

There shall be a great outcry in the entire land of Egypt, such as there had never been and such a there shall never be again. (11:6)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* warned of the impending plague of *makkas bechoros*, smiting of the firstborn. He added that the cries of grief would supersede any cries that had been and any cries that would ever be. These are strong words coming from the individual who was the medium for the last nine plagues that had devastated Egypt. One would expect that such words would have shaken up the Egyptians to their very core. The *Midrash HaGadol*, however, relates a dialogue that ensued between an elderly Egyptian woman and Moshe. The woman screamed, “You are a false prophet! An old woman who has no father, no mother, no brother, no sister, no son, and no daughter, for whom will she cry out?”

When Moshe heard this, he countered, “Your outcry will precede their outcry. (In other words, she will be beset with inconsolable grief.) Apparently, at one time, the woman had had a son who had died. She was now left alone, bereft of all family. Indeed, what did she now have to cry about? Ostensibly, this woman did not give up on the only family member that she had. She sculpted an image of him, an idol to remind her of her son. Every day, following each meal, she would stand and dance before this sculpture. This became the focus of her life. On the night of *makkas bechoros*, dogs came and attacked the sculpture, completely destroying it. The woman went berserk with grief. She cried and screamed over her loss. She fulfilled the *pasuk*, “There will be an outcry in the entire Land of Egypt.”

Horav Yisrael Meir Druck, Shlita, quotes his father, who derived a fundamental lesson from this incident. We see that a person can experience visions of the Divine, actions that clearly indicate that there is a G-d Who controls the world. This woman saw the truth, but chose to either ignore or deny it. She saw and experienced the first nine miraculous plagues. She had no question in her mind that which Moshe was warning would occur – would certainly occur. Yet, she had the temerity to defy Moshe and say – “But I will not cry. So, the outcry will not be everywhere. There will be one person who (because she has nothing to cry about) will not cry.” To call Moshe a false prophet exhibits an audacity that borders on mindlessness. This shows us how obtuse one’s heart can be if he/she does not work on himself/herself.

The *shifchah al ha’yam*, maidservant who stood at the Red Sea, saw a revelation of Hashem's glory that was unprecedented and never repeated. *Chazal* teach that her level of prophecy (what she saw) was even greater than that of the *Navi Yechezkel*. “Nonetheless,” says *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl*, “she remained a *shifchah*.” The experience did not transform her. We see what we want to see because we do not develop the ability to “read” what we see, so that we can spiritually elevate ourselves.

Horav Shmuel Truvitz, zl, relates that he once traveled in a *monit*, taxi. Seeing a Torah sage, the

driver, who was not himself a practicing Jew, said, "I once witnessed the Creator in action. I saw a miracle taking place right before my very own eyes." This piqued *Rav Truvitzs'* curiosity, "So, tell me what you saw."

The driver related that when he and his friend had been in the IDF, army, a venomous snake had wound itself around his friend and was poised to bite him. The driver told his friend, "I can shoot the snake, but he is wound so tightly around you, I might hit you by accident." The friend, who was facing certain death if the snake bit, agreed to let him shoot. After all, he really had nothing to lose.

A religious soldier who was part of their platoon suggested, "Let us all say *Shema Yisrael* together." As soon as they began to recite the *Shema*, the snake slithered away.

"My friend whose life was saved became a *baal teshuvah*," the taxi driver said.

Rav Truvitz was astonished, "Your friend became a *baal teshuvah*, but what about you? You, too, witnessed the miracle. How is it that you saw the miracle as did your friend and only he became a *baal teshuvah*?"

"The snake was not wrapped around me. My life was not in danger." A person can witness miracles and still remain unmoved.