

TORAH THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

PARSHAS VAERA

Copied from AISH HATORAH

Say No to Anger

by Rabbi Eli Scheller

“And the frog-infestation ascended and covered the land of Egypt.” (8:2)

As soon as Aharon stretched out his hand, a hideous super-sized frog hopped out of the river and began to march down the main road towards Pharaoh’s palace. The Egyptians brought weapons and sticks with which to kill the monstrous frog. Instead of falling dead, it opened its mouth wide and spit out legions of baby frogs. They hit it again, but every time they struck it, more frogs came out. Why didn’t they just stop hitting it, if the more they hit it the more damage was caused?

When one is insulted he feels a need to retaliate, thinking, “Who is he to speak to me like that?!” The aggressor then returns the insult, which in turn leads to further escalation. A vicious cycle of fruitless quarrelling erupts, leaving both of them with significant damage. Similarly, when the Egyptians were faced with this threatening frog, their instinctive reaction was to strike it. When more frogs swarmed out they grew angry and lost themselves, striking it again and again, despite the damage they were causing.(1)

There was once a man who greatly honored his father. His father said to him, “You honored me in my lifetime, honor me after my death as well. Any time you are about to get angry, hold it in for one night and don’t take action.” After his father passed away he went on a business trip for many years, leaving his wife behind without knowing that she was expecting a child. After many years of absence, the husband returned home unannounced, hoping to surprise his wife. But as he approached he saw his wife embracing a handsome young man, a stranger. He took out a knife and planned to stab them both, when he remembered his father’s command: “Any time you are about to get angry, hold it in for one night and don’t take action.” Reluctantly he held himself back. The next day he heard his wife saying to the young man, “It’s already many years that your father is away on business, if he only knew that he had a son he would have been back already.” When he heard this he ran out and said, “Thank God that I held in my anger, and blessed is my father who commanded me to hold in my anger for one night, for it saved me from killing out my family!!(2)

A person who becomes angry is punishing himself for the stupidity of others. The only one anger destroys is the angry person himself. It eats away happiness and causes health problems. In a moment of anger, if one would step back for a minute and not take action, the whole thing would just fade away. The Alter of Kelm would not get angry until he first put on a special garment that he reserved for such occasions. He explained, “For when one has to stop to put on a special garment before he allows himself to become completely enraged – by the time he has donned the garment, his anger will have subsided, and his calm will have returned.”

1. Birkas Peretz (Steipler)

2. Sefer Chassidim 655