

## **"Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, and it will become a snake." (7:9)**

Why did Hashem use this sign as the first miracle with which to impress Pharaoh? Undoubtedly, when *Pharaoh's* magicians immediately duplicated this sign, he no longer was impressed with Moshe's divine powers. We may suggest that a message was being sent to Pharaoh. When Moshe came to *Pharaoh* with the request to allow the *Bnei Yisroel* to leave Egypt for a three day "seminar" in the desert to serve Hashem, he was treated with contempt. How could a nation that had sunk to the lowest levels of impurity be able to comprehend holiness, let alone serve Hashem? Moshe's action with this miracle was a lesson to Pharaoh as to the effects of one's environment. The staff which Moshe cast before Pharaoh had Hashem's Name inscribed on it. This symbol of holiness when thrown in front of Pharaoh, an environment of evil and depravity, was transformed into a snake, which symbolizes the essence of sin and evil. However, when this same poisonous snake was placed back into Moshe's hand, and returned into an environment of holiness and purity, it once again became the *ohekt vyn*. Moshe's lesson was simple. The Jewish people had been influenced by the immoral and degenerate society of Egypt. A righteous person placed in the company of corrupt individuals tends to be adversely affected. Let the Jews out of Egypt, give them the opportunity to experience and observe the beauty and holiness of *Torah* and *mitzvos*, and they will revert back to the "kingdom of priests and holy nation" that they are.