

## **Hashem shall distinguish between the livestock of Yisrael and the livestock of Egypt and not a thing that belongs to Bnei Yisrael will die... Pharaoh sent and behold, of the livestock of Yisrael, not even one had died – yet Pharaoh's heart became stubborn. (9:4,7)**

Moshe *Rabbeinu* warned Pharaoh concerning the upcoming plague of *dever*, an epidemic that would strike and kill their livestock. He added that no animal belonging to a Jew would die. This would clearly be a miracle, since the animals of both Egyptian and Jewish ownership mingled together in the pasture, drinking the same water and breathing the same air. The Egyptian animals died, but the animals belonging to the Jews did not – exactly as foretold by Moshe. Despite what was undeniably a miracle, Pharaoh continued his stubborn refusal to allow the Jews to leave Egypt. Why would Pharaoh act this way? Did the plague not take place exactly as Moshe foretold? The mere fact that nary a single animal belonging to a Jew was lost was the strongest indication that Pharaoh was waging a losing battle. Why was he being so obstinate?

The *Malbim* notes the phrase, *v'hinei lo meis m'mikneh Yisrael ad echad*, "Of the livestock of Yisrael not even one died." He says that the phrase *ad echad*, means "up to one," which implies that one did die. We find this phrase in two other instances in *Tanach*. When the Egyptians drowned in the Red Sea, the Torah writes, *lo nishaar bahem ad echad*, "There remained not one of them" (*Shemos* 14:28). This implies that one Egyptian did live. *Chazal* teach that Pharaoh survived the Red Sea. Also, the phrase is used again in *Navi*, (*Shoftim* 4:16) concerning Sisra's defeat. *Chazal* teach that one did survive, Sisra, the general made it.

Therefore, concerning the plague of *dever* and its effect on Jewish livestock, when the Torah writes *lo meis m'mikreh Yisrael ad echad*, "that one did die," it is a reference to the livestock of Shlomis *bas* Divri, whose husband was an Egyptian. While the livestock may have been assimilated with the Jewish livestock, her husband was not Jewish; thus, her livestock died. Pharaoh, however, did not see it this way. He considered Shlomis' livestock to be of Jewish ownership. Therefore, in his eyes, Moshe was "wrong." Pharaoh could continue sinning. He had a reason to be stubborn. This demonstrates the obtuseness of the wicked. They see what they want to see. They embrace any excuse to continue their evil.