed, I played.

Ramban directs us to a verse in Tehillim where this "attribute" of laughter is ascribed to God. There it portrays the futility of those who seek to thwart God's decrees. In response to their comical attempts (ד' *השם בשמים ישחק* (תהלים ב ד) *He who sits in heaven will laugh.*

Evidently "laughter" is indeed divine. What is this heavenly quality that we are to emulate?

The great fifteenth century philosopher Rabbi Yosef Albo in his seminal treatise, *Sefer Halkkarim*, reveals for us the profoundly divine nature of laughter:

*Laughter may also denote scorn... for laughter is often due to the feeling of contempt for that which deserves it, as when one observes a defect in the words or deeds of another, while being conscious of superiority in himself, as not likely to err in word or deed as his neighbor has done... In the same way, laughter and derision are ascribed to God... The reason is because He hears them saying "let us break their bands asunder", words a human being should not use... Sometimes a person laughs when he deceives another in a matter about which the latter should have taken caution and did not. Accordingly the cause of laughter in all cases is a feeling of superiority in the person laughing, when he sees another commit a folly or exhibit ignorance or foolishness. (Second part, chapter 16)*

Laughter is the result of "knowing" better.

Laughter is the product of that divine spark we all possess, our intellect, which when utilized properly empowers us to realize how laughable efforts independent of a notion of God are. Exercising that "superior" awareness is when we connect with the Divine and emulate Him.

When used properly it is indeed thrilling and enjoyable.

It's a double edged sword though. Laughter can be employed from a vantage point of a contrived sense of "knowing better". When we poke fun of old world values by alleging a more contemporary understanding of matters, we are in danger of descending to the pits of depravity.

That is not laughter but rather *לדגירות* derisive mockery strengthened by a false sense of being ever the wiser.

As the great Ramchal writes in his masterful *Mesillas Yeshorim*:

*For with one bit of levity and with a little laughter a person can cast from himself the great majority of the awakenings and impressions that a man's heart stimulates and effects within itself...* (מסילת ישורים פרק ה בבאור מפסדי הוהרות)

Pharaoh was the ultimate "Joker". He deflected all seriousness by playing games with Moshe.

In the midst of the plague of wild beasts, Pharaoh desperately summons Moshe and seemingly relents, authorizing Moshe to go bring his requested offerings. Moshe replies that the Jews will need to go for a three day journey. Pharaoh responds "I will send you... entreat for me!".

Moshe answers that he will indeed pray for the removal of the wild beasts, adding however, *אך רק יסוף, וְלִמְנוּ תִסְפֹּר בְּאָזְנוֹךָ בְּכָל יוֹם אֶת אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלְלִיתָ בְּמִצְרַיִם* (שם ח (ה' *... only let Pharaoh not continue to mock, by not sending out the people...*

Mock? Lying would have been the greater concern. Was Moshe worried about his ego being deflated

by Pharaoh's ridicule?

The Sifsei Cohen points out that Pharaoh was consistently a "joker", teasing Moshe by first stating, "I will send you", then later when refusing to release the people jokingly claim, "didn't I say "you", you Moshe, are indeed free to go, I never said anything about the people!"

He was *גהותל*, a buffoon, a person who manipulated and diverted the seriousness in each encounter by laughing the situation away. A joker lightens any load by creating a false sense of "awareness" that trivializes the gravity of any given moment.

The clown who thinks he can repel with his humor the most ominous state of affairs is about to be taught a lesson or two.

After the plague of the violent hail destroys the crops, miraculously the stalks of wheat and the spelt remain standing. *רש"י שם ט ז*

To all appearances God lacked the might to strike at their entire food source. Humored with this discovery he obtains a newly gained confidence in this "realization". Pharaoh the joker, once again takes back his word. After all he knows better.

Then suddenly, the rug is pulled out from under him. The next plague of locusts decimates whatever was left in the fields. Now you see it, now you don't!

The One who sits in heaven is "laughing" at the absurdity of Pharaoh's hilarious self delusion.

The locusts attack with a ferocity, yet despite their diminishing the remaining crops, are scooped up and used as food and a wonderful source of protein! Once again, Pharaoh probably cynically "thanked" Moshe for the delicatessen as he decided once again to refuse to give in, empowered by his skewed perception.

Outwitting the laughable Pharaoh, God sweeps away the marauding locust with a powerful western wind taking with it every last one, including those salted and stored away!

Surprise, surprise, the comedy continues! *רש"י שם י י*

The verse that describes God's intention to mock Pharaoh and the need to teach it to future generations tells us precisely why, *וְדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' (שם י ב), that you may know that I am Hashem!*

When we gauge and draw our understanding of whatever we face solely from the source of all knowledge we can truly laugh at the folly of man, confident that our awareness is rooted in true reality.

This is our most treasured weapon to healthily endure the many tests we face. What we see is not necessarily what we get. We must be able to laugh at ourselves as well, if we are to plug in to a more acute consciousness that enables us to overcome the most difficult of situations with a smile on our face. The lack of this ability to give up one's notion of reality was the downfall of Pharaoh. The strength to submit to an awareness of *אני ה' I am Hashem*, in every facet of life, is the key to the survival of our people.

Despite the lack of clarity as to exactly in which way this plague will never be repeated, we submit that it is unique. It may never be able to answer definitively when faced with swarming locusts that seem to mimic the plague of long ago, as to how to reconcile the phenomena with the promise recorded in the Torah, but we "know" it to be true!

It is this plague that equipped us with a "superior intellect" that gives us permission to laugh.

The mysterious 17th century Kabbalist, Reb Shimshon Ostropol taught that when God told Moshe, *"בא"ן* *או פרעה (שם י א), Come to Pharaoh*, He was mystically alluding to the transposing of the letters *ב* and *א* with the *פ* and *ע* in *פְרַעֲיָה* name, transforming it from *פְרַעֲיָה*!

The hebrew letters *באפ* being all labial sounds, and *אאקע*, all guttural sounds, are exchangeable with one another for the purpose of mystical illumination.

Pharaoh spiritually transmogrified into a locust! How strange. What does this teach?

King Shlomo reveals in Proverbs, that *מלך אין לארבה (משלי ל ד), The locusts have no king.*

There is no hierarchical system by locust as there are in other species of animal life. They operate as one entity driven by an invisible force, possessing an inner awareness.

Pharaoh thought he was god, he deluded himself into a crazed sense of power as the almighty King of Egypt. He was derisively revealed by God that it was all an illusion. The same power that unites the locust, gives the fantasy of power to the king. In essence, Pharaoh is as nondescript as an isolated locust!

Ultimately *אני ה' Hashem!* *He who sits in heaven will laugh!*

If we can master this "attribute" of laughter, raising our consciousness to align with that of God's, we will be able to deal with adversity and never lose our smile, never be discouraged, and serve God with joy.

If one adds  $3=בא$  to  $355=פרעה$  we arrive at  $358=משה$ ! Speedily in our days!

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