

Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah insights translated and revised by Dovid Pinchas Rose, based on the Yiddish פארש'ס יודישע יודעה by Yehuda Zvulun Klitnick

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לעילוי נשמת אביו מרדכי בן ראובן ואמו שרה לאה בת אביגדור ע"ה

Locusts: the worst plague for Paroh

וְאָכַל אֶת־כָּל־הָעֵץ הַצֹּמַח לָכֶם מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה: וּמָלְאוּ בְתִיךָ וּבְתֵי כָל־עֲבָדֶיךָ וּבְתֵי כָל־מִצְרַיִם וַיַּעַל הָאֲרָבָה עַל כָּל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיָּנַח בְּכָל־גְּבוּל מִצְרַיִם וַעֲתָה שָׂא נָא חַטָּאתִי אֲדָּה־פַעַם וְהַעֲתִירוּ לַה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וַיִּסַּר מֵעָלֶי רַק אֶת־הַמּוֹת הַזֶּה: (י' ה'-י"ז)

...they will eat all your trees that grow out of the field... And your houses and the houses of all your servants and the houses of all the Egyptians will be filled, ... The locusts ascended over the entire land of Egypt, and they alighted within all the border[s] of Egypt, ... But now, forgive now my sin only this time and entreat Hashem your G-d, and let Him remove from me just this death.

Even compared to the grisly horror of the first seven plagues, the Plague of Locusts weighed more grievously on Paroh than any of the preceding ones. This will be our conclusion after resolving four seemingly unconnected points. 1. Posuk 1 foresees the pests' invading the Egyptians' houses, yet we only see them pervading the land as a whole, without infesting domiciles. 2. If we are told that *The locusts ascended over the entire land of Egypt*, then what is added -- and what is the need of saying -- that *they alighted within all the border[s] of Egypt* --?-- Are the two expressions not equivalent, and hence, possibly redundant (a possibility we reject)? 3. Why is it only in the case of the Locusts, among all the Plagues, does Paroh exhibit great zeal and alacrity in summoning Moshe and Aharon for reprieve? וַיִּמְהַר פָּרֹחַ לְקַרְא לְמֹשֶׁה וְלֵאמֹר וַיִּמְהַר חֲטָאתִי. 4. Why does Paroh label this Plague, and no other as "this death"? The answer is found in the way Paroh initially understood what the Plague would be like, and then how it actually unfolded. Initially, Paroh did not fear the Locusts, and even though Moshe warned that the pests would occupy the Egyptians' houses, Paroh supposed that food could be brought from outside Mitzrayim. But to thwart this idea, Hashem miraculously induced the Locusts to array themselves precisely along the international border, where they formed a wall to interdict incoming food shipments. The bulk of the Locusts occupied the interior of Mitzrayim, where they commenced devouring all foodstuffs. When Paroh viewed the locust-imposed embargo on incoming food, along with the wholesale consumption of food throughout the countryside, he feared that the next step would be home invasions by locusts, eating up any remaining house-held food. The end result would be Egypt stripped bare. According to this scenario, Paroh feared that the impoverished people would be as good as dead, since a poor man is likened to a dead man, as Eichah 4:9 confirms: *Better off were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger.* (Nedarim 64b lists four who are like the dead: a pauper, a blind man, a metzora and someone childless.) Paroh saw that he and his people were actually staring death in the face. So he hastened as never before to summon Klal Yisroel's advocates to remove the death sentence. With these insights, we have a more coherent account of the grievousness of the Plague of Locusts.

(בית ישראל השלם למוח"ז האדמו"ר ממאסטערסדארף זצוק"ל)

Paroh's plaintive appeal in the face of the Locusts

וַעֲתָה שָׂא נָא חַטָּאתִי אֲדָּה־פַעַם וְהַעֲתִירוּ לַה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: (י' י"ז)

But now, forgive now my sin only this time and entreat Hashem your G-d (10:17) This abject expression of appeal is found only in the case of the dreaded Locusts. True, in the case of Hail and Frogs, Paroh did say 'I have just seen, Paroh viewed himself as virtually a dead man, and his abject plea, in which he added *Elokeichem*, reflected a submission augmented beyond Hashem's name alone. [Perhaps his plea foreshadows Yidden's proclamation at the end of Yom Kippur: *ה' הוא האלוהים -- total submission to the Kingship of Hashem Yisborach.* [DPR]] (שמח זבולון תשע"ז)

A glorious Yomtov in the midst of bitter slavery

מִי יָמֵי הַהֲלָכִים. וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה בְּנִעְרֵינוּ וּבְנִקְנֵינוּ גִלְדָּה בְּבָנֵינוּ וּבְבָנוֹתֵינוּ בְּצִאֲנֵנוּ וּבְבִקְרָנוּ גִלְדָּה כִּי חָג ה' לָנוּ: (י' ח-ט)

Who and who are going?" Moses said, "With our youth and with our elders we will go, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our cattle we will go, for it is a festival of Hashem to us." (10:8-9)

Paroh is asking, "Whom do you intend to take along with you on this foolish trip?" This is strange for an autocratic ruler, since it seems to be according some power of privilege to an underling. Moshe could have responded simply "All of us, people and livestock together", [but by detailing all classes, the impact is prodigious. [DPR]] But why did Moshe add the element of a Yom Tov? He was anticipating Paroh's opposition to taking youngsters along, since children under a certain age would not grasp the import of the occasion. But a Yiddishe Yomtov is an inclusive event for every family member, without exception. Even newborn babies have a part in the celebration.

(אמרות כנף - מחסידי האמרי אמת מגור)

Kiddush Hashem triggered by the lowly insects

...נִטָּה יָדָךְ עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיַּעַל עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: וַיִּטּוּ וְהִי נִהַר וַיִּחַקְדִּים בְּאֶרֶץ כְּלֵהִיּוֹם הַהוּא וְכָל־הַלַּיְלָה הִבְקֹר הָיָה וְרוּחַ הַקָּדִים נָשָׂא אֶת־הָאֲרָבָה: וַיַּעַל הָאֲרָבָה עַל כָּל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: (י' י"ב-י"ד)

"Stretch forth your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, and they will ascend over the land of Egypt, ..." So Moshe stretched forth his staff over the land of Egypt, and Hashem led an east wind in the land all that day and all the night. [By the time] it was morning, the east wind had borne the locusts. (10:12-14) We strive to reconcile "The plague-Locusts shall ascend (in an upwards direction)" with the east wind causing them to descend (blown in a downward direction.) --?-- As preamble to the Locusts, the second posuk in our Parsha has the key word *וּלְמַעַן* and in order that you tell into the ears of your son and your son's son how I made a mockery of the Egyptians, and [that you tell of] My signs that I placed in them, and you will know that I am the Lord." (10:2) These words indicate clearly that the Locusts were destined to call forth a *Kiddush Hashem berabim*/ a public sanctification of Hashem's name. That was their purpose and reason for being. This elevation in the status of lowly insects constituted an "aliya" for them 'spiritually', so it makes sense to speak of their "ascent" in a physical sense. [CONT'D NEXT PAGE>>>] (נועם אליעזר - סקולען)

Coming or going?

What differentiates **בא** from **נה**? We find in Ba'al HaTurim: "When Hashem told Moshe to come to Paroh's house, he told him **"Bo."** When he told him to confront Paroh at the river water, he told him **"Lech"**. This conforms perfectly with what Ohr HaChaim explains on 9:1. Yalkut Shimoni (175) informs us that heavily armed soldiers stood guard at the palace, standing alongside lions and wild dogs, all of whom struck fear into anyone seeking to enter without permission. An amazing miracle enabled Moshe to enter in response to Hashem's directive **"bo el Paroh"**: the soldiers became lame and disabled and the fearsome lions meekly escorted Moshe to Paroh's throne. But when Paroh stood at the Nile, he was unaccompanied (since no one was allowed to see him attending to his needs). There was no need for a miracle to overpower any watchmen or guards, as at the palace. Hence, a simple

פרדס יהודה תשע"ז sufficed. לך אלפרעה (ו:ט)

Rav Yisochor Dov of Belz זי"ע spent a good part of World War I in Munkatch, which was a safe haven from the fighting. When the war ended, he returned to Belz only to find his house totally destroyed. He settled in Holshitz/Oleszyce, a village between Gdansk and Bialystok in Poland. A small number of Belz chassidim were living there at the time, but their numbers swelled greatly when their Rebbe arrived, who was able to remain with them until the outbreak of World War II. The Dinover Rebbe, Rav Tzvi Elimelech Shpira had been Rov in that town, with the dayan having been HaGaon Rav Shlomo ben Yaakov Baba'd, a descendant of the Minchas Chinuch.

The year תרפ"ב saw a bochur from Germany settle in Holshitz. He impressed two older chassidim with his piety, and they encouraged him to daven and learn in the Belz shul. With time, he became a staunch follower of the Belzer Rebbe. The boy took ill once and his two mentors arranged medical treatment for him until he was **B"H** restored to full health. He wrote to his father with an update on his situation and the man lost no time in coming to visit his son. When he learned of the devoted way the two chassidim nursed his son back to health, he sought to reward them monetarily. The two informed him that they were well-off financially and politely spurned the offer of money. "Well, if I can't reward you with money, I can at least give you the pleasure of hearing a story which I heard first-hand from the man to whom it happened. Listen to this episode about your great Rebbe *shlit'a*:"

"A friend of mine from Germany was once traveling through Lemberg where he stayed at an inn, expecting to get some much-needed rest and nourishment. At the next table, there sat two young men who were locked in a heated verbal dispute about their business dealings. The debate grew heated; their conflicting claims shot back and forth until it was clear they could not reach an agreement. Being men of good will and integrity, they agreed to ask the Rebbe in Belz to adjudicate their case, pledging to be bound by his ruling. My friend could not suppress his curiosity at what was going on, and broke into their

discussion. 'Pardon me, gentlemen, but I could not help but overhear your impassioned dispute and what you plan to do about it. Now I happen to be a trial attorney from Berlin. I know the legal profession very well, but I'm not aware that there is any competent lawyer in the little city of Belz. So who is going to handle your case?' "We don't deal with lawyers, Mister. We are chassidim of the Rebbe of Belz, who is a tzaddik

and learned scholar. He will forge a compromise between us and we will accept his every word." This Yid from Germany had no idea of what a chassidishe Rebbe was, nor of chassidishe Yidden, so he asked the two men for an explanation. The two "combatants" set aside their differences and briefed the newcomer about the most basic principles of chassidus, including the status and role of Rebbes. To add

some spice to the lesson, they added some captivating teachings of the Belzer Rebbes. My friend was much taken by their account and felt moved to travel along with them to Belz so he could become personally acquainted with the Rebbe. The chassidim made arrangements with the Rebbe's gabbai for the lawyer to be admitted to the Rebbe's *kodesh p'nima*/inner sanctum. As is often the case with illustrious Rebbes, a wait of a few days ensued until the gabbai prescribed the course of action for a specific day and time: the man would wait by the Rebbe's open door until a previous visitor would conclude his audience, after which the Rebbe would call him in. And thus it was. But when the Rebbe caught a glimpse of my friend, he flushed red from fright and fled into an adjoining room. This unexpected turn of events frightened my friend to no end and he could do nothing other than to wait "on shpilkes" until things unfolded. When the Rebbe eventually returned, he asked forgiveness for the rude reception and launched into an explanation of why he had been so agitated.

"My holy father, Rav Yehoshua, the first Rebbe of Belz זצוק"ל revealed a sure sign to me of knowing when the chevlei moshiach/upheavals of the Messianic Age would be starting. It would be when a Yid from Berlin, the last capital of Prussia, would appear before me. When I saw you, and remembered my father's prophetic words, I was sure that Moshiach was very close at hand." [The Rebbe regained his composure when he recovered from the initial shock of thinking that Moshiach was literally at his doorstep. He recalled the Gemara's teaching that first the era of Moshiach is ushered in, but the moment of his actual appearance could remain subject to many factors, and could well come later. (General discussion from Sanhedrin 98b) [YZK]] Hearing this potent account of the Rebbe's vision, and his unshakeable faith in his father's words, the chassidim from Holshitz considered themselves well and truly rewarded for the chessed they had performed for the narrator's son.

ספר בארו של יצחק ששמע מכ"ק אדמו"ר ר' יעקב מפשעווארסק זצוק"ל

STORY OF THE WEEK:

A "yekkische" Yid's introduction to the Belzer Rebbe

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