

“One more plague shall I bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; after that, he shall send you forth from here. When he sends forth, it shall be complete; he shall drive you out of here.” (11:1)

Simply, Hashem is conveying to Moshe *Rabbeinu* that Pharaoh and the Egyptians will have to undergo one more plague. Then the Ten Plagues will be complete, and Pharaoh will have received his due.

Sforno, however, renders this *pasuk* differently. He explains that Pharaoh originally sent Moshe and Aharon away willingly; with his rod of anger, he drove them out from his presence. In a similar manner, he will now be compelled to send them and all of *Klal Yisrael* away in anguish. The previous time he had driven away only Moshe and Aharon – and it was only from his presence. Now, he will be forced to send Moshe, Aharon and all the Jewish People away – from his country.

Sforno explains that this is the measure of Hashem's justice. When a man obstinately refuses to comply with the wishes of his Maker, he will ultimately do what he has resisted doing; only now, it will be in distress and sorrow, against his will. This is similar to the *pesukim* in *Devarim* 28:47-48, “Because you did not serve Hashem...amid gladness and goodness of heart...So you will serve your enemies.” This idea corresponds with *Chazal's* maxim, “He who abolishes/nullifies the Torah when he is wealthy, will eventually do so amid poverty” (*Pirkei Avos* 9:10).

Sforno draws an important moral lesson from this *pasuk*. What man fails to do of his own free will, he will eventually be compelled to do under circumstances that are more distasteful to him. We are taught that the world is not *hefker*, ownerless. Everyone must eventually give an accounting for his actions. There is no way to escape Hashem's will. We either do it willingly, at the appropriate time, under circumstances that are convenient and acceptable – or we will do it under duress, under adverse conditions.

Sforno substantiates his thesis with the famous *pasuk* that admonishes us for not serving Hashem amid joy, with goodness of heart. *Horav Gershon Liebman, z.l.*, *Rosh HaYeshivah* of *Yeshivas Ohr Yosef/Novardok* in France, writes that he remembers being in the concentration camp digging ditches. Throughout this backbreaking labor he heard a certain *Rosh HaYeshivah* next to him repeating this *pasuk* constantly, serving as a reminder that this misery was a result of a lack of joy in serving the Creator.

Furthermore, when we sit back indifferent to the needs of our People; or when the crown of Torah is humiliated; when Torah Judaism is denigrated and no one takes a stand but sit idly watching with blank looks, folded hands and shaking their heads as Torah leaders are shamed, the Torah is defamed, and Orthodoxy is disparaged – how will we respond later? What will we answer when

Hashem asks us, "Why did you sit around doing nothing?"

We have only to peruse history to find *Sforno's* words glaring at us. How many times have we been lax in our observance, performing *mitzvos* in an apathetic manner, only to be compelled to act in a similar manner during times of persecution and oppression? How often have we watched indifferently as those who tore down the mantle of Torah did so without our protest? Was this not followed shortly by decrees against our People where once again we were forced to acquiesce to the edicts of our enemies?

Sforno cites *Chazal's* maxim about nullifying Torah amid wealth. *Rav Liebman* remembers how the Jews of Morocco and Algiers were lax in their Torah study, focusing primarily on secular studies, especially mastering the French language. To convince parents to send their sons to a *yeshivah* was an onerous task. Now, the tables have been turned. French is of no value, unless it is being used to ask directions out of the country. The broken Jews who eschewed Torah study because it was not in vogue now do not have the time or "head" to study it, as they are so encumbered with attempting to leave the country for which they gave up so much. When will we learn that when we refuse to obey Hashem of our own free will, we ultimately will be compelled to do so under circumstances which are more unpleasant?