

## פרשת בא

### שמות י:ז-יא

וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲבָדֵי פַרְעֹה אֵלָיו עַד־מַתִּי יִהְיֶה זֶה לָנוּ לְמוֹקֵשׁ שְׁלַח אֶת־הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיַּעֲבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם הַטָּרֵם תִּדְעַ כִּי אֲבַדְהָ מִצְרַיִם: וַיֹּשֶׁב אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת־אַהֲרֹן אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם לָכוּ עֲבַדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִי וּמִי הַהֹלְכִים: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה בְּנַעַרְיָנוּ וּבְזַקְנֵינוּ נֵלֶךְ בְּבָנֵינוּ וּבְבָנוֹתֵנוּ בְּצֹאנֵנוּ וּבְבָקָרֵנוּ נֵלֶךְ כִּי חַג־יְהוָה לָנוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יְהִי כֵן יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲשַׁלַּח אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת־טַפְכֶם רְאוּ כִּי רָעָה נֹגֵד פְּנֵיכֶם: לֹא כִּן לָכוּ נָא הַגְּבֵרִים וְעַבְדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה כִּי אֵתָה אַתֶּם מִבְּקָשִׁים וַיַּגֵּרֶשׁ אֹתָם מֵאֶת פְּנֵי פַרְעֹה:

Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long will this one be a stumbling block to us? Let the people go and they will worship their God. Don't you yet know that Egypt is lost?"

[Thereupon,] Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, worship the Lord your God. 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 the Lord to us." So he [Pharaoh] said to them, "So may the Lord be with you, just as I will let you and your young children out. See that evil is before your faces. Not so; let the men go now and worship the Lord, for that is what you request." And he chased them out from before Pharaoh.

#### Noah Diner- Class of 2020- Sforno- Understanding Pharaoh through Elsav

At the beginning of the Parsha, God sends Aaron and Moshe as messengers on his behalf to convince Pharaoh to set the Jews free. Moshe recites God's will, to let his people free to worship him. With this statement proceeded an ultimatum proclaiming that if his people remain in bondage for another day he will cast locust upon them and their belongings. After deliberating with his advisors Moshe and Aaron are called back to Pharaoh's palace. He begins with an inquiry regarding

their request, asking who will be set free to worship. Moshe responds “We will all go, young and old: we will go with our sons and daughters, our flocks and herds; for we must observe the LORD’s festival.” Moshe’s response casts doubt onto Pharaoh rising extreme suspicion on his part. The unwillingness to uphold God’s request led to Moshe stretching out his hand, which resulted in the inception of the plague of locust.

**Sforno** analyzes a comment made by Pharaoh after proposing that only the men were granted the ability to leave and worship their lord. Pharaoh warns Moshe that his stunt will cause him great harm and will do no good for his people. The Sforno analyzes Pharaoh’s tone and meaning within his statement. The tone, in the eyes of Sforno, seems to imply that he is threatening the God that has inflicted hours of pain upon his nation and for this reason it was odd. However, when Sforno looked at the meaning of his statement everything began to align. The phrase Pharaoh used drew similarities to Eisav’s comment regarding the birthright. Both comments acknowledged that their life paths were leading them to premature death and as a result their actions reflected this toxic mindset. For this reason, Pharaoh wasn’t afraid of the wrath God would unleash on him and his people because he believed that his death would be arriving soon.

In my opinion, I very much like the Sforno’s interpretation and psychoanalyzation of Pharaoh’s actions. This commentary aided in my understanding of the rationale behind Pharaoh’s reckless actions towards Hashem.

( Sforno was an Italian rabbi, Biblical commentator, philosopher, halachic authority, and physician who wrote commentaries on the Tanach. He was born in 1470 and died in 1550. )

### **Noa Geralnik- Class of 2023- Ha’amek Davar**

In the beginning of Parshat Bo, Moshe warned Pharaoh of the locusts. Pharaoh’s servants beg him to consider letting the Jews go. He then summons Moshe and Aharon and asks who would leave. Moshe says everybody even the cattle. Pharaoh says that evil will be with them and that they should leave the children behind. Moshe says no and the locusts come, then the darkness and finally the death of the first born.

The **Haamek Davar** wrote a commentary on what Pharaoh meant when he said that “evil will confront you”. It explains that Pharaoh is asking “who is going to provide for you in the desert and won’t you die of hunger?” Pharaoh is saying that taking the children into the desert is causing the misfortune because they will all die. I think that Pharaoh is lying and trying to trick Moshe into leaving the kids in the desert. He is so sad to be losing all of his slaves that maybe he thinks he could trick him into leaving some behind. I think this because if Pharaoh was being genuine

then why did he only try and keep the children. He could have said everyone should stay so they don't die, not only the children. The reason he chose that it was important to leave the children behind is so that Bnei Yisrael wouldn't be able to repopulate and so he could have young slaves who could repopulate and give him another generation of slaves.

**(Ha'amek Davar** was a series of books of commentary written by Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, also known as the Netziv or Reb Hirsch Leib Berlin. He lived from 1816-1893. He was an Orthodox rabbi and dean of the Volozhin Yeshiva. )

### **Eyal Catran- Class of 2022- An Original Thought**

- Following the plague of hail, Moshe and Aaron come to Pharaoh and warn him of the fact that if he “refuses to humble himself and let them (B’nei Israel) go, Moshe will “bring locusts to his borders” (as in, initiate the next plague, locusts). Moshe then uses two verses to vividly describe to Pharaoh what the following plague will entail, and the effects it’ll have on his land, and people, in order to scare him into letting Moshe’s people go. Moshe mentions how “they (the locusts) 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”. Moshe even references the last plague the Egyptians were struck with, hail, when he says that “they will eat the surviving remnant, which remains for you from the hail”. Pharaoh's servants then usher pharaoh to essentially surrender to Moshe and simply let B’nei Israel go, which brings us to my next paragraph.
- After 7 devastating plagues, heading to the advice provided by his advisors, pharaoh tells Moshe to “Go, worship the Lord your God”. When searching for an original commentary, I found it peculiar how Pharaoh suddenly gave in to peer pressure after his heart was repeatedly hardened by god. Not only did he try to compromise with Moshe (which ultimately failed but A+ for effort nonetheless) he also seemingly warned Moshe “that evil is before your faces”. The actual meaning behind the word of advice or snarky comment sent Moshe's way doesn't actually matter, the real fruit for thought is why did Pharaoh suddenly show character, or better yet, break character from his constant “no no no” hardened heart attitude for seemingly no reason? He didn't budge after the second plague, he didn't budge after the fifth plague, he didn't budge after the (drum roll please) sixth plague, so why is he budging on the seventh? In my opinion, before releasing the truly devastating plagues of locusts, darkness and the death of the first born, G-d had temporarily ceased the hardening of Pharaoh's heart with the intention of showing how truly stubborn Pharaoh was, and how easily he was willing to

disregard his people in the name of his pride and how little the hardening of his heart had anything to do with how much his heart was akin to stone.

**Mrs. Ziyona Rantz- Lower School Judaics Instructor**

An interesting fact and situation that is going on in these pesukim is a concept that is repeated many times throughout history. Our enemies always seem to underestimate us and our strengths. One of the many strengths of the Bnei Yisrael is our achdut and the notion that the whole family and every member of our people are involved in keeping our religion alive. Each member of the family and community, no matter the gender or position held in society has high importance and contribution to the whole. It is not only the men that need to be there but everyone. The Egyptian mentality that Pharaoh has cannot comprehend this concept. This conversation shows how much Pharaoh does not understand the Jewish People and what truly makes us “click”, perhaps it was this lack of understanding that led to Egypt’s fear of how strong the Jewish people had become. Pharaoh is also choosing to have a “selective memory”, he is focusing on the initial request in which Benai Yisrael’s original intent was to go out to the desert and then return to Mitzrayim after 3 days of spiritual recharge with Hashem. At this point, however, that proposal’s expiration date has come and gone. Pharaoh lost his opportunity to truly save face. Everyone must go for the sake of whom the Jewish People were to become. Out of the melting pot of Mitzrayim and into the solid foundation that Eretz Yisrael has to offer us.