

FROM THE PUBLISHER AND EDITOR WWW.JEWISHLIFE.CO.ZA

This time last year we were entering the first Covid lockdown. A week or two before it took effect I wrote an introduction to the Pesach 2020/5780 edition of this magazine, acknowledging the words of Rabbi Yedayah Hapenini Habadrashi who in the 16th century said that the GOAL of wisdom is to know that one knows nothing. I also mentioned that King Solomon, Shlomo Hamelech, said: "I sought wisdom and it was far from me." He was acknowledging that wisdom didn't allude him, after all he was the wisest of all men. He was showing that he had attained the goal of wisdom; he knew the world was so deep that whatever even he knew, was just the tip of the iceberg.

The Rambam said, "Teach thy tongue to say 'I do not know,' and thou shalt progress." He is also quoted as saying: "The only thing one knows for certain is that one knows nothing."

If we needed another year to reach this goal then we've been given one. In this time, perhaps we have realised more than ever that everything is Hashem's. From the open miracles of Pesach to the everyday actions and "coincidences" of life, there is so much wonder in the world that our minds cannot fathom it. Likewise, the Covid virus has stimulated different reactions and many opinions as we've tried in vain to understand it; why did he have it and not her? Where and how is it carried? As the Kalever Rebbe wrote about this year's parsha of Beshalach just a month or so ago: "The biggest mystery is that, during an epidemic, there are three types of people: 1) Humans who become infected even when they are locked alone in their home; 2) Humans who are not infected even when standing next to infected patients; 3) Humans who become infected with the disease while standing next to the patient. Researchers have found nothing natural that connects the human beings of every one of these three types. Any sane person can see from this that everything happens under Divine personal providence."

Purim showed us this and Pesach, in its own dramatic way, certainly testifies to this reality.

As ever, I also thank JL's dedicated and talented team. They have, as usual, produced a terrific edition, both rich in content and inspiring, demonstrating why the magazine is so popular among readers and why advertisers want to be part of it.

And we must certainly thank all our advertisers for their continued support. This year has been especially difficult for everyone and we are so very grateful to every one of our advertisers and to the many new businesses who recognise the value of the magazine and the quality of you, our readers.

I hope you enjoy the issue.

Wishing you all much enjoyment, good health, and a chag kasher v'sameach.

MARTYN SAMUELS, PUBLISHER



Each time, before a plague was to take place, Moshe came to Pharaoh to warn him about what was going to happen. At first glance, it appears that the plagues were horribly ineffective, as only after the tenth plague did Pharaoh finally relent and agree to send the Children of Israel from Egypt.

If the aim of the plagues was for the Egyptians to send the Children of Israel out from Egypt, why did the Egyptians receive plagues which they were able to withstand? Why wasn't the first plague one which would have forced their hand? In other words, Hashem knew, for example, that the Egyptians wouldn't be able to withstand the final plague, the death of the firstborn, so why didn't He just start with that one? Or, alternatively, why didn't Moshe just say regarding any given plague that it simply wouldn't stop until the Children of Israel had gone out from Egypt? Just keep pressing the button down until the goal was achieved.

Before the plagues began, Hashem revealed to Moshe their aim, "I will harden the heart of Pharaoh, and I will increase My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt" (Shemos 7:3). So we see that Hashem fully intended to use a long, drawn out strategy that would enable Him to display His absolute control over everything. But what was the point of it all?

Hashem wanted to increase His signs and wonders so that the Egyptians would recognise His Divine supervision over all of creation and, thereby, be inspired to do teshuva. Our Sages explain that Hashem desires the teshuva (return) of the wicked, not their death – let the wicked, even one as wicked as Pharaoh, return from their evil ways and live. Although Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart, the point was only so that Pharaoh could withstand the difficulty of the plagues, not to prevent him from doing teshuva. We see from this that Hashem is merciful, desiring all people to do teshuva...and giving them ample time and opportunity to do it.

We are experiencing a long, drawn-out plague that comes with varying periods of intensity. May we use the time for reflection, learn valuable lessons from it, and be inspired to do teshuva.

Wishing everyone a chag sameach and good Yom Tov.

ROBERT SUSSMAN, EDITOR

Based on the Sifsei Chaim

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ON THE COVER:

The centrepiece of every Pesach seder, the original visual aid for teaching, the seder plate. Although there are different customs regarding what is included on the plate and how to arrange the items, no Pesach table would be complete without one. (If you don't have a fancy plate with designated sections, an ordinary plate will do.)

