

# KOLLEL AGUDATH ACHIM

Rosh Kollel

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**PARASHAT VA'EIRA-2022**

**פרשת וארא 5782**

**Shabbos Maverchim Chodesh Shevat - Rosh Chodesh will be Monday, Jan 3, 2022**

In the previous Parasha [Shemot 4:3] HaShem involves Moshe in a miracle that would convince Bnei Yisrael of his authenticity as a messenger of G-d. He told Moshe to take his staff and throw it to the ground, whereupon it turned into a “*nachash*”, a “snake.” The fact that he was able to turn the staff into a snake and then back into a staff was enough to convince the Jewish people. However, not so the Egyptian people; they needed more convincing evidence than a snake.

In our parasha [7:9] Moshe and Aharon were told to perform the miracle of the staff before Par'oh as well. They did so, and the Torah states that the staff turned into a “*tannin*”, again translated by Rashi and Art scroll as a “snake.” Since the Torah does not use synonyms I would like to suggest another meaning of *tannin*. A *tannin* can mean a snake, or it can mean an alligator, or, in some contexts it can refer to a whale.

One such occurrence is in the story of creation, where it says that HaShem created the big *tanninim* [Bereishit 1:21]. Rashi there picks up on a missing letter in התנינם and says that it is referring to the Leviatan, the symbol of destruction. The issue is that would if it had reproduced, it would have destroyed the entire world, and therefore, HaShem took away the female [represented by the missing Yud], thereby ending its destructive capability. Thus, the forces of evil and destruction, which are called *tanninim* in the first part of Bereishit, find expression in our parasha.

Turning the staff into a snake and back was enough to convince Bnei Yisrael. For they internally did believe in HaShem and *wanted* to believe in G-d, but they just needed some gentle miracle to help them decide. To convince Par'oh of the same, much more convincing was needed, as he was not ready to admit any limitations to his power. Only a miracle of *tanninim*, followed by a long process of miracles, ending with the Makkat Bechorot, the dying of all first born was the stubborn leader left with no choice in the matter.

The lesson for us is to be cognizant of a brutal and destructive force that has traumatized the people of Paris just as it has done to the people of New York on September 11, 2001, and particularly, the Jews of the world. The terrorists targeted the people of France and the United States, but their real goal was to kill as many Jews as possible in the two countries. The leviathan is today the symbol of Islamic terrorism which will only be stopped by our *achdut*, our tefillot and finally by the actions of HaShem. Removing the female leviathan did not weaken the destructive power of the male but it did isolate it and limit its expansion. So too must the Jews and the world leaders isolate the terrorists politically, economically and militarily to prevent their expansion. The march of 3 million in Paris was a good beginning.

Shabbat Shalom from Yerushalayim  
Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

**THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS:**

***A-How do you see the plague of Locusts as being a “measure for measure?”***

***B-What Mitzvah do we observe to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> Makka-[plague]  
On the dying of every firstborn?***

***C- Why would the Egyptians be willing to gladly give the Jews their  
Valuables? (11:2)***

***D- Moshe knew that the 10<sup>th</sup> plague would begin exactly at midnight.  
Why did he Tell Par'oh that it would begin “at about midnight”? (11:4)***

***E- How do we observe the first Mitzvah of  
“HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem” (12:2)?***