

Hashem said to Moshe, “Come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart... stubborn... and so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son’s son that I made a mockery of Egypt.” (10:1,2)

Hashem informs Moshe *Rabbeinu* that He is keeping up the pressure on Pharaoh by threatening and exacting greater punishments. All this is for the purpose of teaching the Jewish People how He toyed with the Egyptians. The idea that Hashem manipulated the Egyptians is novel and begs elucidation. Why trifle with people who warrant powerful rebuke and punishment? Hashem punishes the wicked with serious punishments – not by toying with them. Imagine a child acting inappropriately at home. His father’s response is, “I am going to show you what I can do to you.” Obviously, the father is going to support his threat with some form of corporal punishment. He will certainly not make a joke out of it. Indeed, if the purpose of the *makos*, plagues, was that Egypt would acknowledge Hashem’s Presence, how would this occur if their punishment was a form of ridicule? Making a fool out of someone is a form of punishment that is not always realized.

Horav Aryeh Leib Bakst, zl, explains that, indeed, derision, mockery, needling and ridicule are methods which may be used to deliver a message of rebuke effectively. This is especially necessary when the sinner has descended to such a nadir that he actually believes what he is doing is appropriate, and even laudatory. Talking to such an individual is a waste of time. He is secure in his belief. On the contrary, it is the individual who tenders the rebuke that needs to be enlightened. He is blind to the “beauty” of the ways of the sinner. He is living in the Dark Ages. If he would get out and have a “life,” so to speak, he would understand that the ways of the sinner are consistent with his thought process. One who has sunk to such a level is beyond reason. Chastisement means nothing to him. If anything, it emboldens him to do greater evil.

Such a person might respond to ridicule. When the sinner sees how he is being perceived, when he realizes that people do not take him seriously, that they see him as some kind of mindless fool, his heart – the seat of his emotions – might begin to respond. No one wants to be put down. Everyone wants respect. To be toyed with, ridiculed, or ignored delivers a message: What you are doing is senseless, irresponsible, laughable, and moronic. A person would rather be viewed as evil than as an idiot.

This is the idea behind, “So that you will relate in the ears of your son and son’s son...” Teach your child that it is possible to descend to such a low level that *tochachah*, reproach, no longer is an option. The only way to reach such a person is through the “*his’alalti* method,” whereby one is made to feel like a joke; his actions are ridiculed, and his beliefs are ignored.

Pharaoh’s arrogance was to the extent that he ascribed divinity to himself. He was a god! He would go to the river at dawn to relieve himself, so that no one would know the truth. It was exactly

at this time that Hashem instructed Moshe to meet with Pharaoh. Imagine his shame and embarrassment at being confronted by Moshe. Yet, Hashem sent Moshe at this time specifically for that reason: to show Pharaoh that he was a nothing, a chameleon attempting to cover up his true colors. This was the only form of *tochachah* to which he would respond.