

APPENDIX

Many of the ideas on the Makkos were learned using Rav Moshe Lewis's sefer, מטעמי השולחן.

דצ"ה

The *Kli Yakar* says that Pharaoh told Moshe that he does not believe in Hashem. Hashem thus brought this set of plagues to show Pharaoh that He exists.¹ The *Ramban* adds to the verse of “למען תדע כי לה' הארץ” that it was also to show that Hashem made the world from nothing.² Hashem used this set of plagues to prove conclusively that He created the world.

Blood began this lesson, since it showed that the Nile, their *avodah zarah*, was false. Frogs made a *kiddush Hashem* by voluntarily jumping into the oven of the Egyptians. The lice were too small to have been made by magic/sorcery, so even Pharaoh's sorcerers admitted that it was *etzba Elokim*—that there must be a God. In fact, every plague in this set showed the Egyptians and Klal Yisrael that there is a Creator.

עד"ש

The *Kli Yakar* says that this set showed that Hashem is the *Mashgiach*, Director, of the world, as the verse says, “אני ה' בקרב הארץ.”³ Heretics say that there is no order to the world, and that Hashem does not distinguish between people and animals, or between Jews and non-Jews. There might be a G-d, they concede, but He is not concerned with the affairs of this world. He created the world and allowed it to go on autopilot.

To prove that what they claimed is not so, Hashem brought *Arov* (a multitude of animals) that wreaked havoc only on Egyptian land, not in Goshen. The *Kli Yakar* says that Hashem took *Arov*, which is *Arvuvya* (all mixed up), and made a separation on land. Regarding *Dever* (pestilence) also, Hashem showed He is *Mashgiach* by the plague only touching the animals and not people. Even the animals affected were only Egyptian animals. *Shechin* (boils) went only on the Egyptians and not the Jews, further showing that Hashem differentiates between peoples. These plagues showed conclusively that Hashem directs all action on the land, animals, and people.

1 *Shemos* 7:17, *Malbim*, *Abarbanel* (*Parashas Va'eira*), and the *Ramban* (*Parashas Bo*) explain similarly.

2 *Shemos* 8:18.

3 *Ibid.* 9:29.

באח"ב

These plagues, the *Kli Yakar* explains, showed Hashem as all-powerful, as it says, “כי אין” כמוני בכל הארץ.”⁴ It showed that Hashem has all the power and that there is no other power besides him. Pharaoh claimed that the sun has external power. Hashem responded by covering the sun with clouds in the plagues of *Barad* (hail) and *Arbeh* (locusts). Hashem made the sun dark by *Choshech* (darkness) and performed *Makkas Bechoros* specifically at night. *Makkas Bechoros* was also directed against sheep, which is the *bechor* of all the *mazalos* (constellations). It showed that there is no power in the stars besides Hashem. This set showed that only Hashem has power and that there aren't two powers.

The lessons culled from these groupings are so important that we have a mitzvah to remember them twice a day! In *k'rias Shema*, right in the beginning, we review this lesson. When we say *Shema Yisrael*, we should have these three things in mind. We start off saying “שמע ישראל”—that Jews should pay attention and concentrate. “ה'”—this is the name of Hashem that means that G-d is the past, present, and future. It is מציאות ה', which is what דצ"ח proved to us. We continue with אלקינו the name of Hashem that describes His strength in being able to do anything and everything. He does all of this for us; He is our אלקינו. ש. עד"ש showed us that once and for all. We end *Shema* with saying ה' אחד (Hashem is One), that no other powers—neither the sun nor the *mazalos*—control anything. Hashem, not Pharaoh, is the only רשות.

We should try at the end of each grouping to sing the first *Ani Maamin* of the *Rambam*: אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים והוא לבדו עשה ועושה ויעשה לכל המעשים.

This principle of faith contains all three lessons of the plagues:

- דצ"ח—This tells us He is the Creator of all... לכל הברואים.
- עד"ש—This tells us He is the Director of all events (ומנהיג).
- והוא לבדו עשה ועושה ויעשה לכל המעשים—This tells us He is the only power that can do anything (באח"ב).

דם

Let's remember the purpose of this plague: to show that Hashem created the world. Pharaoh said that he created the Nile and himself; he denied that he was a creation. He was ludicrous enough to claim that he was a creator! This plague showed that Hashem has control over the water, the very lifeblood of Egypt. The Nile was their source of all water, being that it doesn't rain much in Egypt.

Why was this the first plague? The first step in a siege is stopping the water supply and sole source of food. Additionally, Hashem wanted to make sure that the Egyptians couldn't claim that the Nile (and not Hashem) was punishing them, so first He showed that He has control over their god. Additionally, as in all of the plagues, the Plague of Blood punished the Egyptians for all that they did, as we will see. An important lesson to keep in mind is that Hashem judges *middah k'neged middah* (measure for measure). This is an important concept, showing how exact and fair Hashem's judgment is.

An additional factor to keep in mind is how important the Nile was to the Egyptians. For 2,000 years, it was the lifeblood of Egypt. Day in, day out, their lives revolved around the Nile. When they wanted a drink, they went to the Nile. When they wanted to wash clothes, they hiked down to the Nile. When their fields needed watering, irrigation from the Nile supplied the water. Their connection and passageway to the outside world, whether it was for commerce or pleasure, was through the Nile. When Hashem struck the Nile, He struck at the very center of Egypt's heart, its pride and joy.

Let's see now how this played out.

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and Camelia (daughter)

Narrator: *Moshe and Aharon warned Pharaoh day after day for three weeks that if he doesn't let the Jews free, then all the water in Mitzrayim would turn to blood! Every day, Egyptians heard Moshe's warning broadcast over Egypt, and they ignored the warnings, continuing to beat the Jews and make them work as slaves. Until one day....*

Nerfitti: Wake up, Ramses! Time to start another day! Can you make sure that Sarah comes on time today? I have a big party tonight and I need to make sure that she cleans up—but good.

Ramses: It's so early! Why do I have to get up now? Just because those lazy Jews won't work without their morning beating? Ugh! Every day I have to beat them to make sure they don't slack off! Oh well.

Nerfitti: You make it sound as if it's a chore to supervise the Jews. I see your smile; you enjoy seeing the blood run down their backs.

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- Ramses:** True, true. But it's cruel of them to make me whip them. Do you know how heavy that whip is? They should injure themselves so I wouldn't need to bother! (*Ramses gets down from bed.*) Sarah better do a good job today for you, my dear Nerfitti, or I'll take another child of theirs and put it into the wall Yaakov is building today. What should it be this time, a boy or a girl?
(*Before Ramses finishes his sentence, Gamal and Camelia come running in.*)
- Gamal:** Mommy! Sarah said she was going to give me my morning bath, and instead she put me into a blood bath! I'm filthy and disgusting!
- Nerfitti:** That dirty Jewess, I'll fix her! One minute, Gamal, let me just wash my face and then I'll let you give ten punches to Sarah's nose. That will fix her. Call her here this minute!
(*Nerfitti goes over to the sink and turns on the water. Sarah appears.*)
- Nerfitti:** Ahhh! There is blood coming out of the tap! I'm all filthy! Sarah, stop laughing!
- Sarah:** (*to herself*) Hashem's paying the evil Egyptians back for all the times that they didn't let me wash myself, and for all the precious Jewish children they killed so Pharaoh could bathe in their blood! Let's see how they like it now. Thank you, Hashem, for letting me see their punishment. I knew You were keeping track of everything they do to us.
- Narrator:** *Ramses orders Yaakov to pour him a glass of water. Yaakov pours him a cold glass of water and hands it to Ramses.*
- Ramses:** (*takes the glass and gives Yaakov a kick for good measure*) At least we have good water to drink! (*He takes a big swig of his water, and right away spits it out.*)
- Yaakov:** (*to himself*) You spilled Jews' blood like water, now you will have to drink blood like water.
- Ramses:** Arrgh, my mouth is disgusting now! Nerfitti, I'm going out to the Nile to get water. Surely our god survived this plague. I'm sure the Nile is still cool and refreshing like always.
- Narrator:** *Ramses turns around to leave and gets hit right in the face, with a stream of blood coming right out of the wall! He runs out of the house quickly, soaking wet and frustrated. On his way down to the Nile, he reminisces of the blood that*

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used to pour out of the walls when he would stuff infants into them. An hour later, he comes back all flustered and collapses into a chair. Nerfitti and Camelia look on, all worried.

Ramses: You won't believe what happened; the whole world is talking about it. As EVERYONE knows, Pharaoh and the Nile are our gods and take excellent care of us. Pharaoh even made himself and the Nile! He never even goes to the bathroom; he is so godly.

Early this morning, Moshe and Aharon went down to the Nile, and there is a rumor going around that they actually saw Pharaoh going to the bathroom. If that wasn't bad enough, Aharon had the audacity to hit the Nile and turn even our god into blood. Everywhere you turn, it looks like blood; it almost looks like all the blood of the children that we threw into the Nile is coming to avenge us. Even the fish have died. It smells horrible!

Baruch: (*interrupting*) Next time, don't stop the Jews from multiplying like fish!

Ramses: Quiet! Who asked you? Anyways, as I was saying, I asked around and there is not a drop of water to be found in all of Egypt! The only good news is that our wizards are just as powerful and showed Moshe and Aharon that they also can turn water into blood.

Nerfitti: How does that help anyone? Now we have more blood? Let them turn it back into water!

Ramses: Be quiet, Nerfitti! Pharaoh, our god, said that since his wizards can duplicate this feat, we don't have to let out the Jews. After all, we are just as powerful as them.

Yaakov: (*looking at this scene*) What obstinate Egyptians! Hashem makes a miracle and they fool themselves into thinking that their optical illusions can protect them! This blood is even different from normal blood; it doesn't congeal and it's hot to touch. Hashem is making their god pay first—for the misery they have caused us!

Nerfitti: But Ramses, I'm thirsty and my mouth is parched!

Camelia and Gamal: (*screaming and crying*) We are filthy from trying to wash ourselves! Now we're covered in blood!

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- Leah:** You stopped my father from learning Torah, which is likened to water, so now you don't have water!
- Ramses:** I can't take all this crying and preaching, but what can we do? When will it stop? I know—I'll buy water from Yaakov, our slave. They seem to still have delicious cold water. I'll ask him to sell me some.
- Nerfitti:** But Ramses, won't he charge an exorbitant amount? You know how greedy those Jews are!
- Ramses:** Don't worry. I heard that our neighbor paid only one coin per glass.
- Yaakov:** *(to himself)* Of course I'll charge him. How many times did he make me bring him water for free! He owes me a fortune in fees. He deserves to have to pay now for some of what he did to me.
- Narrator:** *Ramses summons Yaakov to fetch him water "or else." Yaakov brings a barrel of water and a cup.*
- Ramses:** Here you go, Yaakov. Either accept this coin for a glass of water or I'll beat you to a pulp!
- Narrator:** *Yaakov pours him a glass of water, seeing that he has no choice. However, he is amused to see that as soon as the water reaches Ramses mouth, Ramses spits it out furiously.*
- Ramses:** What is the meaning of this? My neighbor paid one coin and got water! How come all I got is a mouthful of blood? I paid good money for that cup of water. What is the meaning of this?
- Yaakov:** I don't know, I don't make up the prices. Hashem does! Maybe because you always treated me worse than your neighbor did, it will cost you more. Try giving me two coins and we will see what happens.
- Narrator:** *Ramses gives two coins and is rewarded with one cup of water, abating his thirst just a little bit.*
- Ramses:** OK, fine, here is 100 coins for one barrel of water so Nerfitti can wash herself off.
- Narrator:** *Yaakov brings another barrel of water for baths, taking his time. One hour later...*

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Nerfitti: Sarah, get over here! My husband paid yours good money for this water, so why did it all turn to blood?

Sarah: Well, that was an hour ago, and demand is increasing. You know the basic rule of supply and demand, no? Hashem must have decided that a glass is worth four coins. Pay up or no water for you.

Nerfitti: You are going to bankrupt me! Please have pity on me and my children!

Sarah: Mercy on you and your children? Don't make me laugh! Did you ever have pity on us? Tell Pharaoh to let us go, and the plague will stop at once.

Ramses, Nerfitti, Gamal, Camelia: NEVER!

And so they suffered, always thirsty, never clean. Everywhere they turned they saw blood. They paid enormous sums to the Jews for a few drops of water, and those who couldn't afford it died of thirst. The Plague of Blood basically destroyed Egypt. Their god was shown to be powerless. Their clothing was ruined, and the air needed purification from the horrible smell. Experts predicted that the Nile would never be the same again. This caused Egypt to tumble from being the world power to being a third world country. Who knew if Egypt would ever recover? Egypt's trust in the Nile was shaken. Their god had failed them. The rock of their lives, the Nile, had betrayed them. They had counted on its steady delivery of water for their daily living. If they couldn't trust the Nile, what could they trust?

The Jews knew the answer to that question. They should trust in Hashem; Hashem is the only dependable thing on earth. Unfortunately, no one asked them.

The blood assaulted almost all their senses. Everywhere they looked they saw blood. The fruit sprouted blood; it came out of the walls and on all their utensils. They smelled the horrible stench of dead fish (which was worse than the smell of the Jews who had died at the Egyptians' hands). Everything tasted like blood, since all they could drink was blood. They bathed in the blood from lack of water to wash in. The only thing not affected was their ears, but that would soon change....

צפרדע

When we last left off, the only sense that the Plague of Blood hadn't damaged was the Egyptian's sense of hearing. Hashem then escalated the next siege of the frogs to assault their ears and permanently cause damage to their hearing. Additionally, this caused them great psychological pain. They were not able to think clearly and had

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immense fear from the incessant croaking. This plague also showed that Hashem had control over the creatures of the water.

Narrator: *Let's rejoin our Egyptian family and see what they are up to.*

Nerfitti has Sarah and Leah hard at work scrubbing all the blood stains from her clothing. Yaakov and Baruch are painting the walls white again. After the Plague of Blood, the whole house needed to be cleaned and aired out from the red tinge left from the blood.

Ramses: Nerfitti, I'm taking the kids out. Watching these Jews work is wiping me out; they look so exhausted. I need some fresh air!

Nerfitti: How despicable of them. They should make more of an effort to be more pleasant to look at. Then you wouldn't get tired out so quickly.

Ramses: I know! Slaves nowadays, what can you do? Anyway, I'm taking the kids out for some air. Come Camelia and Gamal! Let's go down to the Nile and play with the frogs. Moshe keeps announcing that the frogs are going to multiply and take over Egypt. But our god the Nile would never let creatures that live in him hurt us! The only plague is Moshe, annoying us with his announcements.

Narrator: *Everyone goes down to the Nile, and the carriage is pulled by Yaakov and Baruch, who wearily do as they are told. Finally, they reach the riverside.*

Gamal: Look, there's a huge frog. I'm going to go try and catch it.

Camelia: I'm not going to catch it—that's hard work. Hey, Baruch, go catch me a big, slimy frog!

Ramses: Don't catch it, Gamal, hit it! How dare such a big, disgusting frog come out of our god's mouth! Where are all the cute little ones that you are always bringing home? This one is an affront to the Nile.

Narrator: *Ramses hits the frog, and out of its mouth come hundreds of smaller frogs. Ramses doesn't learn his lesson and keeps hitting the frogs, causing more and more frogs to come out.*

Ramses: These frogs are all running to the palace, as if they want to get to Pharaoh! He was the one who started the Jewish enslavement, but what does that have to do with anything? Jews, saddle up! We are off to the palace!

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- Yaakov:** *(to Baruch)* Do you hear something, Baruch? I can't hear anything above all these frogs. This croaking is drowning out all other sounds. *(looks at Ramses)* Ramses looks quite mad, I wonder what he wants? Oh, I know! He must be giving us a day off. Yes, he probably is saying that we should take Mommy and the girls on a trip. *(to Ramses)* OK, Ramses, thank you very much, off we go!
- Baruch:** *(laughs)* Can I go after them to see what's happening by Pharaoh? I won't make too much trouble.
- Yaakov:** OK, but be back by supper.
- Narrator:** *Left with no one to pull his carriage, Ramses proceeds to the palace on foot. The walk, normally a short stroll, takes forever. There are frogs literally underfoot, making the going quite tough. When they finally get to the palace, they find the place in total and complete disarray. Frogs are everywhere! They somehow even got into the vaults and are making a ruckus in the cellars. The palace is swarming with frogs.*
- Gamal:** Let's go see Pharaoh, I'm sure that the frogs can't control him! He is our god, after all.
- Ramses:** That's a great idea, Gamal, but look at Pharaoh. He looks like he is in excruciating pain. Oh my, Pharaoh just opened his mouth and three frogs jumped inside! I see them going down his throat; now they're in his stomach. This is totally against their nature—jumping into people's mouths. Oh no, all the diplomats are fleeing from Pharaoh and going home insulted. This is going to be a PR disaster! All of our so-called friends are running home scared.
- Baruch:** *(giggling)* Pharaoh started the decrees, and now Hashem starts the Plague of Frogs with him! The Egyptians threw people, who live on dry land, into the river, and now creatures of the river are going onto dry land! *Mah rabu ma'asecha Hashem!*
- Ramses:** Baruch, I'll get you for laughing at our king (though you might have a point)! Come, Gamal and Camelia, were going home now for supper and bed!
- Ramses:** *(upon arriving home)* We're home, Nerfitti. What's for supper?
- Nerfitti:** What did you say? I can't hear you. Help me, Ramses, those Jews ran off on me. I shouted at them to come back, but they pretended they couldn't

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hear me. I had to cook supper all by myself, so I turned on the oven and in jumped 100 frogs! They extinguished the fire. Frogs jumping into ovens, who would imagine? So, we have only cold food tonight.

Narrator: *The frogs make a big kiddush Hashem by jumping into the fire, thus negating the chillul Hashem of Pharaoh denying Hashem's existence.*

The Egyptians sit down to eat and then go off to bed. As soon as they get to bed, they hear a piercing scream.

Nerfitti: Ramses, that sounds like Camelia. What could be the matter?

Ramses: I know what the matter is! The frogs sound like the screams of the mothers when I would rip their children from their arms. They sound like the wails of the babies as I placed them in the walls of the imperial buildings!

Nerfitti: What are we to do, Ramses? After a whole day of laboring in the kitchen, I need to sleep.

Yaakov: *(exclaims in indignation)* How do you think we feel when after a full day of work, you make us stand here with this candle for your night light! Now, Hashem is giving you a little taste of your own medicine.

Narrator: *Throughout the night, the frogs croak incessantly, not stopping for a second. Day and night for three weeks, they don't let the Egyptians have the slightest bit of rest. This was exact punishment for not letting Jews daven, day or night. The frogs jump all around their bodies, wreaking havoc on their intestines and in all their inner organs. The Egyptians stayed alive only by an open miracle! Later in the evening, Ramses tells about his day.*

Ramses: I saddled my horse to go to Pharaoh to see what to do about these frogs. The roads are littered with frogs; my horse panicked, and I was thrown to the ground. After wading through all the frogs, now on foot, I reached Pharaoh and I saw this embarrassing story. Our god was trying to talk to Moshe, but frogs kept getting stuck in his throat, making it impossible for him to talk. After this humiliating experience, I heard Pharaoh tell Moshe that he should go pray to Hashem to remove the plague. Our wise king told Moshe to make the frogs die tomorrow, to make sure that Moshe wasn't playing some trick, based on weird weather patterns.

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Nerfitti: (*interrupting*) Weird weather patterns, my foot! These frogs are clearly a miracle. No frogs jump into humans and fire! We are kept alive by some miracle. Frogs have crawled into our bodies, through every opening! Even our organs have been smashed. How could Pharaoh ask for another day of this torture?

The next day, all the frogs died, leaving Egypt with a major cleanup project. Every Egyptian had to clear away over 8,500 kilo worth of frogs! This took days, and the smell of rotting frogs overpowered the nation, causing the more sensitive ones to die. New mental hospitals had to be created to accommodate all the people who went insane from the constant noise. Once again, all the senses were assaulted. They smelled and touched the frogs; they heard their croaking; and during this time only saw green everywhere (better than red!). They tasted little frog hands and feet in all their food. It would take a long time for them to recover from this one!

כינים

This next plague is the last of the set of דצ"ח. Its purpose was to show that Hashem could create the world *ex nihilo* (from nothing). This was proven by Hashem creating lice out of dirt! It showed Hashem's control over the land and the element of dirt.

Narrator: *Let's rejoin our friends, who are finishing up the great urban renewal project—the removal of the frogs.*

Ramses: Ahhh! I can now breathe in the fresh air once again. Three weeks I've had to sit here supervising the Jews to remove these dead frogs. They made such a horrific stench. I wanted to gag just being so close to them. But now, thank Pharaoh and our other gods, we can breathe a little bit. Hey you, Jew, why did you stop working? *Thwack!* That will teach you to not be so lazy! Get a move on with those frogs!

Gamal: Maybe we should head on over to the quarries now that the frogs are mostly removed?

Ramses: It's such a pleasure to see those Jews working, making bricks out of the dirt to build up Egypt. After all, it's their fault all these plagues came down. That's Quarry A, it's almost done. All the dirt there has been made into bricks to build Pisom. Soon, we will move onto Quarry B!

Gamal: Look over there! That can't be Quarry A, it's moving! The dirt is coming alive!

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Ramses: Ouch! It turned into lice! They're crawling up onto me! We are all infested! Let's run home, quick!

Narrator: *The Egyptians flee the scene to go back home. They run quickly through the streets, racing up the path toward home. They are running so quickly that they fail to notice that some of the path had collapsed. The dirt binding the cobblestones had turned into lice, causing a huge hole in the road. They fall into a pit and are immediately eaten up by all the lice in the pit.*

Ramses: How did this pit get in the middle of our walkway?

Gamal: Don't you remember? You forced Baruch to dig this pit in the hot sun in the middle of the day. He was sweating so much that lice came from the lack of hygiene. Then you made him fill it up again with dirt! We were laughing at the Jew forced to do purposeless work. Now the dirt that we made him fill the pit up with became lice! All the structures of Egypt are unstable and in danger of collapse.

Narrator: *All day, the Egyptians try to deal with this epidemic. As soon as they remove one louse, two more jump to take its place! They work nonstop, hopping from foot to foot to try to ease a little bit of the pain. The pain of this was almost as constant as they had made the Jews work. The Egyptians can't sit down, since their chairs are full of bugs. They can't lie down because their beds are similarly covered. There is no escape from Hashem's judgment!*

Ramses: I'm so tired! All this "dancing" is making me exhausted. If I could only rest my eyes a little bit...

Yaakov: Rest? He asks for rest. What happened when I asked for rest after a full day of backbreaking labor? Hashem is punishing you exactly for your crimes. For every little bit of pain that you caused me, He is now paying you back.

Ramses: Enough of this prattling, I'm going to see the magicians. They are just as powerful as your god!

Narrator: *Ramses comes home an hour later looking all dejected and depressed.*

Ramses: The magicians have given up. They admitted to Moshe that they are no match for the Jews' God. They said that lice can only be brought about from the *etzba Elokim*. That's it, Yaakov. Take your family and go home;

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I won't make you work anymore. You are not allowed to leave Egypt, but your work here is done.

Yaakov: Wow! Let's sing, Baruch! *Hu borei*—Hashem creates. He is Hashem, past, present, and future. They can't deny his *metzius*. They let us free, thank G-d!

אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים והוא לבדו עשה עושה ויעשה לכל המעשים.

After the Plague of Lice, Pharaoh was forced to admit that there was Hashem, that there was another power that he had to answer to. However, he still said that Hashem does not care about our actions. He's not directing the world and He does not differentiate between good and evil. He is up in Heaven and does not interfere with this world. Pharaoh claimed that Hashem does not consider what a person does in this world. These next plagues will show that Hashem specifically punished the Egyptians and showed that He is the Director.

עֲרֹב

At this point, Egypt's environment was in shambles. Their water supply was polluted from the blood and the dead fish. Their air wasn't breathable from the stench of the dead frogs. All their amazing pyramids and architectural feats were in danger of collapsing from the lice. Hashem had pulled the very ground from under their feet. This showed Hashem's power over water and dirt. Now, Hashem would show His power over living land creatures.⁵

5 The wild animals did not harm people who feared Hashem. The *Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh* adds a fascinating point by *mechiras Yosef*. Yehudah had a great idea to save Yosef when he told his brothers not to kill Yosef outright but rather to throw him into a pit of snakes and scorpions. This was a plan to save him? To be poisoned by snakes instead of shot by the brothers? What was Yehudah's plan to save Yosef?

The *Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh* answers that the brothers thought that Yosef was a sinner and deserving of death. He was trying to be king over them, when that job, in their mind, belonged to Yehudah. He was acting like an eldest son when he informed on them to his father—the job of the firstborn, Reuven. They thought that he was trying to push out different *Shevatim* and consolidate the future Klal Yisrael under his leadership.

Yehudah said that he has a test, a way to figure out if they were right in their suspicions: throw him into a pit filled with dangerous animals. Yehudah said this knowing that it is not the animals that kill, but rather the *chet* that kills. Yehudah reasoned that if Yosef was truly deserving of death in Hashem's eyes, the snakes would poison him. However, if the brothers had stuck to their original plan and killed him with their own hands, then they would not be able to tell if Yosef was truly guilty or not. Maybe it was their *bechirah* that caused his death, and they would never know if he truly deserved it.

This *Ohr Hachaim* needs to be understood. Was Yehudah suggesting that the brothers could kill Yosef even if he didn't deserve it? A person with his free will can "kill" another person before Hashem decides that it is his time

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- Narrator:** *Our Egyptian family make their way down to Eretz Goshen and start asking about their former slaves. Suddenly, they see all the animals fleeing!*
- Gamal:** Look! Where are all the lions running too? And over there, is that an elephant? All the wild animals are fleeing Goshen! Where are they going?
- Ramses:** I don't know, son. Let's wait and see.
- Camelia:** They are heading straight for our house! Oh no! HELP!
- Leah:** *(to herself)* Hashem is making all the animals leave Goshen for the rest of Mitzrayim. He is doing this to show that He cares about us and distinguishes between us and the Egyptians. Hashem is showing that He is the Director of His Creation!
- Ramses:** Actually, Camelia, they're heading toward the palace. Those animals don't know what they're up against. Come, let's watch Pharaoh make mincemeat out of them! *(They exit.)*
- Baruch:** Foolish Egyptians. You still believe in Pharaoh? Only Hashem can decide if Pharaoh will be harmed or not. *(to Sarah)* Can I go along with them, Mommy, to see Hashem's miracles?
- Sarah:** Sure, sweetie, I'm sure you'll be safe. Hashem won't let the animals touch you. He's *mashgiach* over them to keep us safe.
- Narrator:** *The Egyptians make their way to Pharaoh's palace. When they get there, they can't believe what they see.*⁶

to die? The Gemara says that even a blade of grass can't grow until it is announced in Heaven! How can a person's very life be ended without a Heavenly decree?

The *Sifsei Chaim* answers that of course nothing could happen without Hashem's *yedi'ah* and consent. However, Hashem is committed to giving people free will. Through free will, a person can earn himself *Olam Haba* and the ultimate pleasure of *deveikus* in Hashem. This principle is so important that in order for it to be stopped, a person has to deserve to live. A person has to be able to escape the danger through complete *middas ha'din*. If that person did a *chet* and therefore rebelled against the King, Hashem, and really deserves to die, He does not have enough merits to escape a person's *bechirah*.

- 6 Man's Plans—Egyptians wanted to secure their borders and Pharaoh's palace, so they made the Jews bring wild animals. Dangerous lions and hungry tigers had to be brought into Egypt to prevent anyone from escaping. Divine Control—When Moshe Rabbeinu went into Pharaoh's palace and when the Jews left Mitzrayim, all the animals acted like they were little pussycats at the feet of their masters. They brought in animals to make other people scared, but in the end they were the ones that were frightened upon seeing that the natural world had no effect on the Jews.

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- Nerfitti:** The palace is under siege! It looks like a jungle! I could barely make out where the entrance is. Where did all these vines come from, and why is it so humid? There's a snake coming up from behind to poison Pharaoh—watch out!
- Gamal:** Oh no, what's happening now? It's snowing in the Middle East! A polar bear just dispatched one of the guards. And now he's going for Pharaoh himself!
- Baruch:** (*to himself*) I get what Hashem is doing. Hashem is making sure that the animals are comfortable in their natural habitats: snow for the polar bear and a jungle for the snake. Wow! If Hashem is making sure that the animals are comfortable, then He surely will make sure that I always have what I need!
- Ramses:** Now the palace is a desert and the floor is littered with scorpions. Look! Some eagles are going into a dive. It seems that Pharaoh is no match for these creatures. Let's get out of here, quick. Come home everybody.
- Narrator:** *On their way home, the Egyptians are chased by wild animals. Just as a lion is charging at them, they jump into the Nile.*
- Nerfitti:** Whew! Now we are safe, protected by our god the Nile.
- Camelia:** Yikes! There's a crocodile, and more frogs! I don't like frogs anymore. Make them go away, Daddy! Please?
- Ramses:** I can't make anything go away; our gods don't seem to be protecting us. Hashem only protects the Jews. Look, Baruch is standing there playing with all the animals. That wolf is especially fond of him, as he is from Binyamin, the tribe compared to a wolf. Now he's frolicking with a lion; maybe he's from Yehudah? Hashem is directing the world, I see it now. Eretz Goshen is safe and Mitzrayim is now more dangerous than the jungle. We are being punished with animals for daring to touch the Jews who we treated like animals!

The family made their way home, battered and bruised, only alive by a miracle. Many of their neighbors and friends have been mauled by lions or bitten by snakes and

Lesson Learned—The Gemara says that it's not the snake that kills but rather the sin. If a person has perfect faith in Hashem and keeps in mind "*Ein od milvado*," the *Nefesh Hachaim* says that he will be protected from all harm.

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scorpions. Camelia's best friend was kidnapped by an army of gorillas; her father had tried to rescue her but was felled by a vicious tiger. Nerfitti remembers when he had kidnapped Yaakov's youngest daughter and realizes that he is now being punished for that despicable act.

The Egyptians cowered in their house in fear, unable to sleep from the noises of the jungle. No one was safe. Hashem made all the creatures come *b'irbuvya*, all mixed together. Animals that normally don't mix, such as polar bears and lions, all came together to punish Egypt. Though animals normally don't differentiate between Jew and non-Jew, Hashem showed through this plague that He can differentiate, as He is the Creator **and** Director of the world.

דבר

On to the second plague of the set. Here, Hashem showed that He directs and controls not just where animals go but also their very lives. He can control a plague so that only Egyptian livestock will die. He is the Director and makes sure that a plague, which can't normally discriminate by itself, will only touch those whom He wishes to punish. He showed this by way of the very air affecting land animals. His power is all-encompassing and fired with stunning accuracy.

Narrator: *Ramses and Gamal are taking stock of the animals that were eaten by Arov, to survey what the beasts left over.*

Gamal: We have thirteen goats left.

Ramses: And twelve sheep. Our sheep god didn't fare too well against those animals; forty-seven got eaten. This must be retribution for not letting Yaakov take care of his livestock. At least our lone donkey looks nice and strong.

Narrator: *Just then, Ramses turns around to go home, and from behind, he hears a tremendous crash!*

Ramses: Oh no, what now?

Gamal: All the animals died! Whatever we just counted—those left over from the last plague—just fell to the ground. I don't understand—they were so healthy just a minute ago! What could have happened?

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Ramses: This must be the plague that Moshe warned us about. It devastated all our animals. But it can't be *Dever*; look at Baruch's little pet chicken still running around. If it was that plague, even it should have died.

Gamal: I get it, Father. Their god is showing us that He controls the plague. He creates and He kills. He has complete control and is aware of which animal should be killed and which animal should survive. Once again, He has shown us that He is the Director.⁷

שחין

This plague showed the Egyptians once and for all that Hashem is the Director. He directed the boils to afflict the Egyptians, and He spared the Jews. This was a plague of the fire element, the final of the four elements with which Hashem made this world. He used it to directly harm people for the first time during *Makkas Shechin*.

Narrator: *Ramses returns from the palace in a bewildered state.*

Ramses: You won't believe what I just saw! Moshe and Aharon came in front of Pharaoh, took ashes, and threw them up to the sky—all the way to the heavens. Then the ashes scattered over the whole Egypt. None of this makes sense. How could they take a fistful of ashes and throw it so high? And how did it cover such a large distance? Hey! The ashes are falling on us! I'm scared, Nerfitti, I don't know what those ashes are going to do to us!

Ramses, Nerfitti, Gamal, Camelia: OWWWWW!

Gamal: It's boils! And not just regular boils—I counted twenty-four different types, just on my body. How did they all come from just one type of ash?

Nerfitti: Ouch! Well, at least the Jews also got this plague this time; the ashes fell over the whole country.

Baruch: (*jumps into the scene*) Silly Nerfitti, do I look like I'm harmed? Hashem differentiates between people and gives each exactly what's coming to them.

⁷ Lesson Learned—Hashem directs all events. Everything that happens is from Hashem. Whether it seems good or bad, Hashem only wants our best. All things that happen to us are a present from Hashem. Nothing is by accident, as the Egyptians are learning.

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When will you learn? If I don't deserve to be harmed, then I won't be. If you do, nothing can save you from Hashem.

Ramses: I need to lie down. Bursting the boils on my feet is killing.

Gamal: I tried that already; it doesn't help. When you lie down, it bursts the boils on your back. Ouch! There goes another one.

Narrator: *Baruch returns home and relates to his parents their former masters' anguish from the boils.*

Sarah: Serves them right! Even when I was giving birth, they made me continue working while standing. They never let me lie down! They're dancing from foot to foot, getting tired and hurt, just like they wore out my husband's feet and back from all the heavy lifting and cement mixing.

Yaakov: That's right. These boils are going to leave them scars just like the scars and boils that fill my back from all the whippings and beatings.

Narrator: *With this plague, we can now declare "Elokeinu" with a full heart. We can now sing the second part of the song:*

הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים. (אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים והוא לבדו עשה עושה ויעשה לכל המעשים.)

ברך

This plague began the third set. Hashem proved that He is the Creator in the first set and that He runs the intimate details of our lives in the second set. Now, in this set, He proves that He is the only power in the universe. He shows how the other "gods" that the Egyptians worshipped have no power. Specifically, the sun god and the lamb constellation will be shown to be powerless against Hashem.

Narrator: *Moshe comes before Pharaoh and makes a scratch on the wall.*

Moshe: At this time tomorrow, if you don't let my people go, Egypt will be struck with hail the likes of which you have never seen before. Hail filled with fire will come pounding down like guided missiles, destroying everything it touches. When the sunlight shines on the crack, destruction will befall Egypt.

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- Pharaoh:** Hail in Egypt? You must have lost your mind. It doesn't even rain here, and you think that it can hail? Get out of here! I don't want to listen to this drivel anymore.
- Yaakov:** Come, everyone! Let's go see the scratch that Moshe made. We will be able to see an open miracle; hail will start coming down the moment that the sun reaches the line. The sun is out in full force—not a cloud in the sky, even though it's about to hail. This will allow us to see the sun fall on the crack. All this is part of the miracle that Hashem is going to make. He can do anything He wants to. Just to allow us to see a small detail (like the crack on the wall), He is making a whole miracle. If Hashem wants to give me something or save me, nothing can stop Him.
- Baruch:** After the sun hits the crack that Moshe made, the clouds will gather instantly, and hail will start coming down. The Egyptians worshipping the sun will be shown to be a pack of fools. Hashem will bring down his plague right “in front” of the sun's face. The sun will be covered, and hail from his territory will punish the Egyptians. Hashem will show them that the sun is just a messenger with no intrinsic power at all.
- Narrator:** *The family makes their way to a spot where they could see the action. There is a carnival-like atmosphere among the Jews as the anticipated moment arrives. Five, four, three, two, one...! When the sun hits the line, instantly the sky turns stormy and dark. The very sky that never rains starts spewing hail with the sun “looking” on helplessly.*
- Baruch:** Look! I see a cow leaving Ramses' house. Bullseye! Hashem got that cow as it left the threshold of the house.
- Yaakov:** When will they learn? Hashem warned them to leave their animals inside. Oh well. At least we get to see a good show. Do you see, kids? Hashem has taken fire and water and put them together in order to punish the Egyptians. Never say the word “impossible” when it comes to Hashem. Hashem rules over nature; nature does not rule over Hashem. Look over there! What is Nerfitti saying?
- Nerfitti:** These animals stink; why are they in our house again? Ugh, the horse just made again! Hey, keep your snout to yourself, piggy!

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- Ramses:** Well, Moshe said that if the animals are not in the house, then they will be killed by the hail. Didn't you see the cow get decimated as it left the house? Don't you see that Hashem is punishing us for not letting the Jews bathe? We smell like animals!
- Nerfitti:** I think that it's worse than that. We're living with the animals, not just smelling like them. We acted like animals to the Jews and now we have to live with them.
- Camelia:** (*whimpering from under the bed*) Look out the window—the hail is huge! It's the size of watermelons. The noise is soooooo scary! Why did we ever touch those Jews? Oh no! Mommy just fainted from fright; she looks traumatized.
- Ramses:** I remember once making Yaakov stay with the chickens to prevent them from being eaten by the wolves. This is what he must have felt like. Careful, Gamal, get your hand inside! I just saw our neighbor's hand get chopped off. He was stoned like he stoned his Jews!
- Leah:** Look at the orchards. I remember working on them and tending them in all weather—even during that sandstorm. Well, Hashem is taking care of those Egyptians now; their trees are being cut down by the storm. The grass is also being drowned and burned. The green grass that they didn't let Abba lie down on is now gone. But look, I wonder why Hashem left the wheat and barley. Why did he not destroy those also?
- Yaakov:** Don't worry, Leah, Hashem did not overlook anything. We don't know His master plan, but I am sure that He has a reason.

אֲרֵבָה

Now we will see why Hashem left over the wheat and barley: He was preparing for the Plague of Locusts. This plague will show that only Hashem has power, not locusts and not grasshoppers. Millions of locusts will do His will when He wants it.

Narrator: *Let's join up with Pharaoh and his slaves as they meet to discuss Moshe's warning about a Plague of Locusts on the way. Somehow, Baruch sneaks into the top-secret meeting and hears everything from right outside the door.*

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Pharaoh: For three weeks, every single day without fail, Moshe warns us about another plague. I've heard all your complaints and arguments. "Let the Jews go"; "How much longer can we hold out?" "Hashem is the all-powerful Creator and He loves the Jews." Feh! Let them go? From Egypt? Never! Listen, Moshe told me that he wants to go serve his god. I offered for his men to do so, leaving the children, and he refused. So I sent him away from my presence. Moshe thinks that he can tell me what to do? Absolutely not. Even if I let them leave, it will be on my terms.

Baruch: *(to himself)* Pharaoh, Pharaoh, when will you learn? Hashem is the one in control, and He decides when we should leave. Hey, what's that buzzing? It's the locusts, they're coming! Pharaoh refused to let us out, and now they have to deal with locusts. Oh my, look at those locusts! They're huge! There are so many that they cover the sky. Their sun god is covered and defeated yet again! Their gods are no match for Hashem. The locusts are now going to the fields; what is going to be with all the crops?

Narrator: *Baruch runs off to the fields just in time to see a swarm of locusts dive toward the ground.*

Baruch: Wow! Look at the locusts' appetite! They must be starving; they are eating everything in sight. All the crops that were left over by the hail are now being consumed by locusts. Look at that field over there! It looks like a war zone; wheat and barley are lying everywhere! The harvest is demolished! The locusts sure follow their orders like soldiers.

Gamal: Yes, the locusts are soldiers of Hashem. I guess we deserve it for trying to destroy Hashem's army—the Jews.

Camelia: *(surveying the carnage)* Yes, we made the Jews work hard in the fields, and now we are being punished. Our crops are being pulverized; nothing is left. What did we gain from our wickedness?

Baruch: I think you are also being punished for not letting my father work in his own fields and have his own crops. Now just like we don't have crops, you also don't.

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- Gamal:** What? I understand if we are punished for working your father so hard. But why should we be punished for him not being able to work in his own fields?
- Baruch:** Because that was also your fault. Hashem is perfect and takes into account every scenario, whether He is punishing you for your sins or if He is rewarding you for your mitzvos. My Abba even told me that when I do an *aveirah*, Hashem punishes me for the *bittul Torah* in addition. After all, I could have been learning instead of being busy with *aveiros*.
- Gamal:** Wow, Hashem's judgment is so exact. We better do *teshuvah* for our *aveiros*—quick!
- Baruch:** Yes, don't worry. Just do *teshuvah* and everything will be all right. Hashem does not want to punish you; He just wants you to do *teshuvah*. Look, the locusts are done in the fields and now went inside the houses. They're eating everything, even what's being kept in storage. There is nothing left!
- Gamal:** We are going to starve! We have nothing left to eat! Serves us right for not letting you Jews have time to eat when you were our slaves. Well, at least we have the locusts that died in the fields. We can eat those. We can gather them and then pickle them. Oh no, what's that wind?
- Sarah:** Watch out—that wind is Hashem's way of taking all your pickled locusts away. You will work hard to gather the locusts, just like we worked hard. Then you will see the pain of all of your toil being for naught, since all the locusts will disappear!

חשך

Hashem is up to Plague Three in Stage Three. He now brings a paralyzing darkness—one so thick that the Egyptians will forget that there ever was such a thing as the sun. This Plague will show Hashem's complete and utter dominance over all other powers. He shows that He is the only power and that everything is subservient to His will. Even in the Heavens there is no one like Him. He won't just cover the sun, but He will remove its light entirely.

Narrator: *Let's join our Egyptian family as they sit and relax in their living room.*

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- Nerfitti:** Ah, finally, some time to relax after a traumatic week with the locusts. All I need is a book and everything will be great. Camelia, can you go get me a book?
- Camelia:** Sure. (*while walking*) I just want to tell you that....
- Narrator:** *As Camelia is speaking, the darkness comes without warning. The entire family is frozen in place. Camelia's mouth is left hanging open, and she freezes mid-step. Ramses is stranded in the bathroom. The pitch-blackness is terrifying, as there is no light at all.*
- Baruch:** (*surveys the scene and starts laughing*) This is so cool. They can't even see their hands. They are going to need some serious counseling after this. They should all go for family therapy. Hashem is paying them back for all the trauma and suffering they caused us. Every other plague was physical, while this plague is a major trauma. I see Ramses is stuck in the bathroom. Enjoy your week in there, Ramses!
- Leah:** Camelia looks frightened. She can't see that her mother is right next to her! She thinks she is alone. This serves them right. I remember waiting for Mommy to come home, sitting in the dark, waiting and waiting. I had no hope, and now they can't fathom an end to their suffering. Our hope was extinguished, and we could not imagine happier days.
- Yaakov:** Don't worry, Leah, it's all over. Hashem is now taking us out. Let's play a game.
- Baruch:** Yes. Let's play "Tickle the Egyptian on the Nose"!
- Yaakov:** That's a good one, but I had a different game in mind. Hide-and-seek, anyone? Moshe just told me that we should search all over the house for all their gold and jewelry. We should look for anything valuable that we might want to take with us when we leave. So, let's go find all their valuables!
- Leah:** Oooh, that sounds like fun! Hey, I found a gold bracelet. Can I take it, Abba?
- Yaakov:** Not yet. For now, we are just looking. We will take things, but only when Hashem tells us. If we want to, we can leave Mitzrayim now. The Egyptians are all frozen; they can't stop us. Do you know why we aren't leaving, Baruch?

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- Baruch:** Because even if the Egyptians won't know, Hashem will. Hashem will know we left when we were not supposed to. Next time I am by myself and am tempted to do an *aveirah*, I won't. I'll remember that Hashem is watching and that it is Him that I fear. I don't fear the Egyptians; they can't do anything to me if Hashem does not want it to be.
- Sarah:** (*sifts through Nerfitti's jewelry*) Yaakov, you remember when I had to wake you up every day? It was pitch-black, a little bit like our former masters are experiencing now. I so disliked having to pull you out of bed. Nerfitti made you go to the market before it opened to stand on a line by her favorite jeweler. He was coming out with a new collection and she wanted to be the first to get this limited edition necklace. Well, here it is. I'm going to enjoy wearing it when Hashem tells us to leave.
- Yaakov:** Now I am happy that I was forced to go. You will have something nice to wear for Yom Tov. I am going to remember this moment. When it seems like Hashem is punishing me, really it is for my good. See, I got you a present for Pesach and I didn't even realize it at the time. If I would have known, I would have jumped out of bed. Next time Hashem gives me a hard test, I'm going to be excited and pass with flying colors.
- Baruch:** I found the gold candleholder Ramses used to make you hold late at night so that they could read in bed. I bet they wish they had some of that light now!
- Sarah:** Yes, but now look—we can see, and the Egyptians can't. It's a miracle. Normally, a little bit of light pushes away the darkness. Now, though, it is light for us and for them it is still pitch-dark. Hashem is actually changing nature to show that He is the only power that exists. Nature is just a servant serving Him.

בכורות

This plague will be the last of the set that proves Hashem's power. Hashem is the only one that controls our destiny. Hashem kills the firstborns of every family, showing that our lives are all in His Hands. He does this while the Jews are eating the *korban Pesach*—a lamb, the Egyptian god. Even when their “god” should be angry at the Jews and cause them to suffer, the Jews pass the night safely, protected by Hashem. Hashem

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also will show that He can distinguish between who the firstborn is and who is not. Lots of secrets will be revealed on this night, as people—who previously weren't thought to be firstborns—will be killed in all of Egypt, showing Hashem's knowledge of all events in this world.

Narrator: *Let's join the Jews as they finish up eating their korban Pesach.*

Baruch: Look everyone, it is almost *chatzos*. Let's all be quiet so that we can hear the clock chime midnight. At that moment, the plague will start!

Narrator: *The whole family sits with anxious anticipation, watching the second hand creep ever closer. As their clock chimes, the silence is shattered.*

Sarah: Do you hear that wailing? The Egyptian firstborns must have just died. They got punished for harming Hashem's firstborn—us! Those mothers had no mercy when they killed my children. Listen to their wailing over their kids!

Yaakov: Do you hear Ramses screaming? I wonder what he just found out. Maybe he finally realized that Gamal was not really his firstborn. I remember when they made our distinguished leaders do such degrading labor; now Hashem is making them be embarrassed through their firstborns. Come everyone, let's end our meal with one last song. Everyone let's sing to Hashem together: *והוא לבדו עשה עשה ויעשה לכל המעשים*.

Narrator: *OK, now let's sing it from the top. Let's remember that we learned from דצ"ך that Hashem is the Creator; from עד"ש that He is the Director; and we just finished learning that He is the only power in existence by בא"ח ב. So, let's declare our belief and sing:*

אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שהבורא יתברך שמו הוא בורא ומנהיג לכל הברואים והוא לבדו עשה
עושה ויעשה לכל המעשים.

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Their Egyptian masters: Ramses (father), Nerfitti (mother), Gamal (son), and Camelia (daughter)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Originally from Passaic, NJ, Levi Felsenthal began his studies in Yeshivas Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway, NY. He then continued onto *beis midrash* at Yeshivas Zichron Moshe (South Fallsburg) and Yeshivas Yagdil Torah (Yerushalayim). He currently lives in Israel with his wife and three children, and spends his days learning in Yeshivas Mir in Yerushalayim.