

# TREATING TORAH LIKE AN HEIRLOOM

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

## Parshas Vaera

### Treating Torah Like An Heirloom

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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 #577, Davening For Non-Jews. Good Shabbos!

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The following passage appears at the beginning of the parsha:

*"Therefore, say to the Children of Israel, 'I am Hashem and I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from their service; I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I shall take you to Me for a people and I shall be a G-d to you; and you shall know that I am Hashem your G-d, Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt. I shall bring you to the Land about which I raised My hand to give it to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and I shall give it to you as a heritage - I am Hashem.'" [Shemos 6:6-8]*

The Talmud [Bava Basra 119] raises the question as to whether the Land of Israel was originally given to those who exited Egypt (and divided up among their heirs) or was it given directly to those who entered the Land. The Talmud infers from use of the word "morasha" [heritage] as opposed to the word "yerusha" [inheritance] in the above pasuk [v ersel] that it was given to those who came into the Land.

A morasha is like an heirloom, as opposed to an inheritance. A yerusha has the connotation that the one who possesses it actually owns it. The connotation of morasha is that I do not necessarily possess an object; it is only mine in terms of being able to pass it on to the next generation. The Talmud states that those who left Egypt played the role of "morishim" - they were the ones who gave the inheritance to the next generation, but they were not "yorshim". They themselves did not own it.

The Baal HaTurim points out that the word "morasha" appears in two places in the Torah. The other location is the pasuk "Moshe commanded us the Torah, a 'morasha' for the congregation of Israel."

[Devorim 33:4].

The Shemen HaTov elaborates on the connection between the "morasha" of Eretz Yisrael and the "morasha" of Torah: As explained above, the connection between those who left Egypt and Eretz Yisrael was only at the level of "morasha". They did not possess it, but they did possess it enough to give over to their children, the next generation.

This is the same relationship with the Torah that exists in many families between parents, children, and grandchildren. Torah can sometimes be a "morasha" in the sense that one generation doesn't really possess it. They do not possess Torah in the sense of full ownership or even understand it in any significant fashion. They possess it only in so much as to allow their children or their children's children to acquire it and to become the proud possessors of Torah in the fullest sense of the word.

We see this with our own eyes. Today we can look around and find Heads of Yeshivas, Rabbinic scholars, Gedolim who have mastered Torah discipline and knowledge. These are people who have gained authoritative familiarity and ownership of Torah law. Many times their parents happen to be very simple and unsophisticated Jews, not Torah scholars by any stretch of the imagination. How did such a thing happen?

The answer is that Torah is a "morasha" to the congregation of Yaakov. Sometimes the job of the "previous generation" is to cherish Torah, to believe in it and treat it like one treats an heirloom and then to give it over to the next generation. That is the nature of Torah. This is probably the meaning of the Gemara in Tractate Nedarim, which says "be careful of the children of the poor, for from them Torah emerges" [Nedarim 81a]. The Talmud is not just speaking of people who are economically poor. It also includes people whose parents are "poor" in their knowledge of Torah. Even from such people, may come children who excel in Torah study.

A person who has been in Yeshivos for any amount of time often sees this. Often, children of wealthy people -- monetarily wealthy or even wealthy in Torah knowledge -- do not achieve great promise in their learning. But on the contrary, we often see children of people who are poor -- monetarily or even in Torah knowledge -- but who cherish Torah, who do become great Torah scholars.

### **Get Rid Of The Frogs - Tomorrow**

The plague of Frogs greatly troubled Pharaoh and the Egyptians. They were oppressed to such an extent that Pharaoh summoned Moshe and Aharon and said "Entreat Hashem that He remove the frogs from me and my people, and I shall send out the people that they may bring offerings to Hashem". Moshe Rabbeinu told Pharaoh to name the moment when he desired for the frogs to leave. Pharaoh chose to let them leave the next day. [Shemos 8:4-6]

This is striking. Wherever he turned there were Frogs. They were destroying the country and making life unbearable for the Egyptians. And yet when given the choice by Moshe, Pharaoh asked that they be removed TOMORROW!

Why Tomorrow? If we found roaches in our house and called the exterminator and he asked us when we would like to have the roaches removed, we would naturally say "Immediately!"

The answer is that Pharaoh suspected that the Frogs were going to leave today anyway. He did not want to give Moshe credence in the eyes of the people. He was trying to set a trap for Moshe and have Moshe agree to have the Frogs leave the next day, and then they would be gone before the agreed upon timeline.

Even though he could have gotten rid of them 'today', getting rid of them 'today' would perhaps be giving into Moshe Rabbeinu. It might appear as a confession to the power of the Almighty if he told Moshe to get rid of them 'today'. That was the last thing Pharaoh wanted to do.

Normal people would swallow their pride, forget the philosophy, forget the theology and ask for immediate relief from their suffering. Not Pharaoh. About this it is written: "The wicked even at the gates of Gehinnom do not repent." [Eiruvim 19a] A wicked person would rather suffer than admit that Hashem is the L-rd.

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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 Va'eyra are provided below:

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