

## And Hashem carried out the word of Moshe, and the frogs died--from the houses, from the courtyards, and from the fields. (8:9)

It did not take long for Pharaoh to beg Moshe to implore Hashem to put a halt to the swarms of frogs that were literally infesting his entire country. Moshe prayed to Hashem and the frogs all died. *Chazal* tell us that the frogs who had entered the ovens miraculously did not die, either in the oven or afterwards! We may question the remarkable reward received by the frogs. After all, if they were commanded by Hashem to enter the ovens, where else should they have gone? A similar question may be asked regarding *Chazal's* statement in the *Talmud Pesachim* 53b. *Chazal* tell us that Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah entered the fire as a result of a *Kal V'chomer*, a fortiori argument, which they derived from the frogs. They said, "If the frogs were willing to sacrifice their lives to sanctify Hashem's Name, so should we." The question is obvious. The frogs had no other choice but to conform to the will of Hashem. Why are they being lauded for doing what they were supposed to do?

**Horav Shimon Schwab, z"l**, observes that Yechezkel *Ha'navi* had actually advised Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah to run and hide. Their response was straightforward; they sought to prove a point. If they had fled, people would say that everyone, including the Jews, had bowed down to the idol. By accepting the challenge and risking their lives, they were demonstrating to the world that the Jews had rejected the idol. This was the appropriate time to make a statement against Nevuchadnezzar. They certainly could have run away in order to save themselves. Their cowering from the wicked king would be, in effect, a statement in his support.

What motivated them to accomplish this supreme act of self-sacrifice? What inspired them to go forward rather than backward? It was the frogs who went into the ovens knowing fully well the obvious results. *Horav Schwab* explains the rationale. The frogs were all commanded to swarm throughout Egypt. They knew that this also meant entering the burning ovens. They all had the choice to go where they desired. There was a unique group of frogs who understood that if some of them would not enter the ovens, then Hashem's decree would appear ineffective. This action personified their *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice. They did not have to go into the ovens; they wanted to go into the ovens.

Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah drew a parallel to their own situation. They could escape and be spared, but what about the humiliation it would eventually cause to Hashem's Name? What about the degree of success, the renewed power over the people of which Nevuchadnezzar would be the beneficiary? They could not permit this. Therefore, they acted accordingly and entered the fire.

How often do we have the opportunity to sanctify Hashem's Name, but do not because it is inconvenient? How often does a *mitzvah* come our way, but we ignore it because it is not very "appealing"? True, we can pick the easy *mitzvos*, the ones that give us public acclaim, the ones

that will not demand much sacrifice on our part. We should not be surprised, however, when we are rewarded accordingly.