Assembly Notes

PARSHAS VO'ERA 5785

Assembly Theme: Our connection to Hashem

בסד

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lubavitch girls' school

Parshas Vo'era can teach us about G-d and his relationship with the world. It contains the first seven of the Ten Plagues. These wonders were not intended merely to punish the Egyptians or to convince them to "let My People go''. That goal could have been achieved in a shorter time, in a dramatic way.

The plagues had the function of making everyone aware that G-d continuously creates the world, and that He is involved in nature. This helped prepare us for the Giving of the Torah, the goal of the exodus from Egypt.

At the Pesach Seder we talk about the ten plagues that befell Egypt. We tip a drop of wine for each one. Then we quote Rebbi Yehuda who "used to give them mnemonics - Detzach, Adash, B'achav. And a drop of wine for each of these three.

What is so special about the plagues that a mnemonic is necessary? We don't have a mnemonic for the Ten Commandments!

Moreover, the Sages say that the combination of Detzach Adash B'Achav is a holy sign that existed since Creation. It was engraved on Moshe's holy staff which was created at the end of the Creation. G-d said: "When you go to return to Egypt see all the signs that I have placed **in your hand".** The Sages say in the Midrash that this refers to the staff upon which the Ten Plagues were inscribed. Why then is the ancient mnemonic attributed to Rabbi Yehuda ?

Rabbi Yehuda created the awareness that the mnemonic is divided into three groups, of three, three and four. Each group had a distinct function.

The first three plagues affirmed the **existence** of G-d. There were those who believed that the world just existed with no Source. The second three plagues were to counter the belief that maybe there is a G-d, but He is too powerful to interest Himself in mere mortals and their actions.

The third aspect of Egyptian ethos was that even if G-d is relevant, nevertheless the rules of nature cannot be overcome.

Regarding the first plague G-d says "By this you shall know that I am Hashem ". Of the fourth (first of the second set) it says "for you to know that that I, Hashem, am in the midst of the land". And of the seventh the Torah says "for you to know that there is none like me in all the land"

Even the Egyptian sorcerers admitted "it is the finger of G-d" in the first set of three. In the second set of three the Torah emphasises that the plague was selective and only affected the Egyptians. In the third set of three the laws of nature were overturned: the hail was composed of ice with fire; the locusts swarmed where there was hardly anything left to eat (after the hail); the sun stopped functioning.

(The plague of the firstborn is in a category of its own).

The way to prepare to be free and to experience Revelation is to cultivate our connection to Hashem and to realise that the laws of nature are not the last word.

Shabbat Shalom!

Good Shabbos!

גוט שבת!