

“And they too – the magicians of Egypt – did so with their incantations.” (7:11)

Why did Hashem choose miracles and wonders that Pharaoh thought he could replicate? It started with the staff transforming into a serpent; next the river turned into blood; and then the earth issued forth frogs. In each case, Pharaoh's magicians were able to create a similar ruse – sufficient reason for Pharaoh to think that he had little to fear. Why not give him a sign that he would remember, so that he would have no recourse but to listen to Moshe? This goes on throughout Hashem's "dialogue" with Pharaoh. Even when *Klal Yisrael* left Egypt, Hashem left one idol, *Baal Tzafon*, standing. Why?

Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, z.l., explains that this is all by design in order to retain Pharaoh's *bechirah*, ability to choose, to continue with his free-willed choice of evil. Had every miracle been shown in "black and white," not in "grey," Pharaoh could not have erred. When there is no free-will, the opportunity for reward diminishes.

Alternatively, *Horav Nosson Wachtfogel, z.l.*, submits that specifically because they thought they could duplicate the miracles, they were able to understand the profound nature of these signs. The more one knows about a subject, the greater respect he has for he who excels in it.

This can be compared to one who delivers a brilliant Torah exegesis to a child. Certainly, the child, due to his limited knowledge and acumen, will not appreciate the depth and scholarship of the speaker. As the child grows and becomes more astute and knowledgeable himself, he develops a greater appreciation of the *dvar Torah* and the lecturer, because now he has a "*shaichus*," relationship, to – and understanding of – the matter.

The plagues had to be of such a nature that the Egyptian sorcerers would appreciate their distinction, as well as their own helplessness to replicate these plagues and prevent them from occurring. It was specifically through this means that the Egyptians would come to believe in Hashem.