

Exodus from Egypt:

The Hidden Agenda

(Based on Lectures by Rabbi David Fohrman)

Since this holiday seems to be filled with so many questions- a few more can't hurt.....right? I promise you it is worth your while...

Question 1)

If you were playing God and you were thinking of a name for this holiday, a holiday where you just freed a nation from slavery- what would you call it? Maybe "Independence Day"? Or how about "Freedom day"? Why is it called *Passover*? Because we were passed over from the tenth plague? Isn't this just a detail within the story? How can this be the focus of the day?

Question 2)

In the Tefillin boxes we find a few different sections of the Torah which discuss a few different ideas. One idea which stands out different is the law which commands one to redeem one's first born son and one's first born animals.

1) Exodus- 13: 12-13

יב וְהַעֲבַרְתָּ כָּל-פֶּטֶר-רִחֵם, לַה';
יג וְכָל-פֶּטֶר שֶׁגֵּר בְּהֵמָה, אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה
 לָךְ הַזָּכָרִים-- לַה'. **12** You shall set apart unto God all that comes from the
 opening of the womb; every firstling that is a male, which
 you hast, coming of a beast, shall be for God.

יד וְכָל-פֶּטֶר חֲמֹר תִּפְדֶּה בְשֵׂה,
טו וְאִם-לֹא תִפְדֶּה וְעִרְפָּתוֹ; וְכָל בְּכוֹר
 אָדָם בְּבִנְיָהוּ, תִּפְדֶּה. **13** And every firstling of donkey you shall redeem with a
 lamb; and if you wilt not redeem it, then you shall break its
 neck; and all the first-born of man among your sons shall
 you redeem.

The law is if you have a first born animal which is not fit for offering you may not bring it upon the alter and rather you must redeem it with money, and if you do not bring money, then the animal must be killed. What is this section doing in the Tefillin? The other two parshiot in the Tefillin are the "Shema" and "Veahavta", they discuss the concept of one God and love of God, these are basic principles of Judaism, but what connection does the first born have to do with this?

Question 3)

Why ten plagues? Why does God need so many? How about just load the Jewish people on magic carpets and take them away? Why not make all the Egyptians blind and let the Jews walk out? It is funny because we do find this- by the plague of Choshech (darkness), the Jews could have walked right out, but they

didn't, why didn't they? Is God trying to make up a better story line for Spielberg? What is the reason for all of the drama?

Question 4)

In addition to the ten plagues, we find a dialogue between Moshe and Pharaoh. Why do we need Pharaoh to agree? Why do we care what he thinks? It seems very important that Pharaoh says yes. Why does Hashem want this to be the case? Why? We have no idea. Pharaoh needs to give his free will consent. But we see by plague number six, God intervenes with Pharaoh and "hardens his heart". This seems like a big issue, how can God deprive Pharaoh of his free will? **If he doesn't have free will how can he be punished?** There seems to be a catch-22 here. How do we resolve this issue?

Question 5)

One final issue, to make things even more complicated, if we look at the end of Parshas Vae'ra, it says the hail ended and the plague was all over the place, there was no more precipitation, and Pharaoh continued to sin. And *he* hardened his heart, him and his servants. Who is doing the hardening? It seems like Pharaoh. Let's keep on reading, Hashem said to Moshe go to Pharaoh because I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants. What do you mean? It seems like these verses contradict themselves! Who is doing what?

2) Exodus- 9:35- 10:1

35 And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the children of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses.

לֵה נִיחַזַק לֵב פַּרְעֹה, וְלֹא שָׁלַח אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה', בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה.

1 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Go in unto Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show these My signs in the midst of them;

א וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, בֵּא אֶל-פַּרְעֹה: כִּי-אֲנִי הִקְבַּדְתִּי אֶת-לִבּוֹ, וְאֶת-לֵב עֲבָדָיו, לְמַעַן שִׁמְתִי אֶתְתִּי אֵלָה, בְּקִרְבּוֹ.

Let's try to resolve these issues....

Step 1) Analyze the difference between "kabeid" and "chazak"

If you look carefully at the language used in the story of the Exodus, you'll find two distinct verbs. Sometimes you'll find "*kabeid*" which means *heavy*, and other times you will find "*chazak*" which means *strong*. Two different words meaning two different things. Different things must be happening during this whole sequence.

Chizuk and Kibud. What is the difference between *strengthening* and *hardening the heart*? Where else do we find the word Chazek in the Torah? In Yehoshua,

3) Joshua- 1: 6-7

ו **חַזַק**, וְאַמֵץ: כִּי אֶתָּה, תִּנְחִיל אֶת-
הָעָם הַזֶּה, אֶת-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר-
נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבוֹתָם לָתֵת לָהֶם.
6 Be **strong** and of good courage; for thou shalt cause this
people to inherit the land which I swore unto their fathers
to give them.

ז רַק **חַזַק** וְאַמֵץ מְאֹד, לִשְׁמֹר
לְעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל-הַתּוֹרָה--אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה
מֹשֶׁה עִבְדִּי, אֶל-תְּסוּר מִמִּנּוּ יְמִין
וְיִשְׁמְאוּל: לְמַעַן תִּשְׁכִּיל, בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר
תֵּלֵךְ.
7 Only be **strong** and very courageous, to observe to do
according to all the law, which Moses My servant
commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or to the
left, that thou mayest have good success whithersoever
thou goest.

“Rak Chazak Viametz” we should only have strengthening of the heart. We find Kabad in Shmuel Aleph:

4) Samuel 1- 6:6

ו וְלָמָּה תִּכְבְּדוּ אֶת-לִבְבְּכֶם, כְּאֲשֶׁר
כָּבְדוּ מִצְרַיִם וּפְרָעֹה אֶת-לִבָּם: הֲלוֹא
כְּאֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלְל בָּהֶם, וַיִּשְׁלַחוּם וַיֵּלְכוּ.
6 Wherefore then do ye **harden** your hearts, as the
Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when He
had wrought among them, did they not let the people go,
and they departed?

In discussion of the Ark: “Why should we harden our heart like the Egyptians did, we should just send the Ark back!” How does strengthening and hardening differ? **Which seems positive and which seems negative to you?** *Hardness of heart is negative, strengthening is positive.* Do you want your heart to be hard or to be strong? A strong heart is a heart that is flexible. Stubbornness is when you are hard, you do not care what is around you, and you do not want to be affected by what is around you. Let’s investigate and see the plagues and see the practical difference between *strengthening* of the heart and *hardening* of the heart.

Step 2) Study the behavior of Pharaoh

Let’s start with the second plague. In the plague of “frog” (Side note: Rashi tells us there was one frog which the Egyptians kept on hitting which multiplied and multiplied- See what happens when one loses their cool?) we find something interesting. Pharaoh can’t stand the frogs. Pharaoh says to Moshe “Plead with your God and get these frogs away from me, I’ll let your people go” .

5) Exodus- 8:4

ד וַיִּקְרָא פְּרָעֹה לְמֹשֶׁה וְלֵאחֶרֶן, וַיֹּאמֶר
הַעֲתִירוּ אֶל-יְהוָה, וַיְסַר הַצְּפַרְדֵּי עִים, מִמִּנִּי
וּמֵעַמִּי; וְאֲשַׁלְּחָה, אֶת-הָעָם, וַיִּזְבְּחוּ,
לָהּ'.
4 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said:
'Entreat the LORD, that He take away the frogs from me,
and from my people; and I will let the people go, that
they may sacrifice unto the LORD.'

Moshe says “When would you like me to stop it? Pick a time, any time and I’ll stop it!” If you were Pharaoh wouldn’t you say now! Heloo! What are you waiting for bro? He says tomorrow! Moshe says “And now you will see that it was God who did this”. What? Another twenty fours to see if God is really doing this? What was Pharaoh thinking?

Fast forward to the fifth plague, Devar, what happens? All the live stock are dying. And you are Pharaoh and you hear about all of this. What are you going to do about all of this? Pharaoh hears what happens and his response is “go spy out and see that not one Jewish cattle died”.

6) Exodus- 9:7

ז וַיִּשְׁלַח פַּרְעֹה--וַהֲיֵה לְא־מֵת 7 And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not so much as
 מִמִּקְנֵה יִשְׂרָאֵל, עַד-אֶחָד; וַיִּכְבַּד one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. But the heart of
 לֵב פַּרְעֹה, וְלֹא שָׁלַח אֶת-הָעָם. Pharaoh was stubborn, and he did not let the people go.

Why is he doing this? The Sages saw this pattern. There seems to be a different agenda. He is looking for the *precise control*. Not the power of the plague, he is looking to see the *precise control of the plauge*. We do not know why, but it seems to be the control not the power that is more impressive to Pharaoh. Why? That is something we need to figure out.

If stubbornness is blindness then courage is vision. There must have been something that Pharaoh was looking for. It seems like he had some *hidden agenda*. What was this agenda? Where is the courage of Pharaoh heading? Fast-forward- something weird happens in the tenth plague which we haven’t yet discussed. When Pharaoh is warned before the plague, Moshe says “at about midnight, the firstborns will be killed” why does the Torah say “at about” why not just say at midnight!? The Midrash says on this: When Moshe said “about midnight” he said this because Moshe knew that it was very possible that Pharaoh would miscalculate and would therefore say the plague didn’t happen at *exactly* midnight and would say Moshe is a fool! *Is this a plausible explanation?* Pharaoh comes out and reacts after seeing 17,000,000 first born children dead and he says “Moshe you were off by a few minutes! nope, you are a fool!”? No! Of course you aren’t going to find this, does this make any sense?

Step 3) *Explore the encounters between Hashem and Moshe and Pharaoh and Moshe*

Let’s play a little bit of a role play game. You play Moshe and I’ll play Pharaoh. The first time they ever have their meeting, it seems a little strange, what do you think? The conversation goes as follows:

7) Exodus- 5: 1-9

א וַאֲחֵר, בָּאוּ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן, וַיֹּאמְרוּ, אֶל-פַּרְעֹה: כֹּה-אָמַר ה', אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, שְׁלַח אֶת-עַמִּי, וַיְחַגּוּ לִי בַמְדְּבָר. 1 And afterward Moses and Aaron came, and said unto Pharaoh: 'Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel: Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness.'

ב וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה--מִי ה' אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁמַע בְּקוֹלוֹ, לְשַׁלַּח אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל: לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אֶת-ה', וְגַם אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא אֶשְׁלַח.
2 And Pharaoh said: 'Who is the LORD, that I should hearken unto His voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, and moreover I will not let Israel go.'

ג וַיֹּאמְרוּ, אֲלֵקָי הָעִבְרִים נִקְרָא עָלֵינוּ; נִלְכָּה נָא דֶרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בַּמִּדְבָּר, וְנִזְבַּחַהּ לַה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ--פֶּן-יַפְגִּיעֵנוּ, בַּדֶּבֶר אוֹ בַחֶרֶב.
3 And they said: 'The God of the Hebrews hath met with us. Let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest He fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.'

ד וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם, מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם, לָמָּה מַשֶּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן, תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת-הָעָם מִמַּעֲשֵׂיו; לָכוּ, לְסַבְּלֹתֵיכֶם.
4 And the king of Egypt said unto them: 'Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, cause the people to break loose from their work? get you unto your burdens.'

ה וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה, הֵן-רַבִּים עִמָּה עַם הָאֶרֶץ; וְהַשְׁבַּתֶּם אֹתָם, מִסַּבְּלֹתָם.
5 And Pharaoh said: 'Behold, the people of the land are now many, and will ye make them rest from their burdens?'

ו וַיִּצְוֶה פַּרְעֹה, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, אֶת-הַנְּגִישִׁים בָּעָם, וְאֶת-שֹׁטְרֵיו לֵאמֹר.
6 And the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying:

ז לֹא תֹאסְפוּן לָתֵת תְּבֹן לָעָם, לְלַבֵּן הַלְּבָנִים--כַּתְּמוּל שְׁלֵשָׁם: הֵם, יִלְכוּ, וְקִשְׁשׁוּ לָהֶם, תְּבֹן.
7 'Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore. Let them go and gather straw for themselves.'

ח וְאֶת-מִתְכַנְּת הַלְּבָנִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם עֹשִׂים תְּמוּל שְׁלֵשָׁם, תְּשִׂימוּ עָלֵיהֶם--לֹא תִגְרַעוּ, מִמֶּנּוּ: כִּי-נִרְפִים הֵם--עַל-כֵּן הֵם צֹעֲקִים לֵאמֹר, נִלְכָּה נִזְבַּחַהּ לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ.
8 And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish aught thereof; for they are idle; therefore they cry, saying: Let us go and sacrifice to our God.'

ט תִּכְבֵּד הָעֲבֹדָה עַל-הָאֲנָשִׁים, וַיַּעֲשׂוּ-בָהּ; וְאֶל-יִשְׁעוּ, בַּדֶּבֶר-י-שָׁקֵר.
9 Let heavier work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard lying words.'

Moshe and Aaron go and say send forth my people and allow them to celebrate. Pharaoh responds and says, Who is God that I should listen to, I don't know anyone by God, and I am not sending the Jews. If you were Moshe- What would you do next? Think about it? What would you say? You have two options 1) up the ante or 2) retreat. You go with number 1, you tell him trust me you do not want to mess with God. What does

Moshe do? He goes to Pharaoh and in his response he says, Look Pharaoh the God of the Hebrews has called out to us to go to the desert for three days and sacrifice to him and if we don't- we don't know what God will do to us, don't worry pharaoh we'll be back (pinky swear). Do you think Pharaoh was going to change his mind? In fact Pharaoh is enraged and accuses Moshe and Aaron for why the Benei Yisroel were being lazy and decides to double their work load. Maybe there was a plan. What was Moshe's intention? This is something we need to figure out as well.

Step 4) Understanding the different names of God

Hashem has many names throughout the Torah. How big of a deal is it? The exception where God's names really matter is in the story of the Exodus:

8) Exodus- 6: 2-3

2 And God spoke unto Moses, and said unto him: 'I am the LORD;
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, אֲלֵי, אֲנִי ה'.

3 and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name YHWH I made Me not known to them.
 וַיֵּרָא, אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אֶל-יִצְחָק וְאֶל-יַעֲקֹב--בְּאֵל שְׁדַי; וַיְשָׁמֵי ה', לֹא נִודְעָתִי לָהֶם.

Hashem says I am "Yud Kay Vuv Kay" I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Yaakov as "Kel Shakai", but this name I have not made known to them. Very strange, first time Hashem makes a big deal about his name. What is the big deal?

9) Exodus- 3: 13-14

13 And Moses said unto God: 'Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them: The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me: What is His name? what shall I say unto them?'
 וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים, הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בָא אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמַרְתִּי לָהֶם, אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם; וְאָמְרוּ-לִי מַה-שְּׁמוֹ, מָה אֹמַר אֲלֵהֶם.

14 And God said unto Moses: 'I AM THAT I AM'; and He said: 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I AM hath sent me unto you.'
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה; וַיֹּאמֶר, כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֶהְיֶה, שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם.

He says to Moshe after Moshe asks what should I tell people your name is? Hashem tells him "I will be that which I will be" Just tell them "I will be" has sent you. Why is Hashem avoiding the question? Why not just say "Yud-Kay-Vuv-Kay"? The next verse Hashem says the God of your forefathers has sent you.

10) Exodus- 3: 15

טו וַיֹּאמֶר עוֹד אֱלֹהִים אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, כֹּה-
 תֹּאמַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי
 אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק
 וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב, שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם; זֶה-שְּׁמִי
 לְעֹלָם, וְזֶה זִכְרִי לְדֹר דֹּר.

15 And God said moreover unto Moses: 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations.

What is he talking about? Why is he changing his mind all of a sudden? What is the confusion and what is the big deal with His name? How do we make sense of all of this?

Ok, how are we going to pull all of our questions together? What is Hashem saying in the Exodus? He is saying I am “Yud-Kay-Vuv-Kay”. Kel-Shakei and this new name, what is the difference exactly? When you name your kid, you name them for a specific reason. Can you give Hashem’s name different meanings? What does “Kel” mean? It means “to” and it also means power. We see this by Lavan when he says “I have it in me to do evil to you”. “Elokim” means judges, we find the weird commandment- not to have other gods in front of you, it means powerful beings, other levels of authority, an example would be the sun itself, as one knows it is very powerful. We also view God’s names as different types of traits. *Elokim would signify God as judge, as a power.*

What about the other names? *Shaki*, what does this mean? Any other words in the Hebrew language which seem similar? The Medresh tells us that it is a contraction for a serious of words “*She-amer liolamo die*”, he said to his world “enough”. What does that mean? Not so sure we do know. There was a development in the world in creation and God said at a point that it was enough (If you want more on this specific part- e-mail me, I’ll send you the link which explains it in more depth).

Hashem told Moshe he was “*Yud-Kay-Vuv-Kay*” we don’t really know how to pronounce it. We know it is close to some things we know. It describes his essence. The Hebrew words for existence are “Haya”, “Yiheeyeh”, and “Hoveh” Was, Will be, and Is. If you take these words and overlay it with each other, you will get “Yud-Kay- and Vuv-Kay”. We are talking about a simultaneous existence. It is experiencing time in another way we cannot imagine. It exists but not in this world. It exists outside of time, outside of our world, outside of our universe.

Why would God be outside of time? Why is he outside of it all? This goes back to the Big bang theory. Scientist tell you there is no before the big bang. You ever wonder what there is outside of the universe? Are there big brick walls that you walk into like in like in the movie, “The Truman Show”? If space is created in time would the creator live inside space and time? No, he would not. He is outside time, because he is the creator of time. He is outside of time, he is outside of space. Analogy: Parker invented Monopoly he isn’t going to be part of the game. He invented the game. Chazal says Hashem is “Makom” he is the place of the world, but the world is not his place. He does not live within space and time. He is the place of the world. What is it that space and time exists in? “Yud-Kay- and Vuv-Kay” is the name as creator, although it is imaginary.

Come back to the burning bush. There is a different discussion. Moshe asks Hashem what should I tell the people and Hashem says “I am that which I am, I will be that which I will be, tell them that “I will be” has sent you”. So what is going on here? This violates the cardinal rule of definitions. There is no other way to

define God. What is the definition of the word “definition”? A definition takes things and helps you understand things which you do not understand. God is the ultra-extraterrestrial. He is outside of this world, so definitions do not work. God is only definable in His world, it is another way of saying I am the creator of all and there is no way of understanding me. How do we deal with an unknowable God? How do we understand it? Whenever we think about God, we think about someone like us. The great struggle within Religion is how do we bridge the gap? One way is like Christianity and say God is somewhat human. Judaism does not do that. God says just because I am unknowable doesn't mean you need to relate to me. He is ultimately mysterious.

God says before we go any further, I am now known as something else, “Yud-Kay- and Vuv-Kay”. He is revealing himself as the creator of the universe. Nobody was there. This was not an easy thing to show. Why is God so interested in showing this? What does God care? He is the highest already, why the need to demonstrate it? The easiest way to analogize it is the relationship we have with our parents. What if we thought our parents were powers? Our relationship was dependent upon power. All I know is Dad controls the cookie jar, it is not that I know he is my creator. What is missing? *The element of love*. “Yud-Kay- and Vuv-Kay” is associated with the characteristic of love. God as creator is God as love. We find in the Shema: Hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is One. **There is one God**. The next verse, you should **love God, because he loves you**. How do we know he loves us? If we can't understand him, how do we know he loves us? One way of knowing is to understand that God didn't need to create a world- he wasn't alone- he doesn't need us to do anything for him- He created the world solely for us- it was an act of giving- for no other reason but for us to get close to Him. Another approach: If you can extrapolate the way the world works. What relationship do birds have with their young? What about whales and dolphins? Keep going higher and higher up, you see this care. Look at humans, the more developed the creature, the more the love. Extend it to God. It is a love which we cannot define. We do not describe love that way- it is just not in our world (literally). Can the ant understand the love of the bird? The ant doesn't have the tools to understand the love of the bird, but it is still love, just in a different world.

Step 5) God demonstrating his “oneness”

God is going to demonstrate he is the master of the world. How are you going to do this to a pagan nation? The Egyptians believed that there were many dignitaries. If you can take the most established empire, with their leader who compared himself as a deity, and if you take him and turn him around, then that would stand as testament of one God, **you need Pharaoh to come to that point of realization**. What if he doesn't get it? Would God put all his eggs in one basket, what if he doesn't play fair ball? There must be a plan B. How are you going to reveal yourself to the nation? You can make a huge wave, or bring a bunch of frogs, they will say the sea god or frog god was mad at us, they will never say it was Hashem. They won't think there is one God. In the pagan system, the gods do not like each other. When all of these events are happening, they must say all of these gods must be mad at us, it is very uncharacteristic of them- but still it is possible right? At some point the weight of the evidence becomes too great. As plague builds upon plague, there is a much similar explanation. We talked about the uniqueness of hail. Pharaoh changes his attitude and says he sinned. What was it about the seventh plague of hail? What stood out about it?

11) Exodus- 9: 18-34

יח הַנְּגִי מִמָּטֵיר קֶצֶת מָהָר, בְּרָד קָבֵד 18 Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain

- מָאֵד, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-הָיָה כְּמֵהוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם, לְמֶן-הַיּוֹם הַיּוֹסֵדָה וְעַד-עַתָּה. a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the day it was founded even until now.
- יֵט וְעַתָּה, שְׁלַח הֲעֵזוּ אֶת-מִקְנֶה, וְאֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר לָהּ, בַּשָּׂדֶה: כָּל-הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר-יִמְצָא בַשָּׂדֶה, וְלֹא יֵאֲסֹף הַבַּיְתָה--וַיֵּרֶד עֲלֵהֶם הַבָּרָד, וַיָּמָתוּ. 19 Now therefore send, hasten in thy cattle and all that thou hast in the field; for every man and beast that shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.'
- כ הִירָא אֶת-דְּבַר יְהוָה, מֵעַבְדֵי פְרַעֲהוֹ-הַחַיִּים אֶת-עַבְדָּיו וְאֶת-מִקְנֵהוּ, אֶל-הַבָּתִּים. 20 He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses;
- כא וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא-שָׁם לִבּוֹ, אֶל-דְּבַר יְהוָה--וַיַּעֲזֹב אֶת-עַבְדָּיו וְאֶת-מִקְנֵהוּ, בַּשָּׂדֶה. {פ} 21 and he that regarded not the word of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field. {P}
- כב וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, נִטֵּה אֶת-יָדְךָ עַל-הַשָּׁמַיִם, וַיְהִי בָרָד, בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: עַל-הָאָדָם וְעַל-הַבְּהֵמָה, וְעַל כָּל-עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה--בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. 22 And the LORD said unto Moses: 'Stretch forth thy hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.'
- כג וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת-מִטְּהוֹ, עַל-הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְה' נָתַן קֹלֹת וַיְבַרֵד, וַתִּהְיֶה אֵשׁ אֲרָצָה; וַיִּמְטֵר ה' בָּרָד, עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם. 23 And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven; and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down unto the earth; and the LORD caused to hail upon the land of Egypt.
- כד וַיְהִי בָרָד--וְאֵשׁ, מִתְלַקַּחַת בְּתוֹךְ הַבָּרָד: כְּכֹד מָאֵד--אֲשֶׁר לֹא-הָיָה כְּמֵהוּ בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, מֵאֲזַי הָיְתָה לְגוֹי. 24 So there was hail, and fire flashing up amidst the hail, very grievous, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.
- כה וַיִּד הַבָּרָד בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה, מֵאָדָם, וְעַד-בְּהֵמָה; וְאֶת כָּל-עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה הִכָּה הַבָּרָד, וְאֶת-כָּל-עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה שִׁבַּר. 25 And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field.
- כו רַק בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן, אֲשֶׁר-שָׁם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל--לֹא הָיָה, בָּרָד. 26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.
- כז וַיִּשְׁלַח פְּרַעֲהוֹ, וַיִּקְרָא לְמֹשֶׁה וְלֵאֲהֲרֹן, וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם, חַטָּאתִי הַפְּעָם: יְהוָה, הַצַּדִּיק, וְאֲנִי וְעַמִּי, הָרְשָׁעִים. 27 And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them: 'I have *sinned* this time; the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.'
- כח הִעֲתִירוּ, אֶל-ה', וְרַב, מִהֵיכָּת קִלְתֵּם 28 Entreat the LORD, and let there be enough of these

- אֱלֹהִים וּבָרָד; וְאִשְׁלָחָה אֶתְכֶם, וְלֹא תִסְפּוּן לָעֲמֹד. mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.'
- כַּטּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלִיּוֹ, מִטָּשָׁה, כַּצֵּאתִי אֶת-הָעִיר, אֶפְרֹשׂ אֶת-כַּפְּי אֶל-ה'; הַקְּלוֹת יִתְדָלוּ, וְהַבָּרָד לֹא יִהְיֶה-עוֹד, לְמַעַן תִּדְעַ, כִּי לֵה' הָאָרֶץ. **29** And Moses said unto him: 'As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread forth my hands unto the LORD; the thunders shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know that the earth is the LORD'S.
- ל וְאַתָּה, וְעַבְדֶיךָ: יָדַעְתִּי--כִּי טָרִם תִּירְאוּן, מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים. **30** But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God.'--
- לֹא וְהַפְּשָׁתָה וְהַשְׁעֵרָה, נִכְּתָה: כִּי הַשְׁעֵרָה אָבִיב, וְהַפְּשָׁתָה גִבְעַל. **31** And the flax and the barley were smitten; for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was in bloom.
- לֵב וְהַחֲטָה וְהַכְּסָמַת, לֹא נִכּוּ: כִּי אֶפְיֵלֶת, הִנֵּה. **32** But the wheat and the spelt were not smitten; for they ripen late.--
- לֵג וַיֵּצֵא מֹשֶׁה מֵעַם פְּרָעֹה, אֶת-הָעִיר, וַיִּפְרֹשׂ כַּפָּיו, אֶל-יְהוָה; וַיִּתְדָלוּ הַקְּלוֹת וְהַבָּרָד, וַיִּמָּטֵר לֹא-נִתַּד אֶרְצָה. **33** And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread forth his hands unto the LORD; and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.
- לד וַיֵּרָא פְּרָעֹה, כִּי-תָדַל הַמָּטֵר וְהַבָּרָד וְהַקְּלוֹת--וַיִּסָּף לְחַטֵּא; וַיִּכְבַּד לִבּוֹ, הוּא וְעַבְדָּיו. **34** And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he *sinned* yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

Pharaoh seems to get it. What is it about the plague? Let's talk about the plague. The only plague with a warning, tells you how to avoid the effects, *the fire was frozen in the hail storm*. All of the plagues were supernatural, what is so wild about this? The thing about this miracle was the *ice and fire* gods were *working together at the same time, they were in harmony*. It makes no sense. Only one being could do this. This seems to scream out that there is a creator.

A long time ago, we wondered why Moshe said "at about midnight" we noticed that Pharaoh was very interested in the degree of precision, so interested that Moshe kept bothering him about this. Why is Pharaoh so interested that even if he got to the last plague that he would say it is all a false? Let's think about it, there are a lot of supernatural powers, there are draughts, earthquakes, and tornadoes. Who cares? All of a sudden something else is going on here. We are talking about *precision*. Precision in time and space, this is just another indication that we are dealing with a greater being. Any one plague can be a pagan god, but these kinds of alliances who else could it be but *The one God? Precision doesn't happen in a pagan world*. Their view starts to crumble. Does plan A or plan B work? The struggle between *Moshe and Pharaoh is the battle between the pagan world view and the monotheistic world view. It is all at stake*.

Step 6) The hidden agenda

Let's go back and read the story. We are going to find a vastly richer picture. Chapter five went like this: Moshe said two speeches, they didn't seem like the second one made much sense. What was the reason behind Moshe's utterance? Moshe says: "Thus said Hashem, send forth my nation and let them celebrate before me". Pharaoh responds: Who is God that I should send forth the Jews? In the first speech Hashem was directing his speech to Pharaoh the name of "Yud-Kay-Vuv-Kay". In the second speech we find the theme is about sacrifice- Moshe was saying- we need to go out and serve our God. It is something you do to appease God, it is not a celebration. *Love does not make sense in the pagan world.* You should celebrate with your God? Pharaoh doesn't understand this, he rejects this! Who is "Yuv-Kay and Vuv-Kay" what type of God is this? There is no love. Moshe says find listen forget the whole God of outside of space, just know the Hebrews want to go see "Kel" and sacrifice to Him, that's it, that is all we are asking, we just want a little freedom of religion-You get that right Pharaoh?

It is a process of education. If you were God, you would say let my people go! Why the three day visit in the desert? Rabbi Fohrman suggests that the Jewish people would have come back if Pharaoh would have granted them permission. Pharaoh rejects this and says no, so the plagues come and are a process of education. How does the evidence build? This will help us see the meaning of "choseness" (i.e. Question 2).

Now we need to examine the ten plagues. We saw a strengthening of the heart and a hardening of the heart. Two different things are happening. When does this happen? In the plagues as we will see. We will also see the role of the astrologers of Pharaoh- we will keep this in mind. We will start with the snake trick. Moshe is supposed to show Pharaoh a sign and Aaron throws his staff down and it turns into a snake. The astrologers do the same. Pharaoh's heart is strengthened, just as Hashem had predicted. Why does this give him courage? He is strengthened by the fact that this could have been some mere hocus-pocus. Next God enters and says to Moshe that Pharaoh's heart has hardened. God's perspective is different from Pharaoh's perspective. If you remember the snake trick, the snake of Aaron swallows up all of the other staffs. This act could have taught Pharaoh something, but he did not allow himself to listen. Then we get to the first of the plagues. **Blood**- The astrologers can do this as well. But then we get to the **frogs** and control and precision is mixed within the equation. After this Pharaoh's heart is kabeid, it is stubborn. The next plague is **lice** and Pharaoh's boys cannot do it, and the sorcerer's of Pharaoh tell him this act is from the finger of god. With a small g. It is just a hand of **a** power. This is a power not a magician. You are battling **a god** and since Pharaoh thinks he can battle a god he continues. We then find the plague of **wild animals** and Pharaoh's heart is kabeid once again. Following is the fifth plague of **dead animals** - not even one piece of cattle lived. Again Pharaoh's heart is stubborn. In plague six- **boils**, Pharaoh cannot stand by it anymore and wants the Jews to leave but Hashem makes Pharaoh's heart strong and allows him to continue. *Did Hashem just take away his free will?* Why does Pharaoh want to let them go? It is because he is overwhelmed, it is not because he is giving up on his vision, he is giving in only because he is weak! When will he give up and just admit to the evidence. Hashem is allowing him to continue with his vision. *It is like Oz giving the cowardly lion courage, he has enhanced his free will.* If Pharaoh will give in and admit in the oneness of God- then of course God would not interfere. The next plague is **hail**. Hashem tells Pharaoh I am keeping you around so that you will tell your nation and nations about monotheism. Pharaoh does not want to do that and therefore will become an extra in the movie. When do you warn? Only when you are compassionate. Pharaoh has a different response this time, he says that he has sinned and God is the righteous one, I and my people are the wicked ones. He has finally brought morality in the world. He admits that he has sinned! This is the theological change. It should have ended there, *but it did not*, because of Pharaoh- he turns an about face and *continues to sin*. The word sin is used again. This kind of stubbornness is different. *He has seen the truth and he still doesn't care.* He hardens his heart and strengthens

himself. After this something changes. Plan A is gone and now plan B takes place. What is plan B? Next words of Parshat Bo: I have frozen Pharaoh's heart he hasn't changed, so now you Moshe you should tell your children, Pharaoh is just a pawn, he will get no recognition, only through his destruction will it now be known to the world that God is in fact the creator. The exodus is the event in which God does reveal himself, he proves himself in a sense. What is this event for us then?

Step 7) What does this all have to do with me?

What does it mean to us? We now come to this issue of "chosenness". What is the notion of being the first born? The Jews need to tie a goat, take the goat's blood and pour it on the doorposts. What is the reason? Why is it the plague of the killing of the first born any different? What is the significance of the doorway? You are saying Egypt stops here. What are all the laws doing here? The common denominator, it is a one year old sheep, people need to come together, cannot break the bones of the offering, it needs to be roasted, not boiled. The *Maharal (Judah Loew ben Bezalel- 16th century Jewish mystic)* - the common theme is it all about *oneness*. The meat cannot fall apart, it must all be together, there needs to be oneness, it is part of the story. When they can do that, they can go free. What does it mean to be part of a first born in one's family? Why do the Jews need to be a first born leader? What does the first born add to a family? The problem that every child faces is generation gap. How do the values transmit from one generation onto the next generation? The first born is the child who is the bridge and takes the values and translates them in the child's world, the other children see and take after he/she and know what to do. God is not just another generation he is the extra-terrestrial. God gives the Torah and says you are to take the Torah and show how to live in this world and bring God into the world. So now what is up with the Tefillin? The Tefillin begins with Shema, the declaration of the truth of monotheism. The parsha of "Veahavta" yells: "I can't stop thinking about you and how much I love you". The cognitive should translate into the heart. Love is the great tenant of monotheism. We need to love him, but that is not enough. We need a response, we need to act. The last part of Tefillin is asking if we will stand up and act as the nation that we need to be- the first born. The Gemarah says Hashem wears Tefillin, the first verse is "Who is the nation as unique as Yisroel" mirroring our Tefillin which says "Who is like you O God". When have you seen that Hashem has gone into history to take out a nation? It is the exodus. The exodus is about Hashem demonstrating himself as creator in the world and how we respond to that, we have a job to do in this world, which needs to be done with integrity, love and commitment.

Hope you enjoyed! Chag Kasher Visameach to you and your family!