



L'zecher Nishmas, my dear yedid, R' Chaim Yechezkel ben R' Yosef Goldstein, z"l

[“The Compassionate Plague of Blood”]

[Video Link: <https://www.torahanytime.com/#/lectures?v=275927>]

Hashem instructed Moshe to warn the Egyptians. If they wish to live, they should remain indoors during the *makah* of barad. Whoever is found outside will be killed. Those who want their livestock to survive, should bring them inside before the onset of the plague.

“*Hayareh es de'var Hashem haynis es avadav vi'es miknehu el habatim.*” – Those who feared the word of Hashem sheltered their slaves and livestock in their homes.¹

The Torah reveals that the decision of the Egyptians to safeguard their lives and possessions from the oncoming plague was due to their “*yiras Hashem.*”

Rav Eliyahu Meir Bloch² asked, “Perhaps this was their motive, but why was this a certainty? There are other possibilities for their concern.”

Moshe and Aharon were sent by Hashem to appear before Pharaoh and to perform miraculous acts before him. Aharon threw his staff down before Pharaoh. The staff turned into a snake.

Two of Pharaoh’s *mechashfim* (wizards) Yochna and Mamreh challenged Moshe, “Are you bringing straw into the city of Afarayim?” (Afarayim was a place of abundant grain).³

The *mechashfim* believed that Moshe and Aharon transformed the staff through *kishuf* (wizardry).

One thing the Egyptians knew about Moshe and Aharon, they knew that their predictions came true. They didn’t necessarily have a clarity in the source of their “power.”

Rav Bloch suggested, perhaps the Egyptians did not truly fear the word of Hashem. They just feared getting killed. And if they would be killed, it would make no difference to them the source of the power that killed them.

And that is why they remained inside. That is the reason they gathered their livestock and sheltered them inside.

From this, a profound insight emerges – *middos ra'os* (negative character traits) corrupt the mind.

¹ Shemos 9:20

² Rosh Yeshiva, Telshe Cleveland

³ Menachos 85a

Any rational mind would see the positive aspect of seeking refuge during the plague of barad. And they wouldn't need to engage in a process to determine the precise source of the threat. It would suffice that they were reasonably certain that the plague would arrive.

But the Egyptians weren't thinking rationally.

They wanted Moshe and Aharon to fail. They needed them to fail. And the Egyptians found it difficult to admit that they were wrong.

And despite Moshe and Aharon's warnings coming true time after time, the Egyptians would believe that this time it would be different. This time the plague would not arrive.

In addition, one who has no *yiras Hashem* will go even further. He would even be willing to place himself in danger to feed the "needs" of his bad *middos*, and he will find his sense of self-preservation corrupted.

Amalek is a prime example of this corruption. The medrash tells us that one who would dare to attack the Jewish people upon their emergence from Mitzrayim is likened to one who jumped into a kettle of boiling oil.⁴ And yet that didn't stop the nation of Amalek from ignoring all consequences in order to pour out their passion for destruction upon the Jewish nation.

And so, the fear of being killed or financially wiped out would not suffice as a reason for the Egyptians to find sanctuary from the barad.

But there were Egyptians who did heed the warning of Moshe and Aharon. Those Egyptians were demonstrating their belief in Moshe and Aharon's truth over the faith in their own corrupt motives.

It could only be sincere *yiras Hashem* that would illuminate the darkness of their mistaken view of reality.

⁴ Medrash Tanchuma, Ki Seitzei 9