

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

Background

When HASHEM sent Moshe Rabbeinu to Pharaoh to ask him to let the Jewish people go, HASHEM gave a specific command for Moshe to treat Pharaoh with respect. After this, on at least two occasions, Moshe changed the words that HASHEM said to him, i.e. to be more respectful to the king.

Questions

We are dealing with Pharaoh, a man who is clearly wicked. Not only did he enslave an entire nation, but it was known that he actively tortured them. As an example, when he contracted *tzaras* (a form of leprosy), his astrologers told him that the only cure was to bathe in human blood. So twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, he had 150 babies slaughtered so that he could bathe in their fresh blood. We would assume that the obligation to treat a king with respect surely shouldn't apply to such a man.

But what makes the obligation of treating a king with respect even more difficult to understand is that fact that Pharaoh remained in his wickedness despite being shown obvious and overt miracles. Even after he was shown the hand of HASHEM, he remained obstinate in his path. Surely, at that point his wickedness put him the category of one who isn't worthy of respect. Yet till the end, Moshe treated Pharaoh with respect. The question is: why?

ספר שמות פרק ו

יג) וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל אָהֲרֹן וַיֹּצִיֵם אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶל פְּרַעֲה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרָיִם לְהוֹצִיא אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם

HASHEM spoke to Moshe and Aharon and commanded them regarding Bnei Yisroel and Pharaoh in order to take the Bnei Yisroel out of Mitzrayim.

רש"י על שמות פרק ו פסוק יג

ואל פרעה מלך מצרים - צום עליו לחלוק לו כבוד בדבריהם

HASHEM commanded them to give Pharaoh honor with their words.

ספר שמות פרק יא

ח) וַיֵּרְדוּ כָל עֲבָדֶיךָ אֵלָי וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לִי לֹאמְרָא אַתָּה וְכָל הָעָם אֲשֶׁר בְּרִגְלֶיךָ וְאַחֲרַי כֹּן אֵצְא וַיֵּצֵא מֵעַם פְּרַעֲה בַּחֲרֵי אֶף

[Said Moshe to Pharaoh], "And all of your servants will come down and bow to me."

רש"י על שמות פרק יא פסוק ח

ח) וירדו כל עבדיך - חלק כבוד למלכות שהרי בסוף ירד פרעה בעצמו אליו בלילה ויאמר קומו צאו מתוך עמי

ולא אמר לו משה מתחלה וירדת אלי והשתחווית לי (זבחים קב)

He gave honor to the king because in the end, Pharaoh himself came down in the middle of the night.