

# The Point of the Plagues

by: Rabbi Jeremy Rosen

When Moses begins his long struggle to change Pharaoh's mind God starts with the signs which were like 'magic tricks' at the Burning bush. We are bound to wonder why God bothered to show him these 'signs' if Pharaoh's magicians were able to replicate them.

The fact is that they could indeed copy some of them. But in the end, they had to accept the limitations of their skills and concede that there was a greater power than theirs. Part of this process with the signs and plagues was to persuade Egypt that even if technologically and materially it was the greatest power at the time, the Children of Israel and their God still had something valuable to offer. A level of understanding that went beyond the technical and scientific and into the realms of the spiritual. But Pharaoh thought he had control over the spiritual too, through his magicians. He had never experienced anything different.

We are similar today. Look how easy it is to fool us. Whether it is David Copperfield, or financial con-men taking advantage of our desire to make quick money, or so called wonder rabbis who offer promises, blessings and investment tips in exchange for large 'donations,' they all rely on our credulity and naivete. And it often takes time and disappointment before we realize that we can do just as well without these 'magicians.' Magic, luck is fickle. Ask any gambler. It may work temporarily but it never lasts. That's the message here.

Just as Pharaoh had to learn the limitations of trickery so do we today. Human nature hasn't changed much. We want someone to take care of us, to persuade us that he has superior knowledge of the mysteries of life and solve our problems. The truth is we are the best equipped to be our own guides if only we have the confidence and if we follow the guide lines given to Moses and given to us and live a life that reinforces our own natural spiritual qualities.

I believe we have the powers within us to solve most of our own problems. We may need expertise and great spiritual minds to give us direction but in the final analysis it is up to us. No magic, no miracles.