

# THE DOGS WILL GET THEIR REWARD IN THE WORLD TO COME

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

## Rabbi Frand On Parshas Bo

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These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 446, The Dog In Halacha. Good Shabbos!

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### The Dogs Will Get Their Reward In The World To Come

The Yalkut Shimoni [Shemos 11:187] relates that Rav Yishaya, a disciple of the famous Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, fasted for 85 days because he could not understand a certain paradoxical tradition.

[It is worth noting why Rav Yishaya fasted. The righteous amongst us, perhaps, fast when someone they know is sick or if they are facing personal tragedy. Rav Yishaya fasted because he did not understand the interpretation of a teaching of our Sages. This itself is a tremendous lesson, although it is not our main point at this time.]

What teaching bothered Rav Yishaya? It is taught that in the World-to-Come, dogs will lead in singing the praises of the Almighty. They will say to other creatures "Come! Let us prostrate ourselves and bow, let us kneel before G-d, our Maker" [Tehillim 95:6]. Rav Yishaya reasoned, dogs are called "brazen creatures" in Tanach [Isaiah 56:11].

Throughout classical Jewish literature they are portrayed as the most insolent of animals. How could it be, he wondered, that this very same creature will merit to lead in the singing of praises to G-d in the World-to-Come?

The Yalkut says that an angel came down from Heaven and told Rav Yishaya to stop fasting. The angel told him that he would never find a satisfying answer to what was bothering him - it was simply a Heavenly decree that this is what is going to happen. The fact that dogs would merit saying Shirah (songs of praise before G-d) in the World-to-Come was a secret revealed to the prophet Chabakuk and to no one else.

However, the angel told Rav Yishaya, since you are a disciple of Rav Chanina ben Dosa, in honor of

your teacher I will give you the explanation of this paradox:

The merit by which dogs will be able to lead the Shirah is by virtue of the pasuk [verse] "and no dog shall whet its tongue" [Shemos 11:7]. The fact that they kept quiet during the plague of the firstborn, earned them the right to lead the Shirah in the future world. A person that keeps his mouth shut saves himself from troubles.

Rav Mordechai Ezrachi (in his sefer Birkas Mordechai) writes that the praise of keeping quiet involves more than merely not speaking slander or gossip. The dogs did not earn this merit by not speaking lashon Hara. The dogs simply kept their mouths closed. Dogs are known for their attribute of chutzpah [impudence]. Therefore, keeping quiet represented the ultimate defeat of their negative character traits (shviras hamidos). This represented the ultimate self-improvement possible for that creature. It is a significant accomplishment when a person who is an az nefesh [having the characteristic of arrogance of spirit] and likes to use his mouth inappropriately, overcomes that characteristic and is quiet. Such an accomplishment is deserving of special reward.

Their song is that of "Come! Let us prostrate ourselves and bow, let us kneel before G-d, our Maker." We won't act with impudence and insolence. We will bow down and display servitude. The dogs turned their nature around by keeping their mouths closed. It took tremendous power and self-control to accomplish such a change.

The lesson for us is that it is not always necessary to say something. It is not always necessary to comment. It is not always necessary to have a remark.

Rav Ezrachi quotes someone who personally knew the Alter of Slabodka (Rav Nosson Zvi Finkel [1849-1927]). This person testified that there was no one he knew who was as big a 'dabran' [talker] and simultaneously as big a 'shaskan' [silent one] as the Alter. It is not that the Alter of Slabodka always kept his mouth closed. He did not. He had hundreds of disciples and he talked to them frequently. But he knew when to talk to them and when to be quiet, what to say and what not to say. It takes great wisdom to know when not to speak and what not to speak.

The dogs, who kept quiet during the plague of the firstborn, merited the privilege of singing Shirah in the future World-to-Come as a result of this silence.

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## The Irritating Nature of Cynicism

Another Medrash in this week's parsha is very appropriate for our times. The pasuk says, "Not so; let the men go now. Serve Hashem, for that is what you seek! And he drove them out from Pharaoh's presence" [Shemos 10:11]. The Medrash makes an interesting comment: Because of the Almighty's extreme displeasure at Pharaoh's mocking attitude, He now changed the order of nature in

delivering the next plague.

In all of the plagues up to this point, the Almighty did not change the order of nature. This means that all prior plagues could to some extent be given some "natural" explanation. For example, the Nile being filled with blood could have been the result of pollution, a type of 'oil spill', etc.; frogs can congregate in one place, occasionally; and so forth. None of the first eight plagues represented a fundamental change to the order of nature.

However, the ninth plague of Darkness did represent a change in the course of nature. Three days of consecutive darkness, was a miraculous departure from the natural day night cycle. Why now? The Medrash attributes it to a special Divine irritation with the king of Egypt.

This time Pharaoh did something that the Almighty would not tolerate. Pharaoh was cynical. He mocked the Jewish people. He treated Moshe Rabbeinu with derision. G-d has, so to speak, a special aversion to cynicism (leitzanus) and mockery. The trait of cynicism and the practice of acting with derision is abhorred by Heaven to such an extent that when Pharaoh engaged in that behavior, G-d increased the intensity of the plagues by changing the order of nature.

Rav Shimon Schwab asks where in the above quoted pasuk do we find mocking or derision? Where is the cynicism here?

Rav Schwab suggests that the word 'nah' in the expression 'lechu nah haGevarim' (Let the men go now) means 'please'. Furthermore, the word 'Gevarim' has the connotation of distinguished individuals, whereas Pharaoh was really speaking about slaves. Pharaoh thus begins with the statement "Please, let only the elders and statesmen go." Then the pasuk concludes "and he drove them out from Pharaoh's presence" as if to say "get out of here!" (or something much stronger). He mocks them by first speaking with a false respect and then throwing them out like trash. His attitude toward them was one of derision and cynicism.

G-d said, "Now you have done it!" Leitzanus is a very serious matter before the Almighty. Treat them nicely or treat them not nicely, but don't play games with them. Don't mock them.

Cynicism is very irritating both in Heaven and down here on Earth. May we guard against it so that we may be able to find favor in the 'eyes of G-d' as well as in the eyes of man.

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Bo is provided below:

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