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The first time where the Torah mentions the term of *mageifah* (epidemic) is by the plagues that Hashem inflicted on Egypt. (As a hint, the numerical value of the word *mageifah*, מַגֵּיפָה without the letter *yud* as it is sometimes mentioned, is 127. The first Jew to become “exiled” in Egypt was Sarah, when she was abducted by Pharaoh. Sarah lived 127 years, which hints that Sarah’s abduction by Pharaoh would later turn into the source for *mageifah* in Egypt!)

The Torah calls the plagues of frogs and also hail with the term *mageifah*, where Hashem said, וְאָנֹכִי מְבַרְכֵם וְאֶתְּרָא מַגֵּיפָה לָכֶם, “Behold, I will bring all my plagues upon them,” and the plague of death of the firstborn was called a נַגַּף, *nagaf* (epidemic), from the word *mageifah*.

There is a *possuk* in *Yeshayah*, which says וְנִגַּף רָפוֹ, “*nagaf rafo*,” where the *navi* is describing the final plague in Egypt, the death of the firstborns, that it was an “epidemic that brought healing.” The final epidemic upon Egypt brought “healing” to the Jewish people, for it heralded the redemption from Egypt. In the final two plagues, darkness and death of the firstborns, the Jewish people received blessing as Egypt got afflicted. The plagues of darkness and death of the firstborn both forced the Egyptians to be secluded in their houses, while the Jewish people had light in their homes in the midst of the darkness of Egypt. Hashem struck down the firstborns of Egypt and sanctified all Jewish firstborns, and brought death upon the Egyptians while protecting the Jewish people. And when leaving Egypt, everyone left together in groups, in contrast with the last two plagues in Egypt where everyone became secluded.

But there is also *mageifah* that comes uniquely upon the Jewish people. In the times of Dovid *HaMelech*, a plague broke out amongst the Jewish people after they had all been counted by numbers. And the Torah lists 4 events where there was *mageifah* amongst our people: After the *Eigel*, by the story of Korach, after the event of Bilaam and *baal Peor*, and after the *Meraglim*. In the *Tochachah*, Hashem said that *mageifah* comes whenever people veer from the word of Hashem.

When Moshe went above to get the Torah, he was given the secret of the *Ketores* as a gift, the power that saves from *mageifah* which he would later use after the sin with the *Eigel* to stop the epidemic that raged then. But Dovid *HaMelech* also stopped a *mageifah* in his times.

The Gemara says that a bull (and all animals as well) has no *mazal*, and therefore when a bull pushes another bull (the act of goring is called *negifah*, similar to the word *mageifah*), it was done without intention to damage the other bull, since the bull has no *mazal*. [Rashi explains that an animal does not have *daas* (mature intelligence) and therefore it has no *mazal*, whereas a person has *daas* and therefore a person getting damaged is a result of having a bad *mazal*. Hence, the concept of *mazal* is

connected with *daas*]. Thus, *negifah* (pushing) comes when there is an absence of *mazal*, and that is why a bull will attack another animal. The word *negifah* comes from the word *mageifah* - we can learn from this that a *mageifah* thrives whenever there is no *mazal*.

Now we can understand the difference between *mageifah* of the Jewish people and by the gentile nations. When the nations of the world are in the midst of a bad *mazal*, the result is a *mageifah*, amidst the nations of the world. However, regarding the Jewish people, Chazal said, אֵין מַזַּל לְיִשְׂרָאֵל "There is no *mazal* for Yisrael." The Baal Shem Tov explained that "no *mazal*" for the Jewish people, which is spelled as אֵין מַזַּל *ain mazal* (there is no *mazal*) can also be read as "ayin *mazal* l'Yisrael." The *mazal* for the Jewish people is אֵין, *ayin*, the higher dimension. In other words, the Jewish people have a higher mode of conduct (or a higher *mazal*) than what the nations have. Thus, when we rise to the level that is above the jurisdiction of *mazal* - which is essentially the higher dimension, known as *ayin* - we can rise above the dangers of a *mageifah*.

Dovid *HaMelech* was called a *bar nafli* [a stillborn who was supposed to die at birth, who received all 70 years of his life from Adam], which also means "fallen one." This a hint that he had a impaired, "fallen" *mazal*, for his life was destined to be fraught with perils and all kinds of danger and suffering. He had no *mazal* protecting him, so he was vulnerable to *mageifah*. That is also why there was a *mageifah* in his times which was brought by him, when he counted the Jewish people. But ironically, his very disadvantage of having no *mazal* was actually the key to his survival and his ability to save the Jewish people from *mageifah* in his times. Having no *mazal* also meant that he could rise above *mazal*. Dovid *HaMelech* [through his humility and his closeness with Hashem] reached the level of **ayin**, and Dovid *HaMelech* 's very level became *ayin*, the dimension of the spiritual which is above the level of the human being. Thus, Dovid *HaMelech* rose to the level of *ayin*, essentially being above *mazal* and, by extension, transcending all *mageifah*. He fully reached the level of *ayin* that is above *mazal* - the very root of the Jewish people, which is in *ayin*, which places the Jewish people above *mazal*.

The *mageifah* of the Jewish people happened as a result of sinning with the *Eigel*/golden calf which looked like a young bull. This sin caused their illustrious level to plummet, and ever since, the *mazal* of the Jewish people has fallen because of this evil "bull."

The sin with the *Eigel* was the root of *mageifah* for the Jewish people alone, whereas the sin of Adam was the root of *mageifah* for the entire world (both the Jewish people and all the nations). According to one view of the Sages, the *Eitz HaDaas* (Tree of Knowledge) that Adam ate from was a grapevine, a *gefen*, which has the same root letters as the word *mageifah*. The sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* caused mankind to lose his higher *daas* and fall to the level of an animal, like the verse "They were comparable to animals" [which is the detrimental effect of sin]. Thus, *mageifah* is the result of losing *daas*.

The root of *mageifah* in the Jewish people, however, was uniquely the sin with the *Eigel*, which brought *mageifah* only to the Jewish people. After falling in this sin, they fell down from the perfected level of man which they rose to at Har Sinai, and they fell back to the level "They were comparable to animals" - in particular, the "bull." By the *Eigel*, the *Erev Rav* declared about the golden calf: "This is the god which took you out of Egypt." So the *eigel* was the "bull" that brought *mageifah* to the Jewish people.

But the Jewish people can rise above *mazal* and thereby be above *mageifah*. The Gemara says that it is the way for a bull to get pushed around by another bull, but it is not normal for a person to get pushed by a bull. This is a hint that a *mageifah* only affects a person who falls to the level of the "bull," an animal (that is, when he loses his *daas*), and when he is not on the level of the human being.

Even more so, Dovid *HaMelech* was compared to Adam, which stands for “Adam, Dovid, Mashiach,” a hint that Dovid contained the illumination of Mashiach, which is above even the level of a person. The illumination of Mashiach, personified by Dovid *HaMelech*, is the ability to rise to the level that is above a person, the level of *ayin* – the root of the Jewish people which is above *mazal*.

The *Poskim* also discuss what defines a *mageifah*: how many people have to be dying in order for it to be considered a *mageifah*, how many cities are being affected, and how quickly, etc. But it is clear that in the end of days, there will be a *mageifah* like in the times of Dovid *HaMelech*, who also represents the Mashiach ben Dovid.

This *mageifah* is a result of *hester panim*, the concealment of Hashem’s Presence when we don’t clearly feel Hashem, and His Presence feels so hidden from us. Mashiach ben Dovid will soon become revealed, and this will be the fully revealed level of Dovid *HaMelech*. Whereas Dovid *HaMelech*’s righteousness and full potential remained mostly concealed his whole life, he made himself into *ayin/nothing*, Mashiach ben Dovid will be the fully revealed potential of Dovid *HaMelech* (a more revealed level of *ayin*), which will be the level that is above the human being, above the level of *daas* (human comprehension). Dovid was called *bar nafli*, one with a fallen *mazal*, and this was connected with the concept of the *mageifah* that appeared in his times, which caused people to feel concealment of Hashem’s Presence. Because of this, people during a *mageifah* will be exceedingly worried of what’s going to be, what troubles are going to be next, etc. They become disoriented and they lose their *daas*.

[Interestingly], the *mageifah* in the end of days came upon us at Purim time. This tells us about the spiritual nature of this *mageifah*. Purim is a festival that is above *daas*, it is entirely a festival of losing our regular *daas*, rising above our *daas*. Thus, the root of the *mageifah*, which started shortly before Purim [in *Eretz Yisrael*, which is the central place of the world] was in a time period in which there was absence of *daas*. The root of a *mageifah* shows us how to repair it. Since the *mageifah* started from a point where *daas* was absent, the way to transcend the *mageifah* is therefore by going above *daas* – by rising above the level of the human being (*daas*) and accessing the level beyond the human being, which is *ayin*.

The *mageifah* that takes place in the end of days [which is currently taking place] is not like *mageifos* of the past, where the concern was simply about how many people are dying in each city, etc. The *mageifah* in end of days is a *mageifah* affecting the entire world, spreading to every corner of the earth. The way to spiritually repair [and transcend] the *mageifah* in the end of days is by doing the *avodah* of Dovid *HaMelech* which was personified by ***emunah*** (faith in Hashem), and namely ***t’mimus*** (simple, unquestioning faith and loyalty to Hashem). Both *emunah* and *t’mimus* are levels that transcend logical *daas*. The entire root of *mageifah* is when there is no *mazal* (as explained earlier), and the way out of this, then, is to go above *daas* through having *emunah* and especially *t’mimus*. This will place us above *mazal*, where we will not be affected by *mageifah*.

Getting more specific, in the end of days, our *avodah* of connecting more with Hashem is deeper than the level we achieved at our first redemption, which was the exodus from Egypt. Our redemption from Egypt was personified as “An infant nursing from its mother,” where we received all of our sustenance from Hashem. But during the final days, when we are on the way out from the final exile into the final redemption, our *avodah* is to be “like a fetus inside its mother,” which is a deeper level of closeness.

At the exodus, we left with Moshe, and in his merit we received the *manna*, where we were “nursed” our sustenance directly from Hashem. But at the final Redemption, when we are on the way out from this final exile, we can receive an even deeper power than *manna*. The power of Dovid *HaMelech*, the *bar nafli*, is that he had no existence of his own, he was *ayin*. He lived with total *emunah* and

t'mimus and survived only because he lived completely in Hashem's embrace.

Dovid was called a "stillborn" [because he was destined to die at birth, and his entire survival was miraculous]. He survived because he was like the "fetus in its mother," which has no place of its own because it cannot survive if it enters the world. Its only chance of survival right now is to be inside its mother, where it is protected and nourished. Although the fetus is at a disadvantage because it has no place of its own where it can live, this is however, its very source of survival since it can only be inside the mother.

When an *mageifah*/epidemic is raging, there is nowhere in the world to run to, because it is spreading all over the world, to every place. The *posuk* says that during an epidemic, "*Close the doors behind you, come into your rooms.*" The *possuk* is really giving us the deep answer to be saved from an epidemic. We need to "close the doors" to the world outside of us. We need to become "like the fetus in its mother," concealed from everything in the world [where are our only place of refuge is to be alone with Hashem, where we are getting all of our nourishment from Hashem, and we where we are entirely found with Hashem]. This is the way to survive the "birth pangs" before Mashiach's arrival - by being like the fetus in its mother! And that is the deeper meaning of "*close the doors behind you.*"

We are currently in the "birth pangs preceding Mashiach's arrival," but if we want to survive it and be safe from a *mageifah* that rages in the world around us, we need to be like the fetus inside the mother, closed off from the world outside of us. If we are found "outside" in the world, then we have nowhere to run to from the *mageifah*, because the *mageifah* in the end of days will be all over the world. But if we are found on the "inside" - being like the fetus in its mother [alone with Hashem and depending solely on Him for our survival, recognizing that we have nowhere to run to other than Him], then we will be safe. There is no real place in the world to run to, except for running to take shelter under Hashem, for only Hashem is called the true "Place" of the world as *Nefesh HaChaim*, *shaar III* explains. There is no place to run to, there is only Hashem to run to.

A fetus survives only by getting all its sustenance from its mother. By the exodus from Egypt, we were like an infant nursing from its mother, protected by Hashem. But at the final redemption, we can reach an even deeper level than this. We can be like the fetus inside its mother, which is not found on the outside world at all, where we have no place to be in other than being with Hashem! This is the depth of transcending a *mageifah*. When we are actually *zocheh* to enter this level by having total *bittul* (nullifying our self) to Hashem, then the birth contractions before Mashiach's arrival will lead us to the birth that we are waiting for: the birth of the *Geulah*. May it come quickly, *Amen*.

[adapted into english and abridged from the hebrew derasha מגיפה בלבביפידה מחשבה תשפ"א]