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Frogs everywhere

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One of the hardest things for a person to deal with is the feeling of uselessness. It is demoralizing, it is deflating, and worse—it makes you not want to do anything. If what I do doesn't matter anyway, why bother putting in any effort? If nobody appreciates my contributions, and all I get is flack every time I attempt to be useful, then I'll just stop trying altogether.

We all have times in our lives that we feel like a hamster in a wheel, toiling away with little result or recognition; and of course we also have times that we feel good about ourselves and see the fruits of our labor make a difference—in the world and in people's lives. The trick is to make every part of your life have meaning, even when it isn't necessarily apparent.

To be sure, that is often easier said than done, that's why we turn to Torah for guidance, even if it sometimes has to come from the unlikeliest of places. Like frogs.

One of the plagues G-d sent upon the Egyptians for their refusal to free the Jews was an infestation of frogs throughout the country. Every part of Egyptian life was disrupted as a result of the plague; the frogs were literally everywhere, including in the ovens where the Egyptians were attempting to bake bread.

An interesting passage in the Midrash states that if it weren't for the frogs, G-d would have been hard pressed to smite Egypt. But was that really the only tool in G-d's arsenal? What about all the other plagues, many of them seemingly far worse and more devastating than pesky frogs?

The explanation given is that the purpose of the plagues in general was more than just to inconvenience the Egyptians. There was an objective in each plague aimed at breaking Egypt's spirit and making G-d's presence known. Frogs, being cold-blooded amphibians, were sent for the purpose of cooling down and diminishing the Egyptian spirit of rebelliousness. By the frogs infiltrating every aspect of life, including and especially the ovens—symbolic of the heat and passion of the Egyptians' rebelliousness—they played a pivotal role in the breaking of Egypt and the eventual redemption of the Jews.

So the Midrash makes a point to highlight the frogs' contribution. Not so much because G-d was forced to use them, but because other than in this particular event, frogs contribute little to the world. They are benign creatures that usually keep to themselves and neither harm nor help anyone. But when called upon, they went all out and left their mark and exhibited the ultimate purpose of their existence—to enhance the presence of G-dliness in the world. And it is quite possible that just with that event they fulfilled their entire reason for existence.

That being the case with a creature like the frog, how much more so human beings. Each and every one of us has a unique purpose in the world and we were allotted a set amount of time in this world to reach that goal. Every day we are blessed with is another opportunity to make the world a beautiful place and to enhance G-d's presence in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Every mitzvah a person does, every act of kindness we perform, and every time we go out of our way to do a good deed, another step in completing the picture of creation is added, and the purpose of our existence is validated. We may not know exactly which deed will be the one we were created for, but we do know that the more we do, the closer we get to the goal.

And one thing is for sure: Nobody is useless, everyone matters and has a mission specific to his or her life. The only person that can fulfill your mission, is you!