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On the Parsha

In the beginning of this week's Parsha, Hashem tells Moshe to "come to Pharaoh" and deliver His message to him.

- 1) Why does the Possuk use the words "come to Pharaoh"? The Possuk should have said "go to Pharaoh"?
- 2) In the next Possuk, Hashem says that He will implement his signs of Divine Providence "within their midst" and so that "you should know that I am Hashem." Why was it so important to place these signs publicly, in the midst of the Egyptians?
- 3) Also, when the Possuk says that "you should know that I am Hashem", who is it that should know that He is Hashem – does the word "you" include others besides for Bnei Yisrael?
- 4) And finally, what does it mean to know that "I am Hashem" in this context?

To answer the first question, Rabbeinu Bachya explains that the command from Hashem to Moshe was to **come into** Pharaoh's home itself and censor him there. It was not to go out and meet with Pharaoh outside of his house. This is because Pharaoh had an enormous sense of Ga'avah – haughtiness, which emanated from his pride that he had in his palace. Hashem wished to correct this within him.

Regarding the second question, the Ramban explains that Hashem's signs and plagues were not done to punish the Egyptians. If that were the case, the signs and plagues could have been done privately. Rather, it was so that all the Egyptians would recognize Hashem's greatness. Therefore, a public display in their midst was warranted.

Regarding the third question, Rabbeinu Bachya writes that "you should know" refers not only to Bnei Yisrael, but also the nations of world – meaning that everyone should recognize Hashem's true greatness. In other words, Hashem's signs and miracles were a message to the world to see the truth of Hashem's existence and the

consequences of doing evil toward others. We see from the fact that the "you" includes the nations of the world - that Hashem's concern is for all of His creatures. The Sfas Emes (Parshas B'shalach 5641) explained that the words "Umasbia Lechol Chai Ratzon" – he satisfies the needs of all creatures (Tehillim 145), is not limited to food and drink, but includes even the spiritual needs of all of His creations that so desire it.

This concern that Hashem has for the welfare of all of His creations can also be seen in other ways. There is a well-known expression in the Gentile world called, "What goes around comes around" or the misapplied term known as "Karma." For example, when a driver attempts to cut off another driver, and if during this process, the driver himself ends up in an accident, people will comment, "That's Karma!" However, what this actually is, is a manifestation of the Torah concept of Midah K'neged Midah – Hashem punishing the individual "measure for measure" which means that Hashem punishes an individual in the same manner that the person himself had erred. Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz ZT"L (in his Darchei HaChaim Vol. I p. 389) explains that Hashem punishes people in this manner as a kindness to them. By punishing people measure for measure, a Jew or a Gentile can see clearly and truthfully in what area they have failed based on how they were punished and correct their behavior accordingly.

Chizuk - Inspiration

A young woman moved out of town from the New York area and got an excellent and very well-paying job helping someone run his business. The business was doing quite well. However, there was a slight problem. The owner of the business was doing so well and was so busy that he did not really have time to train her.

The young woman felt that, while she was being paid very well, her high salary was unjustified. She constantly asked if the owner could set aside time to show her exactly what needed to be done. However, every time the owner set an appointment to train her, the owner had a new client to meet and the appointment was

canceled. The young lady, who was raised with the character traits of honesty and integrity, felt that try as she could, she was not earning an “honest salary” since she felt that she could not perform her job properly without formal training. She felt honor bound to leave the position. Upon leaving the position, she took a role as an assistant teacher at the local yeshiva.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: We are planning a vacation and will be travelling abroad. Where we are going, there is not much Kosher food available, so we are planning on packing Kosher food in our suitcases and taking it with us. People have warned us that at the airport, customs officials often take away all sorts of foods that are packed in suitcases – and sometimes, even foods that the law of the country states are completely permitted to enter the country. Can you give us some guidance regarding the prohibition of Gnaivas Daas (deception) and / or other relevant Halachic issues as to what we may or may not say, in case we are questioned or stopped at the airport and asked about the Kosher food in our suitcases?

ANSWER: It seems that there are three categories of food items in this particular case:

Category One are foods that are clearly forbidden by the law of the land to enter the country. Category Two are foods where the law is unclear as to whether they may enter the country. Category Three are foods that the law permits to enter the country.

With this in mind, let us explore each of the categories. It is forbidden to bring in Category One foods because of Dinei D'malchusa Dina – the law of the land is the law (See Choshain Mishpat 369:8). Regarding Category Two or Three foods, when you pack your suitcases, it is permitted to split the food up and place them throughout your carry-on items and or packed suitcases in order to avoid detection. Should the customs agents end up discovering some of your food and confiscate it, at least you will still have some food in other pieces of your luggage. However, it is forbidden to lie, even in regards to Category Three foods (where your food is at risk of being confiscated illegitimately). If you are stopped by the custom agents, you must answer their questions truthfully or you have violated the prohibition of Genaivas Daas.

The Rambam writes quite clearly in his Peirush HaMishnayos (Kailim 12:7) that Gnaivas Daas is forbidden even to Gentiles – especially if it is combined with Chillul Hashem. The concept that Chillul Hashem only applies to other Jews is entirely incorrect. We see from the SMAg (Lavin #2) that the prohibition of (Vayikra 22:32) “Lo Sechalelu Es Shaim Kodshi” – Do not sully My Holy Name, applies to Gentiles as well. It causes Gentiles to say, “the Jews have no Torah.” It negates the Passuk in Tzefania (3:13), “The remnant of Israel shall neither commit injustice nor speak lies; neither shall deceitful speech be found in their mouth..” See also the SMAg in Assai #74.

Mussar – Introspection

We continue with our translation of the Chofetz Chaim’s fourth chapter of Sefas Tamim:

“Our sages further stated [in a Sefer called Raishis Chochma Meseches Geheham – written by the chavrusa of the AriZal] that on account of this sin of deception to gain money, they feed them a fine sand that causes their teeth to crack and break, as it says in Tehillim (3:8), ‘Arise, Hashem save me... for You have struck all my enemies on the cheek; You have broken the teeth of the wicked.’ If they do not wish to eat it, the Holy One responds: ‘Why was it that when you consumed stolen items in this world, it was sweet in your mouths?’

Even after all of the punishments, things will not be completely rectified, until the person comes back as a Gilgul [reincarnation] to return the stolen item. I saw in the holy books [see Peleh Yoetz Gezel, and Derech Emunah p.74 by Rabbi Yaakov Shaul Dwick HaKohain], an extraordinary incident that occurred in the time of the Rishonim (the Rivash) that one person [who died before he could pay back a debt] was reincarnated as a horse, and he worked [for his master who he owed the money to in his prior life] with all his strength to pay back his debt. And this is one of those most difficult of Gilgulim.

[Authors Note: Upon further review of the sources referenced above, I found further details of this story as follows. The master of the horse actually recognized the thief who was now reincarnated as the horse. The horse begged his master for forgiveness of the debt. The master forgave the debt and the horse died the next morning.]