

Parshat Bo 5776

Detzakh (כ'צ'ד) **Adash** (ש'ע'ד) & **Be'achav** (ב'א'ה'ב) - What do we learn from the famous division of the 10 plagues into 3 groups by Rebbe Yehudah? **A Pattern?** 1. *Maharal* notes (Rebbe Yehudah realised) that there was a sequence: 1st/4th/7th Plague-warning: 2nd/5th/8th Plague-warning: 3rd/6th/9th Plague-no warning. 2. Further, when told by Hashem to give the warning to Pharaoh in the 2nd plague (chapter 7:26, 'Frogs), the 5th plague (9:1, 'Pestilence') and the 8th plague (10:1, 'Locusts'), Moshe is ordered *Bo* (*Bo al Paro*). Whereas in the other 3 cases of warning (1st/4th/7th plague), *Bo* is omitted. So combining the 2 ideas leads to the configuration: 1st/4th/7th Plague-Warning without *Bo*: 2nd/5th/8th Plague- Warning with *Bo*: 3rd/6th/9th Plague- No warning. Which in turn led to Rebbe Yehudah deducing the following pattern within each of his 3 consecutive groups of plagues of *Detzakh*, *Adash* & *Be'achav*? The 1st plague: warning without *B*. The 2nd plague: warning with *Bo*. The 3rd plague: no warning. **Explanation – 'The Progressive Punishment of Egypt'**-This is analysed by the Maharal in an ingenious manner.

(i) **3 Spheres**-The three groups of Rebbe Yehudah represent 3 spheres:-
 A the subterranean up to the surface of the earth including the rivers, seas and the land mass. B the living world which includes humanity and the animal kingdom and all that lives on the earth's surface up to the sky. C the heavenly and celestial kingdom. *Detzakh* are all in A: the river turning into 'Blood', the 'Frogs' coming from the river, and the 'Lice' from the earth. *Adash* are from B: the 'Wild Beasts' who dwell in the world, the 'Pestilence' which affected the animals, and the 'Boils' which affected the humans all relate to the middle sphere. *Be'achav* are all from C: 'Hail' and 'Locusts' are from the upper sphere; *Maharal* calls 'Darkness' "the covering of the sun". 'Death of Firstborn' is beyond the heavens above.

Bo and Warning-For the 1st plague within each of the 3 groups, Moshe was sent with the 1st warning to Pharaoh. He was not to enter Pharaoh's house (no *Bo*), but to politely wait for him until he came out. For the 2nd plague and the 2nd warning Moshe went straight into Pharaoh's house (yes, *Bo*), for by then, Moshe was allowed to exert more power over the recalcitrant Pharaoh (and therefore Moshe was not required to be patient). By the 3rd occasion, Pharaoh deserved to be punished with no warning. However, as the start of the next group involved a higher sphere, the whole process had to be repeated.

(ii) **Further Sub-division Within Each of the 3 Groups**-The 1st and 2nd in each group represent opposite extremes, whilst the 3rd is a combination or amalgam of the other two. Thus 'Blood' represents heat and fire; 'Frogs', water which is the

opposite; whilst 'Lice' is from a combination. 'Wild Beasts' are unnaturally destructive; 'Pestilence' which is a natural event; but 'Boils' is partly both. Hail comes down; 'Locusts' goes up; and 'Darkness' is a mixture for it affects the celestial bodies which go up and down. As each 3rd plague was a combination of the elements of the first two in each group, no (further) warning was necessary.

(iii) **Hashem's Increasing Might**-Maharal (in Gur Arye) also points out that in the case of the first 3 makos (*Detzakh*), Pharaoh did not believe that they were divinely ordained from Hashem. Hence he instructed his chartumim to do likewise, until the plague of 'Lice' proved to him (8:15) that 'the finger of Hashem' was involved. Notwithstanding this, Pharaoh was not yet prepared to accept that Hashem exercised *Hashgocho Protis* (individual attention) to the lower spheres. Consequently Hashem brought the second set of plagues (*Adash*), in connection with which the possuk says (8:18) 'and I will distinguish.....the land of Goshen.....in order that you will know that I am Hashem in the midst of the land'. Hashem demonstrated that he could differentiate between one person and the next and accurately identify His target - this clearly proved that He exercises detailed supervision and scrutiny over each individual. So too in the plague of 'Pestilence' (see 9:4).

Finally came *Be'achav* where there was an even more exalted lesson (9:14) "so that you shall know that there is none like Me in all the world". These last 4 plagues accentuated the absolute superiority of Hashem, and that there is none even remotely comparable to Him. Each was a wondrous unique event. Of 'Hail', it says (9:18) that "there had never been anything like it in Egypt from the day it was founded until now". In 'Locusts' (10:14) it again says that "there had never been, nor would there afterwards be, such a locust-swarm". *Kal Vachomer* as to 'Darkness'. Similarly, 'Death of Firstborn' (11:6) "and there will be screaming throughout Egypt, such as there has never been, nor will there be anything like it again".

Finally: The connection between plagues 3, 6 and 9 (the third in each group) is shown by *Meam Loez* in a different context by the following:

כ	ש	ח
ג	ה	ש
מ	ו	כ

Whether read horizontally or vertically all three are there! דבר תורה לפרשת השבוע לעילוי נשמת אבי מורי ר' אברהם ב"ר נחמן ע"ה ביום היארצייט לפטירתו ו' שבט