



Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHAH

ISSUE 14

9th January 2016

VA'EIRA

28th Teveth 5775

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 6, verse 2 - 13

- ✚ Hashem explains to Moshe that he is the God of his forefathers and is tormented by B'nai Yisrael's cries of despair.
- ✚ Hashem sends Moshe out to speak to the Jewish people, stating that they are now Hashem's chosen nation and he will personally with an outstretched arm put an end to their oppression and slavery in Mitzraim and, lead them to the land of Israel.
- ✚ Moshe argued that the people were suffering so much, they'll refuse to listen or believe him, so Hashem appointed Aron to go with him.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 6, verses 14 - 28

- ✚ The heads of B'nai Yisrael houses, starting with Reuven are listed here.
- ✚ These are the elders who Moshe and Aron relayed Hashem's message to before embarking to relay Hashem's intentions to Pharaoh.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 6, verse 29 - Chapter 7, verse 7

- ✚ Hashem tells Moshe that when Aron and Moshe stand before Pharaoh demanding the release of B'nai Yisrael, Hashem will harden his heart in order to bring forth a number of Plagues upon the whole land of Mitzraim.
- ✚ Moshe is eighty years old and Aron is eighty three when they both enter Pharaoh's palace to speak with him on B'nai Yisrael's behalf.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 7, verse 8 - Chapter 8, verse 6

- ✚ Pharaoh demands proof of Hashem's power, so Aron threw his staff to the ground and it became a serpent. Pharaoh then summons his magicians to repeat the trick but when they did Aron's staff swallowed them all up. Pharaoh dismisses this as proof of Hashem's power and refuses to admit defeat.
- ✚ Moshe warns Pharaoh if he does not comply, Hashem will turn all the water in Mitzraim into blood.
- ✚ After Pharaoh's refusal, Aron lifted up his staff over all the rivers and streams and immediately all the water did indeed turn to blood, killing all the fish making it impossible to drink for seven whole days.
- ✚ Aron points his staff once more over the rivers and lakes. This time frogs emerged from the water covering the whole land. Pharaoh agrees to let the Jewish nation go if the plague stops.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 8, verses 7 - 18

- ✚ Moshe prays and all the frogs die. However pharaoh stands his ground and refuses once again to let them leave.
- ✚ Next Aron strikes the sand with his staff, all the sand across the land suddenly transformed into lice. Goshen was the exception because Hashem's people dwelt there.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 8, verse 19 – Chapter 9, verse 16

- ✚ Three more plagues strike Mitzraim (Wild beast attacks, Pestilence, and Boils; yet after each one Pharaoh stood his ground and kept saying no.
- ✚ Although Pharaoh's magicians admitted it was the finger of Hashem that was causing the plagues, Pharaoh Remains obstinate and still denies to let the Jewish nation go.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 9, verses 17 - 35

- ✚ A hail storm combined with fire came next destroying everything in its path.
- ✚ This time Pharaoh himself admits defeat and tells Moshe and Aron that he has indeed wronged B'nai Yisrael.
- ✚ He implores for Moshe and Aron to pray on his behalf to end the plagues.
- ✚ Moshe complied but as soon as the hail stopped falling, Just as Hashem predicted, Pharaoh hardened his heart once again and refused B'nai Yisrael to leave.

Haftorah – YEHEZKEL (EZEKIEL) Chapter 28 verse 25 to Chapter 29 verse 21

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ Yehezkel begins with a description of what will occur during the ingathering of the exiles.
- ✚ The prophet then proceeds to convey a prophecy regarding Pharaoh and Egypt, foretelling the demise once again of the Egyptian empire.
- ✚ The Haftorah ends with another prophecy wherein Hashem informs Yehezkel that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, will be the one to conquer Egypt and take its spoils. This as a reward for his effort in defeating the wicked nation of Tyre.

GEMATRIA LINKED TO THE SEDRA

- ✚ How Many plagues are mentioned in this week's sedra? The gematria of the first two letters of the Parsha of vav and aleph comes to seven. Indicating seven plagues are discussed.
- ✚ The Magicians tell Pharaoh that the plague of boils is the finger of God "Etzbah Elokim" The Gematria for אלהים Elokim is 86. This implies that the magicians are informing Pharaoh that the Hebrew god is judging us because the gematria for the words הוּא דִין הוּא HuDayan (he is a judge) also adds up to 86.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

In last week's sedra of Shemot, Bnai Yisrael believes that they have met their hero Moshe who tells them that Hashem has heard their cries and will put an end to their slavery and will take them out of Mitzraim. However, things did not go according to plan. Instead of Pharaoh listening to Moshe, and freeing the people, Pharaoh increases their workload, making the people doubt Moshe and his prophecies and causing Moshe to ask Hashem "what went wrong?"

Parsha Va'eira begins with Hashem reassuring Moshe that nothing went wrong and that he should go back and speak to his people, telling them Hashem has remembered his covenant he made with Avraham and will take them out of Egypt. Relieved, Moshe rushes to tell Bnai Yisrael the good news but this time due to their shortness of spirit and from hard work they refuse to listen and reject him

Chazal comments that even though Bnai Yisrael were working harder than ever before, then surely they would still cling to any shred of hope Moshe was conveying, no matter what had transpired previously'. Yet, putting myself in their position it's easy to understand why they disbelieved him. Moshe had already gone to Pharaoh once, and all that did was instead of relieving the pressure, they ended up with even more work. Fool me once, shame on you, but fool me twice....

My explanation, for why the people didn't listen to Moshe, is that they didn't think Moshe understood them, and therefore, wasn't really a suitable candidate of becoming their leader. Moshe did not seem to come from the people or share in their burdens. They perceived that it was easy for Moshe to be all cheery and hopeful because he came from a privileged background, would he have been able to keep that same attitude from under the constant strain and burdens they were currently experiencing, day in/ day out. I think not!

I feel that Moshe thought that if he did what Hashem asked of him, then everything would suddenly be clear to everyone else too, even Pharaoh, and that freeing Bnai Yisrael would be easy. Though the Torah and commentaries understand that the people couldn't hear Moshe because of what they were experiencing, Moshe himself believed that somehow he was at fault and was the one responsible in not succeeding in helping the people understand or to comfort them. This is the character of what a genuine leader should be. Today's discussion was inspired by the word 'SHEMA'. Shema means both to hear and to listen. I believe that a good leader must have both of these qualities in abundance. Hearing is about taking in the words, while listening is about understanding them. A leader has to be available to the people and hear what the people are saying. But a good leader also has to listen to what they are saying and sometimes go beyond listening to the words, to listening to the tone of the words, the body language and to know what the person is actually saying, even when they say the opposite. I don't think Bnai Yisrael snubbed Moshe completely. I just think what they meant to convey was this. "We're sorry Moshe but you built our hopes up the last time and we can't take the risk of doing so again, only to hear you failed once more. It would destroy us completely. It's better for one's own sanity and survival if we live with no hope than we would with false hope."

Moshe was indeed the true leader of the Jewish People as he not only heard but listened to Bnai Yisrael's plight. Yes, the people did not accept him as leader because they did not see him as 'one of them' but that was a misconception. Moshe did feel their pain and anguish. In fact, there is a midrash that says Moshe even went as far as becoming and working as a slave to strengthen the bond and love he had for his beloved people. If Bnai Yisrael knew this, then maybe they would have accepted him as their leader and would have listened to him earlier. Who knows!

