

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Bo 5784

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Hashem brings the mako of locusts upon Eretz Mitzrayim.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי כֵן הַ עֲמֻמָּה כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲשַׁלַּח אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת־טַפְכֶם רְאוּ כִּי רָעָה נִגְדַּד פְּנֵיכֶם:

“And he said to them, let it be so, Hashem among you, that I will send you out and the children. See the evil you have done opposite my countenance.” (Shmos 10:10).

Did Pharaoh say this to Moshe and Aharon or is “said to them” referring to a different “them?” If Hashem is among them then why did Pharaoh not give in to send the children? What evil did Moshe and Aharon do to Pharaoh with their request?

As always, context is important. In this pasuk the discussion is between Moshe and Pharaoh regarding yet another mako that Hashem will bring upon Eretz Mitzrayim. This mako /strike, like some of them, came with prior warning. **כִּי אִם־מָאֵן אֶתָּה לְשַׁלַּח אֶת־עַמִּי.** “Because if you refuse to send out My people, Lo! I will bring locust tomorrow in all your territories.” (Ibid 10:4). The הַנְּגִי “Lo!” signifies something out of the ordinary. More than just a mako, this mako will delineate Pharaoh’s borders.

A bit of background is important. Eretz Mitzrayim is comprised of two distinct territories. First, there is Mitzrayim. When used by itself, this means the city or district of Mitzrayim. Like New York State has a New York City, Mitzrayim was a district within the greater country of Eretz Mitzrayim. Goshen is in the district of Mitzrayim. When Yoseph was vizier over Mitzrayim, he expanded the power and territories for that Pharaoh. **וַיִּקְנוּ יוֹסֵף אֶת־כָּל־אֲדָמַת מִצְרָיִם לַפְּרִעָה כִּי־מָכְרוּ מִצְרָיִם אִישׁ שְׂדֵהוּ כִּי־תָוֹק עֲלֵהֶם הָרָעָב וַתְּהִי הָאֶרֶץ לַפְּרִעָה.** “And Yoseph acquired all the lands of Mitzrayim for Pharaoh, because each Mitzrayim land owner sold their land to the crown, because the famine was strong upon them, and the Land (Country) came to Pharaoh.” (Bereishis 47:21). This is how all of Mitzrayim became owned by Pharaoh. Man, beast, and land were sold to Mitzrayim for the provisions. That is also why the Torah constantly refers to Pharaoh’s courtesans as “servants.” They were indentured to Pharaoh. This pasuk, though, teaches at the end that “and the Country was to Pharaoh.” Pharaoh also gained the lands south of Goshen and Mitzrayim and formed the great country called Eretz Mitzrayim. As the Torah says in the next pasuk, “And he consolidated his territories.” (Ibid 47:22). The Torah uses the word גְּבוּלָה for territory. Egypt became a great country.

Gvul means more than just border. As the Torah says, “And it was, the original *gvul* of Canaan was from Tzidon extended through Gerar to Aza, Sadom and Amora and the lands of Tzivoyam until Lasha.” (Ibid 10:19). It is talking about cities included in the territories of Canaan. Here, too, Pharaoh consolidated his territories to include the surrounding lands.

Gvul was used in the second mako, which also had prior warning. “If you refuse to send them, Lo! I will plague all your territories with amphibians.” (Shmos 7:27). This

pasuk mirrors the warning for locust. It commences with “If you refuse to send them” and then talks about the entire territories being stricken, and uses “Lo!” The mako threatened not only the borders, but the entire expanded territory, as “they will come up and enter your palace and your bedchambers...your ovens and kneading bowls.” (Ibid 7:28). It attacked the land and the frogs attacked the household food.

Why were these two makos referred to as striking at the territories? Every other mako, save for dever – pestilence, hit the entire Eretz Mitzrayim. However, these two specifically came up through the acquired lands that created Eretz Mitzrayim and attacked the provisions. “The Nile River will swarm with the amphibians.” (Ibid). The Nile runs north toward the Mediterranean Sea. It comes from the new territories and passed through the old territories. Meaning the frogs came from the new territory and attacked the older territories. It also attacked at the household ready food supplies.

The locust was the same. Hashem drove an east wind from the Yam Suf into Eretz Mitzrayim. (Ibid 10:13). Locust attacked through the south (where the Yam Suf is adjacent to Eretz Mitzrayim) and came north. They also attacked all vegetation. (Ibid 10:15). Both the second and seventh makos came from the south, covered the entire lands, and attacked the food supply directly. This attacking of the food inside kitchens and then out in the field harkened directly to how Egypt became Eretz Mitzrayim. Saving his subjects from the famine originally gave that Pharaoh the power. Now that he was warned that he would lose their foodstuff the servants rebelled.

Moshe warned that “the locust will devour all the remnants of food.” (Ibid 10:5). Further, “they will fill your palaces and your houses.” (Ibid 10:6). Famine was coming and the servants would again not even have the quiet of their own homes as refuge (as they did not with the frogs). The servants now objected to Pharaoh: “How long will you allow this [war with Hashem] to become a destructive trap for us? ...You know that [if the locusts come] then Mitzrayim is lost.” (Ibid 10:7). They reminded Pharaoh that the entire reason they were servants was for the Pharaoh’s protection. However, if the famine came again then Mitzrayim (Goshen and the lush farmable north regions) will be lost. The great Eretz Mitzrayim will be forced to break up, the people will no longer allow themselves and their children to be servants to Pharaoh. Great civil war, rebellion, and destruction was looming. It was all about to fall apart. Territories will be lost.

Pharaoh capitulated and called Moshe and Aharon back. When they said they will go with all the people, young and old, and all their livestock (ibid 10:9) Pharaoh rejected them. Then he turned to his own courtesans and said, “Go be with Hashem, that I will send you out and your children” for I will release you from my protection and my service “see the evil you have done opposite my countenance” that you dare to rebel against the Pharaoh, you shall no longer be part of my court or protection. (Ibid 10:10). Pharaoh finished, “No! You men can go worship Hashem. Because that is what you have been requesting.” (Ibid 10:11). The servants started to fear Hashem in the previous mako. (Ibid 9:20). Then Pharaoh “expelled them from his presence.” (Ibid 10:11). He didn’t expel Moshe and Aharon (who he summoned after the darkness) but his own courtesans. The “servants of Pharaoh” are no longer mentioned in connection with being together at the palace.