

# Mussar HaTorah

Torah Insights into Human Nature – Dedicated in memory of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l

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Parashas Vaaira

“AND HE WHO DID NOT HEED THE WORD OF HASHEM, LEFT HIS SERVANTS AND CATTLE IN THE FIELD.” (SHMOS 9:21)

**Why didn't all the Egyptians save themselves?**

THE SEVENTH PLAGUE – hail – was unique in that it was the only plague that the Egyptians could have avoided simply by obeying the advance warning of Hashem and bringing all their property indoors. Indeed, the Torah tells us that some Egyptians did heed this warning, and were spared the devastation. Others did not, and suffered from the awesome force of the pounding hail. The question begs to be asked: Why didn't all the Egyptians listen to Hashem and save themselves from the destruction?

**Weren't they afraid of even the possibility of damage?**

The Da'as Z'kaynim (ibid. 9:27) states, “Because with wickedness they left their animals in the fields and they did not believe in Hashem.” It seems that their refusal stemmed from a lack of belief in Hashem's word that the plague would occur. But after six crushing plagues – blood, frogs, lice, wild animals, cattle disease and boils, all forewarned with precision and clarity – shouldn't logic dictate that the Egyptians at least be cautious to avoid monetary loss? Weren't they afraid of even the possibility of damage?

**The argument for consistency is a favorite strategy of the Yetzer Harah**

One of the most powerful psychological mechanisms of the human mind is the drive to maintain consistency in all situations. The Egyptians' adamant refusal to believe in Hashem regarding the ultimatum to set the Jews free caused them to deny even the possibility of Hashem carrying out His threat of hail, in order to maintain a consistent attitude. Their rejection of Hashem's request to free the Jews had strong ulterior motives – the loss of an army of slave labor would undoubtedly adversely affect their economy. This same motivation to prevent financial loss, should only have served to compel them to obey Hashem and save their animals from the devastating hail. But, the need for consistency didn't allow them even to be cautious, and demanded that they suffer this loss in order to deny Hashem completely.

The argument for consistency is a favorite strategy of the *Yetzer Harah*. While many temptations seem simply too powerful to resist, other challenges to our willpower are not as formidable and we want to overcome them. Yet our cunning adversary taunts us, “You don't keep that other mitzvah and you violate that *halacha* how can you act like such a *tzadik* all of a sudden? You're inconsistent, a hypocrite and a phony!” It is essential that we realize that any mitzvah we can grasp should be as precious to us as gold and diamonds. Would we refuse money today just because we had foolishly turned it down in the past, and we would appear inconsistent?

The taunts of inconsistency appeal to our sense of pride and vanity. If we are humble enough to acknowledge our occasional mistakes, and move forward and upward to capitalize on every opportunity for spiritual growth, we will emerge victorious in our battle with the *Yetzer Harah*.