

## *Parashat Va'era: The Hit Frog – January 12, 2013*

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Reviewing this week the classic commentators of the Torah in my weekly personal Torah study time, I came with a nice and I could say also funny discussion about the nature of the first plague that God sent as a punishment to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians. The discussion was between the rabbis S'forno (Italy 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Century) , Avarbanel (Portugal 15<sup>th</sup> Century), Ibn Ezra (Tudela 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Century) and Rashi (France 10<sup>th</sup> Century).

According to S'forno and Avarbanel, the second plague of Frogs (Tzfardeyim in Hebrew) meant crocodiles or some other water-dwelling creatures. On the other hand, Abraham Ibn Ezra says that if the Torah says explicitly “frogs” we don't have to look further and just think on regular frogs.

Interestingly, Rashi brings a completely different story which is based in a particular verse of the Torah that speaks about this plague: “*Aharon put out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and **the frog** came up and covered the land of Egypt*” (Exodus 8:2). For the sages of the Midrash (the source of Rashi commentary) the fact that the Torah mentions only one frog (“... and the frog came up...”) means that originally there was only one giant frog and only then that frog multiplied and came to be a plague. But how the frog multiplied? The Midrash tells this funny story: When the Egyptians saw the giant frog, they kept hitting it and with each blow it multiplied into more and more numerous croaking frogs, which eventually filled the Land of Egypt.

Just imagine the Egyptians hitting the frog! There was no sense in beating up a frog that was sent by God with the mission of punish Pharaoh and giving a message to the Egyptians. But beyond this nice story maybe we can also learn a lesson for every one of us:

Like the Egyptians, many times we feel like we have received some “plagues” in our life: Problems, bad situations, crisis, tests... But instead of accepting the situation and dealing with it appropriately (asking ourselves what it happening, what can I do now, etc.), frequently and mindlessly we “beat up” on what is happening, we react with anger, neglect the situation or just cannot accept that things are not exactly the way we want. The consequence of that attitude is that we only contribute to create a bigger mess, the plague multiplies and our life becomes even worst, sometimes finally losing any ability to deal with it.

So next time you see a frog, don't hit it! It is better to gently try to take it out of your house, or to move from the place it is.

Shabbat Shalom!