

"He that feared the word of Hashem among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses." (9:20)

In Moshe's warning to Pharaoh preceding the plague of hail, he explicitly stated that any man or animal who remained outside during the hailstorm would surely perish. Nevertheless, the *Torah* clearly states that the only ones who went inside were those few individuals who were G-d fearing. In contrast to this select group, the majority of Egyptians disregarded Hashem's word and left their slaves and animals outside. We must remember that this warning came after Hashem's warning already had been confirmed through the six prior plagues. Each of these plagues were effected only after three weeks of warning and each lasted for one full week. Why, then, were these Egyptians so foolishly obstinate? All that was necessary in order to limit their property loss was to take their portable possessions indoors. Even the most unyielding, inexorable Egyptian should not be so foolhardy as to chance losing his possessions!

The *Steipler Gaon Z"l* explains this phenomenon as a clear indication that apostasy and denial of Hashem's existence is not a result of a lack of knowledge, but is rather the consequence of a deficiency in one's desire to seek and acknowledge the truth. One who aspires to the truth will succeed in his quest, while one who is complacent and self-satisfied will allow the truth to elude him. We may note that misguided philosophies do not originate from prudent intellectual logic, but instead from an evil inclination to continue living a life-style which is unethical to true belief.

Consequently, it is no wonder that some of the most sagacious thinkers lack the ability to perceive Hashem's existence. It is as our *Chazal* have clearly stated, "*In the path that one chooses to go, he is guided.*" Everyone has the ability to reason with his mind and, therefore, should not allow the passions of the heart to overwhelm his senses.