

"Say unto Aharon, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the land, it shall become lice.'" (8:12)

Similar to the two previous plagues of blood and frogs, it is Aharon who brought about the plague of lice. Aharon had this responsibility because Moshe was not permitted to strike the water or the dust. The water had protected him when he was an infant, and the dust concealed the Egyptian who Moshe had killed. It would have shown ingratitude for Moshe to strike either the water or the ground. Imagine, Moshe and Aharon were involved in the most sublime endeavor of their lives -- taking *Klal Yisrael* out of Egypt. The overriding concern, however, was not to "offend" an inanimate object, because it once had been a vehicle for protecting Moshe!

The captains of the ship who were securing its release from the muck of Egypt were concerned with steering clear of anything tainted by a vestige of impropriety. The greatness of man is measured by his ability to maintain the highest level of rectitude, even when he is involved in the noblest of endeavors. While *Klal Yisrael* was being liberated from the moral degeneracy that was Egypt, it was imperative that Moshe remain sensitive to the gratitude he owed even to an inanimate creation of Hashem.

Horav Mordechai Kukis, Shlita, observes the *Torah's* aversion to the popular dictum of "the end justifies the means." Rivers of blood and seas of tears have been spilled on the altar of this ideal. Whether it is in the name of *kashrus*, *Shabbos*, or Jewish education, our goal-oriented society somehow does not seem to take into account the methods with which it achieves its aim. It is of no concern who gets hurt, how many lives are ruined, or whose reputation becomes besmirched, as long as our objective is realized.

Horav Kukis illustrates his point by reminding us of a common occurrence -- the removal of the *sefer Torah* from the *Aron*. Instantly, a sea of people move toward the *Torah* to demonstrate respect and kiss its mantle. Some individuals push their way through the crowd, at times knocking over elderly men, stepping on toes, just so that they can express their love for the *Torah*. Of course, they apologize all along, as they continue inflicting their damage upon anyone whose misfortune it is to be in their path.

If Moshe *Rabbeinu*, the *Rabbon shel kol Yisrael*, was sensitive to an inanimate object, even while he was involved in *Klal Yisrael's* deliverance from Egyptian bondage, how much more so should we be vigilant in our interaction with others -- even in the midst of performing a *mitzvah*.