



## A GOOD WAIT CARRIES WEIGHT

Erev Shabbos Parashas Vaera 5781

Dear Parents,

One of the greatest challenges facing any human is to admit he or she was wrong. We have no better example of one who failed spectacularly in this, than *Paroh*, described in these weeks' *Parshiyos*, as *Bnei Yisroel* are poised to leave *Mitzrayim*. The first nine *Makos*, plagues, afforded *Paroh* nine separate opportunities to admit he was wrong in his decision to not allow the Jews to leave. The refutation of his misguided thinking was clear, yet he persisted until the overwhelming devastation of the tenth plague overcame his psychological resistance, and he was able to admit he was wrong.

**“One of the greatest challenges facing any human is to admit he or she was wrong.”**

In describing the second plague, *Tzefardea*, frogs, (*Shemos 8:2*) the Torah uses the singular, “and the frog arose and covered the land of Egypt” as if the plague was one frog. In fact, *Rashi*, quoting the *Medrash (Tanchuma 14)*, and the *Gemora (Sanhedrin 67b)* says indeed initially there was one frog. When the Egyptians confronted it they hit it repeatedly, and each time they hit it, swarms of frogs emerged from this one frog.

*HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin zt'l*, in his commentary on *Chumash, Oznaim LaTorah* questions the purpose of the plague beginning with just one frog. He explains “*This is the approach of the Master of Mercy – to give time to the sinner to return to Him.*” In a similar vein, many of the *Makos* were preceded by a warning on the previous day, giving time for the Egyptians to consider doing *Teshuva*. In the case of the frog, had the Egyptians corrected their ways, the frog would have simply returned to the Nile and disappeared.

We can glean significant insights from this idea. First, we should be greatly encouraged even if we have acted inappropriately. If *Hashem* designed the *Makkos* with a built-in mechanism to more easily enable the evil *Paroh* and his people to do *Teshuva*, it shows that not only does *Hashem* not give up on anyone, but it is as if He is actively reaching out to bring even the worst sinner back to Him.

The second insight should give us a powerful tool in raising our children to go in the proper path. Part and parcel of the learning and growing up process is making mistakes. Children act inappropriately due to ignorance, due to failing to think clearly, poor judgment and peer pressure, among other reasons. When we catch them in a “mistake,” how we approach them will be critical in determining if our intervention will be effective or ineffective, constructive or *chas v'sholom* destructive.

***This is the approach of the Master of Mercy – to give time to the sinner to return to Him.***

From the words of the *Oznayim LaTorah* we learn that if you want someone to admit a mistake or wrongdoing on their own, they must be given time. With time, a person, and especially a child, has the space in which to think, reflect and possibly allow an alternative viewpoint to take hold of his mind and his senses. Anyone who is criticized, instinctively puts up a defensive wall that no logic in the world can penetrate. But with time, space and encouragement, he or she might initiate progressive steps to change. If we want to turn a child's mistake into a teachable moment, once

we've stopped the harmful or inappropriate behavior, we must step back and wait.

Parents should know very well that you don't reprimand or give consequences out of anger. This idea of giving time for reflection is an additional point. Too often, we want so badly to correct our children that we immediately enter into a process of criticizing and lecturing, making it abundantly clear to our child that he really messed up. What we fail to realize is that for our children to effectively correct their behavior, they need to go through the same steps of *Teshuva* as an adult.

There must be an admission of wrongdoing. It is not always necessary or productive for a child to be forced to articulate a confession, but they do need to think in their minds that what they did was wrong.

To achieve that, a parent must first put him or herself in the child's shoes. What would get them to admit they were wrong? Clearly they need time to think when they are not feeling under attack. Disciplining a child requires a calm, loving parent. Disciplining also requires a parent with a very clear thought-through value system. Discipline needs consistency. Discipline also needs time, time to allow the child's innate goodness to regain control over his heart and mind.

**“Discipline also needs time . . . to allow the child's innate goodness to regain control over his heart and mind.”**

If we can learn to hit the ‘pause-button’ and incorporate this concept of ‘wait-time’ into our reactions to our children's mistakes, we will enhance our effectiveness as parents, and greatly improve our children's willingness to admit to and grow from their missteps.

Best wishes for a wonderful *Shabbos*. Good things are worth waiting for!

  
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