



KINDER TORAH[©]

*For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table
Parshas Va'eira*



Busy, Busy, Busy

A slave has no free time. Paroh put the Jewish people to work day and night. Gathering straw, kneading it, forming it into bricks, building buildings, was all hard, time-consuming work. They had no free time to rest. More importantly, they had no free time to think. The Mesillas Yesharim (Chapter 2) explains one of the reasons for this. A person with no time to think cannot plot against the king. He is too busy to fully grasp the desperation of his situation, or to contemplate how to escape his plight. The Mesillas Yesharim points out that this is one of the tactics of the *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination). He keeps us busy, busy, busy. We have no time to introspect and consider if we are going on the right path. If we would stop and think, then we would realize the areas that we need to improve, and we would act. Therefore, he keeps us busy.

Kinderlach . . .

There are times when being busy is good. If you are traveling on a boat, you want the motor to be very busy, running as fast as possible to get you to dry land. However, the captain needs to check the bearings from time to time, and steer the boat in the right direction. Similarly, we want to be busy doing mitzvos. We want to keep the mitzvah motor running. However, we also need to take time out and talk with our parents about big things. We need to make sure that we are going in the right direction. Are we in the right class? Do we have the right friends? Are our after school activities right for us? Take the time to make sure you are steering yourself in the right direction.

The Reason For Punishment

Paroh behaved in a very interesting manner during the *eser makkos*. While the *makkos* were occurring, he promised Moshe Rabbeinu that he would comply with Hashem's order and free the Jewish people. After the *makko* ended, however, he changed his mind and did what he wanted, not what Hashem wanted. Rav Leib

Chasman zt"l points out in his sefer *Ohr Yohel* that the suffering that a person undergoes in his life is no different from the *makkos* that plagued Paroh. They are both tests to see how we will react. When a person is suffering terribly he cries out to Hashem and promises to do *tshuva* (repentance). After the suffering passes, what does he do? Does he keep his promises, or does he return to his old ways?

Kinderlach . . .

Abba and Imma do not like to give you a punishment. Why do they do it? To teach you that you are doing something wrong. Of course during the punishment, you stop misbehaving. What do you do after the punishment ends children? Do you behave like Paroh, chas veshalom (G-d forbid), and return to doing the very same thing that brought on the punishment in the first place? We hope not. Or do you learn from the punishment and stop misbehaving. When you learn the proper lesson from a punishment, you make Abba and Imma very proud of you.

Honor

Who can contemplate the terrible deeds that Paroh did? Rav Leib Chasman zt"l in his sefer *Ohr Yohel* illustrates as follows. Paroh spoke with chutzpah against Hashem. "Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice to send out Israel? I do not know Hashem and I will not send out Israel" (Shemos 5:2). He tortured the Jewish people with back breaking labor and horrible atrocities. For this he was punished with the *eser makkos* (ten plagues). Each *makko* was more humiliating than the next. Try to imagine the *makko* of *tsefardeah* (frogs). They were everywhere, in the homes, in the ovens, even in people's stomachs. The noise from their croaking was deafening. Paroh, the King of Egypt, in all of his splendor, is sitting on his throne in his royal garments, surrounded by his officers. He opens his mouth to speak, but you cannot hear his voice. It is drowned out by the croaking of the frogs in his stomach. Can you imagine anything more disgraceful than that? Is there any honor to his kingship?

How was Moshe Rabbeinu was commanded to treat Paroh? After nine *makkos*, Paroh had the chutzpah to say to Moshe Rabbeinu, "On the day that I see your face you will die" (Shemos 10:27). Moshe Rabbeinu left Paroh presence in burning anger (Shemos 11:8). Before he left, however, he described the last plague of *makkos bechoros* (killing of the first born). It would be so horrifying that all of Paroh's servants will come running to Moshe, begging him to take the Jewish people out of Egypt. Rashi comments that Moshe did not say that Paroh himself would come running to him. Why? Moshe still had to honor to the kingship of Paroh (Shemos 11:8). He was such an evil king, and he performed acts so horrible that he was terribly punished. Yet he still was deserving of honor. Rav Chasman points out that this is a powerful lesson in respecting the honor of a human being. If Moshe Rabbeinu had to honor Paroh HaRasha, how much more so do we have to honor our fellow Jews.

Kinderlach . . .

Do you see how careful we must be to speak to others with kovod (honor)? You may think that this is hard. If you think about the other person's good points, then honoring him comes naturally. He is older, wiser, wealthier, more patient, or has more mitzvos or fewer sins than you. Honoring others is the basis if true derech eretz and the sign of a real mensch.

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