Points to Ponder

Voera 5779

**וַיְצַוֵּם֙ אֶל־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל וְאֶל־פַּרְעֹ֖ה מֶ֣לֶךְ מִצְרָ֑יִם He commanded them to Bnei Yisrael (6:13)** – What did he command them to do with Bnei Yisrael? **Rav Bernard Weinberger ztl.** explains that if Moshe was to go to speak on their behalf to Pharaoh, he needed their acceptance of his leadership and representative status. Thus, they would need to accept him. This is the intent of the Possuk here – He commanded Moshe and Aharon to be representatives of the Bnei Yisrael and then to go to Pharaoh. (Think like the role of Barchu which is the acceptance of the role of Shaliach Tzibbur).

**לֵ֣ךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹ֞ה בַּבֹּ֗קֶר הִנֵּה֙ יֹצֵ֣א הַמַּ֔יְמָה Go to Pharaoh behold he is going out to the water (7:16)** - **Rashi** reminds us that Pharaoh would go to the water early each morning to relieve himself because he started the claim that he was a God and did not need to use the facilities. **Rav Reuven Melamed ztl.** pointed out the irony of Pharaoh. On the one hand, he was the wealthiest person in the world with the greatest honor. Still, he was unable to do as he pleased due to the aura he created for himself. In essence, he was enslaved to the image he created in order to lead the people. Rav Melamed explains that this is an incredible lesson for anyone enslaved to any sort of desire. That which we tend to be interested in pursuing often becomes that which becomes all consuming – of us and our lives.

**לְהוֹצִ֥יא אֶת־הַכִּנִּ֖ים וְלֹ֣א יָכֹ֑לוּ To produce the Kinim and they could not (8:14)** – Why was the 3rd Makka Kinim? And why was Yaakov afraid of it so much that he wanted to be out of Mitzrayim for it? **Rav Eytan Feiner Shlita** suggested that after Pharaoh, the next ruling class was the class of Preists and Chartumim. However, the Avodah Zara protocol for them demanded that not only they – but also their animals --be hairless. This was the case in order to prevent lice from being on them as they served Avodah Zara. Ergo, the challenge of Kinim from Hashem to the Egyptians was that He was cutting them off from their status – not only would they be made to suffer, they would not be able to do anything about it. Moreover, they would look to Yaakov Aveinu and see that his body was free of lice and then they would turn him into an Avoda Zara posthumously. This, Yaakov could not stand and asked to be removed from the place.

**וַיֵּצֵ֥א משֶׁ֖ה מֵעִ֣ם פַּרְעֹ֑ה וַיֶּעְתַּ֖ר Moshe left Pharoh and davened to Hashem (8:26) – Rashi** explains that he went the extra mile for the Tefillah. **Rav Schwab ztl**. asks why he did that? Why wasn’t it better NOT to daven, have Pharaoh and the people be punished and the Jews would leave? Why does Moshe daven on the Egyptians behalf? Rav Schwab answers that Bnei Yisrael are recognized as Goy Gadol (See Megillah 27a) because we call out to Hashem or because we study His Torah. Moshe chooses to daven extra hard because when the Egyptians see the power of his prayer, Moshe will have created a Kiddush Hashem and the nations would know to appreciate Bnei Yisrael for this power.

**הִנֵּ֗ה לֹא־מֵ֛ת מִמִּקְנֵ֥ה יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל עַד־אֶחָ֑ד  And from the Jewish animals up to one (9:7)** – It almost sounds like one died. Yet, earlier the Possuk had mentioned that no animal had died. Which version was correct? The **Gra** explained that the sheep of the Migadef did die but prior to Matan Torah his Jewish status was determined based on patrilineal descent. Ergo, the sheep dying was that of a non-Jew. The only thing was that Pharaoh did not know this. **Rav Gedaliah Eisman ztl**. explains that this is an incredible lesson in human nature. Pharaoh did not bother to seek an alternative explanation for the abnormality because he did not WANT to accept the possibility that Hashem was correct despite seeing the entire Egyptian flock die. It is an incredible lesson about the Yetzer HaRa’s belief system.

**כְּצֵאתִי֙ אֶת־הָעִ֔יר אֶפְרֹ֥שׂ אֶת־כַּפַּ֖י When I leave the city I will spread my hands up to Hashem (9:29)** – Shlomo HaMelech also does this style when he dedicated the Beis HaMikdash. Why don’t we do this today? **Rabbi Akiva Eiger** points out that we have set positions for Tefillah. Why do we not spread our hands? He answers that the issue is one that the Christians corrupted from us. A similar concept exists in the name of the **Gra** who points out at the beginning of Yeshayahu that there are 2 types of Prishus Kapayim – one outward and down and the other outward and up (like a giver and a receiver). If one were to duchan and could not hold his hands out**, Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted in the name of Rav Soloveitchik ztl., that he would not be Yotzai since to give a Beracha one needs to hold his hands out on his own. Rav Schachter Shlita would point out to us that there are a number of instances where the Christians corrupted the intent and Chazal decided to make changes from the style in Tanach. Here the Prishus Kapayim means 2 different things based on position of the hands up or down.

**כִּ֥י אֲפִילֹ֖ת הֵֽנָּה The wheat and the spelt were not destroyed (9:32) – Rashi** explains that these crops are late and thus were still young and soft enough to withstand the storm of the Barad. **Midrash Tanchuma** argues with this idea maintaining that the word Afilos comes from the word Ploei Ploim – wonderous in that it was wonderous that these crops were able to survive. Why does the Midrash challenge Rashi’s explanation if this Peshat is supported throughout Shas? And why is it Ploei ployim instead of merely “a peleh”? **Rav Nebenzahl Shlita** explains that the entirety of Barad was a miracle as it involved a challenge to nature and the Barad itself – fire and ice/hail at the same time was an additional amazing thing. That the late crops were not destroyed at the time that destruction was happening in the most miraculous way – is Pleoi Peloim.

**Haftara – בְּקַבְּצִ֣י | אֶת־בֵּ֣ית יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל מִן־הָֽעַמִּים֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר נָפֹ֣צוּ בָ֔ם וְנִקְדַּ֥שְׁתִּי בָ֖ם לְעֵינֵ֣י הַגּוֹיִ֑ם  When I gather Bnei Yisrael from among the nations and my name will be sanctified from them (Yechezkel 28:25)** – **Rav Dov Lior Shlita** used this possuk to explain the Kiddush Hashem of the Medina despite some of its shortcomings. The Novi explains the settlement of the land, the planting of vineyards and the building of homes. Where are the discussions of doing mitzvos and learning in Yehivos? Rav Lior cited the **Chofetz Chaim** who noted that initially at the time of the early stages of the Geulah, the land will need infrastructure first. Thereafter, a larger group will come and a greater stress on Shmiras HaMitzvos will come with it. Rav Lior noted that this is what seems to be happening to us in Eretz Yisrael and Halevai we be Zoche to be ready to move on to the continued steps until the Geulah Sheleima --- and beyond.