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GROWTH

At The

SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT VA'ERA

Postponed Relief

The entire dialogue and interplay between Moshe and Pharaoh contains so much depth that can fill up volumes of psychology books. Take one instance by the plague of frogs. An episode that may be overlooked among the rest due to the awesome nature of them all, there is a short encounter that the Torah recounts between the redeemer of Israel and the king of Egypt. A brief summary, to paint the picture:

The entire country had been hijacked by endless frogs that were making life unbearable. Pharaoh, viewed as a god by his own people, was at a crossroads; the last thing he wanted was to concede to Moshe and his God, thereby disgracing his own position and making a complete embarrassment out of himself, but at the same time, he had no choice. The country had been made into a laughingstock, his people were all suffering, and he could hardly continue living this way himself. So he is forced into the soul-crushing, identity-ruining experience of summoning Moshe to end this plague. Moshe offers to pray for the frogs to cease and desist, asking only one simple question: when? Pharaoh responds: "Tomorrow."

I'm sorry... what?? Tomorrow?? How about "right now"?! If he was suffering to the extent that he had to bend over backwards to call Moshe and rely on him to end the plague, how could he even endure another moment of the torture?

The answer is profound. The commentaries explain that Pharaoh still held onto his own ulterior motives. Once Moshe offered to pray, Pharaoh realized that perhaps all this was a show. Perhaps, Moshe was a grand charlatan who just had a few tricks up his sleeve, and that the frogs were nothing supernatural. Perhaps, the frogs would disappear naturally *on their own*, and Moshe was just conveniently offering to pray *now* so that he could make it look like a miracle. Unable to allow himself to be bested, he tried thinking two steps ahead and therefore postponed Moshe's prayer to the next day in an attempt to emerge victorious and prove himself right, despite the cost of an extra day of suffering. It didn't matter that the plague was excruciatingly uncomfortable; for the sake of being right and the potential "aha" moment, he would postpone relief and endure it for a whole extra day.

While most of us can agree that Pharaoh's conclusion sounds unreasonable, foolish, and immature, how many of us periodically succumb to the same inner trap? Many times in our own lives, we may see and even acknowledge that we may be deficient in something or require assistance in whatever it may be, yet refuse to turn for help because of ego, delaying it for "tomorrow." True growth begins when we have the courage to set ego aside, ask for help, and take the first step today — because the moment we choose humility over pride is the moment real redemption can begin.

(Based on a d'var Torah shared by R' Shlomo Farhi)

Accumulated Awe

A rich man decides to run a charitable social experiment. He finds two destitute paupers, does some research on their daily travels and whereabouts, and orchestrates something beyond their wildest dreams. For the first, he places a treasure of \$10,000 not too far from his doorstep for him to come across. For the second, he plants \$1,000 for him to find, and then another \$1,000... sprinkling a total of \$10,000 in various locations along his path. Each receives the same amount, but which received greater satisfaction?

One may ask: why did G-d need to strike the Egyptians with 10 different plagues? Even if He would have persisted with the Plague of Blood for long enough, they would be fed up and still let the Jews go. Why 10 *different* plagues?

One answer, brought down in the Haggadah of R' Ovadia Yosef, lies in the anecdote presented above. G-d, wanting to not only free His people but infuse them with *emuna* after they had been broken and tortured for centuries, carried out the plagues in a manner that left His people more inspired after each one. The second poor man experiences tremendous happiness, ten times more than the first guy. One long-lasting bang would've been powerful, but not nearly as meaningful or awe-inspiring as 10 different displays of strength.

There is practical relevance for us, as well. Which of the following would make a wife feel more loved by her husband: getting her a one-time beautiful bouquet of flowers, or surprising her with even a single rose on multiple spontaneous occasions? Lasting inspiration is built through repeated moments, not a single dramatic gesture. When growth, love, and faith are nurtured step by step, each small experience accumulates into something far deeper, more enduring, and more transformative than one overwhelming moment ever could.

"Peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. It means to be in the midst of those things and still be calm in your heart."