

Parshat Bo 5778

Detzakh (דֵּצַח 'כ) *Adash* (עֲדָשׁ 'ש) & *Be'achav* (בְּאָחָב 'ב) - Why the 3 Groups? *Maharal* noted that there were commonalities within certain of the 10 plagues. He realised that this is what led Rebbe Yehudah to deduce the following sequence & pattern within each of the 3 consecutive groups of the 10 plagues (famously divided into and known as *Detzakh*, *Adash* & *Be'achav*).

The 1st plague in each of the 3 groups (1st 'Blood', & 4th 'Wild beasts', & 7th 'Hail'):

Warning without 'Bo al Paro'.

The 2nd plague in each of the 3 groups (2nd 'Frogs', & 5th 'Pestilence', & 8th 'Locusts'):

Warning with 'Bo al Paro'.

The 3rd plague in each of the 3 groups (3rd 'Lice', & 6th 'Boils', & 9th 'Darkness'): **No warning.**

Explanation by the Maharal – 'The Progressive Punishment of Egypt'

(i) 3 Spheres

The three groups of Rebbe Yehudah represent 3 spheres (each higher than the group of 3 which preceded it) :-

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.

(ii) **Why 'Bo al Paro'? / No 'Bo al Paro'? / Warning? / No Warning?** For the 1st plague and the 1st warning within each of the 3 groups ('Blood', the 'Wild Beasts' 'Hail'), Moshe was sent 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 within each of the 3 groups (the 'Frogs', the 'Pestilence', 'Locusts'), 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 and wait

for Pharaoh to come out). By the 3rd occasion (plague) within each of the 3 groups (the 'Lice', the 'Boils', 'Darkness') Pharaoh deserved to be punished with no warning. However, as each of the subsequent group of 3 (or 4 for the last/3rd group) involved a higher sphere than the preceding group of 3, the whole process had to be repeated.

(iii) 'Opposites & Combinations'

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.

(iv) Hashem's Increasing Power

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 *Hashqocho 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".

דבר תורה לפרשת השבוע לעילוי נשמת אבי מורי ר' אברהם ב"ר נחמן ע"ה ביום היארצייט לפטירתו ו' שבט