



A CLOSE LOOK AT TORAH
EXCERPT FROM THE WEEKLY PORTION
January 28, 2023



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה:

Torah Stats

Weekly Portion: Bo el Par'o
Consists of: Exodus 10:1-13:16
Sequence—



in annual Torah-reading cycle: 15th of 54
in the Book of Exodus: 3rd of 11

- A Salient Selection from the Portion -

Exodus 10:1-6

Context: *Exodus, second of the Five Books of the Torah, is an account of how God liberated the Israelites from Egypt and entered into a Covenant with us at Mount Sinai, and a record of the legislations they undertook for the conduct of the society they were to establish in the Promised Land.*

Content: *This week's portion continues the narrative of The Ten Blows ("Plagues") that God strikes against the Egyptians, cumulative— and increasingly severe— punishments forcing Pharaoh to relinquish control over the Israelites.*

10:1] - Then The Eternal One told Moses:
“Come into Pharaoh’s presence— for I have made his heart a heavy one, as well as those of his courtiers, to the end that I may place these, My signs, in his midst; [10:2] - and to the end that you may recount to your children and your children’s children all the wonders that I wrought in Egypt, and My signs that I placed among them, so that you may know that I am The Eternal One.”

10:3] - So Moses and Aaron came into the presence of Pharaoh, and they said to him: “Thus says The Eternal One, God of the Hebrews: ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Release My people, that they may serve Me. [10:4] - For should you still refuse to release My people, then tomorrow I am bringing a locust-swarm within your borders.

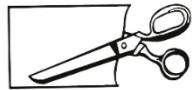
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל-
פַּרְעֹה כִּי-אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת-לִבּוֹ
וְאֶת-לֵב עֲבָדָיו לְמַעַן שְׁתִּי אֹתָתִי
אֵלָה בְּקִרְבּוֹ וּלְמַעַן תִּסְפֹּר בְּאָזְנִי
בְּנֶגֶד וּבֶן-בְּנֶגֶד אֵת אֲשֶׁר הִתְעַלְלָתִי
בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶת-אֹתֹתַי אֲשֶׁר-שִׁמְתִּי
בָּם וַיִּדְעֻם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה

וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל-פַּרְעֹה
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי
הָעִבְרִים עַד-מָתִי מֵאַנְתָּ לַעֲנֹת מִפְּנֵי
שְׁלַח עָמִי וַיַּעֲבֹדְנִי כִּי אִם-מָאֵן
אַתָּה לְשַׁלַּח אֶת-עָמִי הֲנִי מֵבִיא
מִחֵר אֲרִבָּהּ בְּגִבְלָךְ

- more over

10:5] - ““They will cover the face of the earth, so that the ground cannot be seen; and they will eat everything spared for you from the hailstorm, consuming every tree and growing thing of the field. [10:6] - They will fill your household, and those of your courtiers, and those of all the Egyptians, the like of which your forebears and theirs have never seen, from the time they first came into being to the present day’.” Then he turned and left Pharaoh’s presence.

וְכָסָה אֶת-עֵין הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא יוּכַל לִרְאוֹת אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וְאָכַל אֶת-יִתְרַת הַפִּלֶטָה הַנִּשְׁאָרָת לָכֶם מִן-הַבֶּרֶד וְאָכַל אֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ הַצֹּמַח לָכֶם מִן-הַשָּׂדֶה וּמִלֵּאוֹ בְּתֵיךָ וּבְתֵי כָל-עַבְדֶּיךָ וּבְתֵי כָל-מִצְרִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא-רָאוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ וְאֲבוֹת אֲבֹתֶיךָ מִיּוֹם הַיּוֹתֵם עַל-הָאָדָמָה עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וַיָּפֹן וַיֵּצֵא מִעַם פְּרָעָה



TORAH Snippet

וַיָּפֹן וַיֵּצֵא מִעַם פְּרָעָה

10:6 - Then **he** turned and he left Pharaoh’s presence.

A) Exodus 10:3 - So Moses **and Aaron** came into the presence of Pharaoh, **וַיֵּצְאוּ אֵלָיו** and **they** said to him....

וַיָּבֹא - ידענו כי לא יבא משה אל פרעה בלא אהרן עמו כי הוא המלי והזכיר עתה משה ואהרן בעבור שהושבו שניהם וגרשם באחרונה שלא עשה כן בכל המכות

B) Abraham ibn-Ezra (1089-1164) on Exodus 10:3 - “[He] came in” - [the singular verb is used because] we take it for granted that Moses would not come into Pharaoh’s presence without Aaron, who [per Exodus 4:14] is his translator and spokesman. But [verse 6] mentions both Moses and Aaron in this case, because [in 10:8] **it is both of them who will be summoned back to Pharaoh’s presence, and subsequently [in 10:11] ejected together**— the like of which had not happened for any of the previous Plagues.

C) Exodus 7:7 -

וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל-פְּרָעָה

So Moses **and Aaron** came into the presence of Pharaoh,

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ-כֵן כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה

and **they** did accordingly, even as The Eternal One had instructed:

וַיִּשְׁלַךְ אֶהֱרֹן אֶת-מִטָּהוּ . . . וַיִּהְיֶה לְתַנִּין

Aaron cast down his rod . . . and it became a crocodile.

D) Leviticus 9:23 -

וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל-אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד

Whereupon Moses **and Aaron** entered into the Tent of Meeting.

וַיֵּצְאוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת-הָעָם

Then **they** emerged, and **they** blessed the people.

- A Salient Question About the Passage -

כִּי-אֲנִי הַכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת-לְבוֹ וְאֶת-לֵב עֲבָדָיו
 10:1 - I have made his heart a heavy one, as well as those of his courtiers,
 לְמַעַן שְׁתִּי אֶתֶּנִּי אֱלֹה בְּקֶרְבּוֹ
 to the end that I may place these, My signs, in his midst.

הַכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת לְבוֹ - הוֹדִיעַ הַקִּבְ"ה לְמֹשֶׁה שֶׁהוּא הַכְּבִיד אֶת לְבוֹ עֵתָה אַחֲרֵי שֶׁפָּחַדוּ מִמֶּנּוּ בַּבְּרָד וְהַתּוֹדוּ עַל עֲוֹנֵם

E) RaMBaN (Bonastruc da Porta, 1194-1270) - The Holy And Blessed One has made known to Moses that it is He Who has made them stubborn, after they earlier expressed their fear of Him following the hailstorm, and after they had confessed their guilt.
 ואמר לוֹ הַטַּעַם כִּי עָשִׂיתִי כֵן לְמַעַן שֶׁאֲשִׁית בְּקֶרֶבָם אֱלֹה הָאוֹתוֹת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי חֹפֵץ לַעֲשׂוֹת בָּהֶם שִׂידְעוּ מִצָּרִים אֶת גְּבוּרָתִי לֹא שֶׁאֶעֱנִישׁ אוֹתָם יוֹתֵר מִפְּנֵי הַכּוֹבֵד הַזֶּה

[God] is explaining to [Moses]: “The reason I have done so is to place among them these signs which I wish to carry out in their midst, in order that all Egypt should know My might— not that I may punish them more on account of this stubbornness.”

אֲנִי הַכְבַּדְתִּי - פִּירוּשׁ מֵעֵתָה תִּשְׁכִּיל לַדַּעַת כִּי אֲנִי הוּא שֶׁהַכְּבַדְתִּי אֶת לְבוֹ כִּי מִטְּבַע אָדָם לוֹ יִהְיֶה לְבוֹ קָשָׁה כְּאֲבֹן יִרְעַד וַיִּפְחַד בְּרֹאוֹתוֹ מִכַּת הַבְּרָד וְזֶה הָאִישׁ עוֹדֵנוּ בִּרְשָׁעוֹ אֵין זֶה מִמַּדַּת אָדָם אֲלֵא אֱלֹהִים גָּזַר עָלָיו לַהֲקִשּׁוֹת

F) Chayim ibn-Attar (1696-1742), *Or haChayim* - “I have made his heart a heavy one” – the meaning of this: “Now you, Moses, would realize that it is I who have made Pharaoh stubborn. For human nature is such that, even were his heart as hard as stone, he would tremble in fear upon beholding the trauma of the hailstorm— yet this fellow persists in his wickedness.” This is inconsistent with human behavior; only Divine decree could have accounted for his continued refusal

וּלְפִי מָה שֶׁפִּירְשְׁתִּי בַּפְּסוּק וְהַחֲטָה וְהַכּוֹסֶמֶת וְגו' כִּי אֲפִילוֹת וְגו' כִּי ה' עָשָׂה פְּלֵאִי פְּלֵאִים וְזֶה הִיא סִיבָה לַהֲכַבִּיד לְבוֹ יְדוּיִק ג"כ עַל נִכּוֹן כִּי אֲנִי הַכְּבַדְתִּי בַּעֲשׂוֹת פְּלֵא זֶה

And in accord with what I explained above [on Exodus 9:31, God did not interfere with Pharaoh's free will]; rather He performed the wondrous miracle of sparing the wheat and spelt from being struck down by the hail, to give Pharaoh a chance to delude himself that God's power did not extend to those two grains. Grammatically speaking, since that already happened, “I have made Pharaoh stubborn” is in the past tense.

Biblical idioms	עֲקֹשׁ	“be obstinate, obdurate, stubborn”
	קֶשֶׁה-עֵרֶף	“stiff-necked”
	חִזְק לֵב	“hard-hearted”
	כֶּבֶד לֵב	“heavy-hearted”

a lot of mileage out of a three-letter root: **כ-ב-ד**

כֶּבֶד	noun -	“liver”	
כָּבַד	III / פָּעַל / intensive active -	“sweep the floor”	}
כָּבֵד	“ “ “ “ -	“bestow honor”	



הִכְבִּידְתִּי V / הִפְעִיל / causative - “trouble; inconvenience; **burden, weigh down**”
 “I have **weighed down** Pharaoh’s heart” **אֲנִי הִכְבִּידְתִּי אֶת-לִבּוֹ**

כָּבֵד adjective - “burdensome; severe; grave; **heavy**”
 “for the famine was **severe** in the land” **כִּי-כָבֵד הָרָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ**
 “for I am **impaired** of speech” **כִּי כָבֵד-פִּה וְכָבֵד לָשׁוֹן אֲנֹכִי**
 “Abraham was **greatly** wealthy” **אֲבְרָם כָּבֵד מְאֹד בְּמִקְנֵהוּ בְּכֶסֶף וּבְזָהָב**

כְּבִדּוּת abstract noun - “**heaviness; weightiness**”
 “locked wheels so they drove **heavily**” **וַיִּסָּר אֶת אַפְּן מִרְכָּבָתוֹ וַיִּנְהֲגוּ בְּכְבִּידּוֹת**

כָּבֵד noun - “**heaviness; seriousness; gravity**”

כָּבֵד noun - “distinction; honor” ← **synagogue usage**
 “vestments made for **honor** and glory” **וְתַעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם לְכָבוֹד וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת**

Biblical citations	“the glory of God”	כְּבוֹד יְהוָה
	“the glory of God’s Name”	כְּבוֹד שְׁמוֹ
	“the honor of Israel”	כְּבוֹד יִשְׂרָאֵל
	“the glory of Jacob” [i.e. Israel]	כְּבוֹד יַעֲקֹב
	“the splendor of Lebanon”	כְּבוֹד הַלְבָּנוֹן
	“the dignity of the nations”	כְּבוֹד גּוֹיִם
	“the splendor of his kingdom”	כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ

הִתְכַּבֵּד VII / הִתְפַּעֵל / reflexive - “be **honored**”

איזהו מכובד המכבד את הבריות

G) Mishnah, Pirgei Avot 4:1 - Who is **honored**? One who honors others—

שנאמר כי מכבדי אכבד ובוזי יקלו

even as it is said in Scripture: “those who honor Me, will I honor, while those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” [I Samuel 2:30].

H) Nancy Wechsler, “Honor: Making An Effort”; *The Mussar Torah Commentary* - Why is **Pharaoh** worthy of being **honored**? The answer, I believe, can be found in Moses’s childhood.

Pharaoh’s daughter found baby Moses in the basket. She rescued him to avoid the **Pharaonic** ruling of killing every male Jewish child. **Pharaoh** could have kept his ruling in place and de-

- continued

creed Moses's death. Yet, Moses lived and was raised with riches in the palace. Apparently, **Pharaoh** had decided to spare that one little boy and let him live. That single decision made Moses's life and all his deeds possible. **It was ultimately Pharaoh— not his daughter— who saved the life of Moses.**

To give honor to **Pharaoh**, to “come” to him [Exodus 10:1 בָּא אֶל-פַּרְעֹה], requires “sweeping away” everything but that one fact. Merciless cruelty and humiliation to the Israelites—

Deuteronomy 23:8 -

לֹא-תִתְעֵב מִצְרִי כִי-גֵר
הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶצּוֹ

You may not despise an Egyptian, having once been a resident guest in his land.

swept away in that moment; fear of being killed— swept aside: **Pharaoh** saved his life, and in that moment, nothing else matters.

We are commanded to feel empathy for other human beings—including our enemies—and to lift them up with *kavod*. Therefore it is possible to learn from the same Biblical text on the one hand, “when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy” [Proverbs 11:10] and on the other

hand “when your enemy falls, do not exult” [*ibid.* 24:17]. We live with this dichotomy.

In the Rabbinic reading of the story of the Israelite crossing through the Sea [Midrash Pirkei d'Rabi Eli'Ezer], **Pharaoh** does not die, but flees and eventually becomes the king of Nineveh. When the prophet Jonah arrives in the city, the king of Nineveh (who is the old **Pharaoh** of Egypt) immediately initiates a national repentance movement. Thus **Pharaoh becomes the paradigm of change, and an example for all of us** on the afternoon of Yom Kippur when we read and learn his story.

Kavod means to honor someone by lifting them up. Sometimes, the weight is heavy. Still, the process has the potential to purify ourselves and others, raising us all.

Jonah 3:6-9 -

When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his robe, put on sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he had a proclamation made throughout Nineveh:

“By decree of the king and his nobles, neither man nor beast— of flock or herd— shall taste anything! They shall not graze, and they shall not drink water. They shall be covered with sackcloth— man and beast— and shall cry aloud to God.

“Let everyone turn back from his evil ways and from the injustice of which he is guilty. Who knows but that God may turn and relent? He may turn back from His wrath, so that we do not perish.”

I) Isaac Luria (1534-1572), Shabbat hymn *Yom Zeh M'chubad* -

יֹם זֶה מְכַבֵּד מְכַל יָמִים כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת צוּר עוֹלָמִים

This day is honored above any other,
for on it did the Rock of Ages cease and rest.

שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָתָךְ וַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי לֹא־לָהֶיךָ
שָׁבַת לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה בּוֹ מְלָאכָה כִּי כָל עֲשֵׂה שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים

יֹם זֶה מְכַבֵּד מְכַל יָמִים כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת צוּר עוֹלָמִים

הַשָּׁמַיִם מְסַפְּרִים כְּבוֹדוֹ וְגַם הָאָרֶץ מְלֹאָה חֶסֶדוֹ
רְאוּ כִּי כָל אֶלֶה עֲשֵׂתָה יְדוֹ כִּי הוּא הַצּוּר, פֶּעֱלוֹ תָמִים

יֹם זֶה מְכַבֵּד מְכַל יָמִים, כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת צוּר עוֹלָמִים