



A CLOSE LOOK AT TORAH

EXCERPT FROM THE WEEKLY PORTION

January 28, 2023



ברוך אתה יי', אליהינו מלך העולם,
אשר קדשנו במצוותיו, וצனנו לעסוק בדברי תורה:

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.

ויאמר יהוה אל-משה בא אל-רעה פי-אני הכהנתך את-לבניך ואת-לב עבדך למען שתיכתת אללה בקרבו ולמען תספר באזני בנה ובנו-בנך את אשר הتعلלתיכם במצרים ואת-אתתני אשר-שמעתי בם וידעתם כי-אני יהוה

ויבא משה ו אהרן אל-פרעה ויאמרו אליו פה-אמר יהוה אל-היה העברים עד-מני מאנת לענת מפני שלח עמי ויעבדך כי אם-מיון אתה לשלים את-עמי הנהני מביא מחר ארבה בגבלה

- 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.

וְכֹשֶׁה אָת-עַיִן הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא יוּכֶל
לְרֹאֶת אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וְאָכַל אֶת-צִתְּרָה
הַפְּלִיטָה הַנְּשָׁאָרָת לְכָם מִן-הַבָּרֶד
וְאָכַל אֶת-כָּל-הָעָז הַצְמָח לְכָם מִן-
הַשְׁדָּה וּמְלָאוּ בְּתִיקָּה וּבְתִיקָּה
עַבְדִּיקָּה וּבְתִיקָּה כָּל-מִצְרָיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-
רָאוּ אֲבָתִיקָּה וְאֶבֶוֹתִיקָּה מִיּוֹם
הַיּוֹתָם עַל-הַאֲדָמָה עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
וַיַּפְּנִוּ וַיֵּצֵא מִעַם פְּרָעָה



טַבְזֶבֶת Snippet

וַיַּפְּנִוּ 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,
and they said to him....

וַיָּבֹא מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל-פְּרָעָה
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלָּיו

וַיָּבֹא - ידעוּ כִּי לֹא יָבֹא מֹשֶׁה אֶל פְּרָעָה בְּלֹא אַהֲרֹן עִמּוּ כִּי הוּא הַמְלִי וְהַזָּכֵיר
עַתָּה מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בָּעֵbor שְׁהוּשְׁבוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם וְגַרְשְׁם בְּאַחֲרֹונָה שְׁלָא עֲשָׂה כֹּן בְּכָל
הַמִּכְוֹת

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,

וַיַּעֲשֵׂה-כֹּן כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהָוָה
and they did accordingly, even as The Eternal One had instructed:

וַיַּשְׁלַח אַהֲרֹן אֶת-מְטִיהוֹ . . . וַיְהִי
לְתָנִין

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.

וַיֵּצֵא וַיְבָרֶכֶת אֶת-הָעָם

Then they emerged, and they blessed the people.

- A Salient Question About the Passage -

כִּי-אַנְּיִ הַכְּבָדֵתִי אֶת-לְבֹו וְאֶת-לְבֹ עֲבָדָיו

10:1 - I have made his heart **a heavy one**, as well as those of his courtiers,
לְמַעַן שְׁתִּי אַתְּתִי אֱלֹה בְּקָרְבָו
 to the end that I may place these, My signs, in his midst.

הַכְּבָדֵתִי אֶת-לְבֹו - הוֹדִיעַ הַקְּבִ'ה לְמַשְׁה שַׁהוּא **הַכְּבִיד** **אֶת-לְבֹם** **עַתָּה** **אַחֲרֵי**
שְׁפָחוֹד **מִמְנוֹ** **בְּבָרְד** **וְהַתּוֹדוֹ** **עַל-עֲוֹנוֹם**

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.

וְאָמַר לֹו הַטָּעַם כִּי עֲשִׂיתִי כֹּן לְמַעַן שָׁאשִׁית בְּקָרְבָם אֱלֹה הַאוֹתּוֹת אֲשֶׁר אַנְּיִ חֲפֵץ
 לְעָשָׂות בָּהֶם שִׁידּוּ מַצְרִים אֶת גְּבוּרָתִי **לֹא שָׁעֲנִישׁ אֹתָם יוֹתֵר** **מִפְנֵי הַכּוֹבֵד**
הַזָּה

[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.**”

אַנְּיִ הַכְּבָדֵתִי - פִּירּוֹשׁ מִעֵתָה תְּשִׁכֵּל לְדַעַת כִּי אַנְּיִ הָוֶה **שַׁהַכְּבָדֵתִי** אֶת-לְבֹו כִּי
 מַטְבֵּעַ אָדָם לוֹ יִהְיֶה לְבֹו קַשָּׁה כְּאֵין יַרְעֵד וַיַּפְחֵד בְּרָאוֹתָו מִכְתַּבְדֵל וְזֹה הַאִישׁ
 עֲוֹדָנוּ בְּרָשָׁעָו אֵין זֶה מִמְדַת אָדָם אֶלָּא אֱלֹהִים גָּזֵר עַלְיוֹ לְהַקְשֹׁוֹתָו

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

וְלֹפִי מָה שְׁפִירְשָׁתִי בְּפָסָוק וְהַחֲתָה וְהַכּוֹסְמָת וְגַוְיִי כִּי הִי עֲשָׂה
פְּלָאִים וְזֹה הִיָּה סִיבָה לְהַכְּבִיד **לְבֹו** יְדִוִּיק גַּיְכָ עַל-נְכוֹן כִּי אַנְּיִ הַכְּבָדֵתִי
 בְּעָשָׂות פְּלָאִים 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	עֲקָש	“be obstinate, obdurate, stubborn”
	קַשְׁתָּה-עֲרֵף	“stiff-necked”
	חַזְקָקַ לב	“hard-hearted”
	כְּבָדַ לב	“heavy-hearted”

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

כבד

noun - “liver”

כָּבֵד

intensive active - “sweep the floor”

כָּבֵד

“ “ “ - “bestow honor”



הכבדתי / causative - “trouble; inconvenience; **burden, weigh down**”

“I have weighed down Pharaoh’s heart”

כבד

adjective - “burdensome; severe; grave; **heavy**”

“for the famine was **severe** in the land”

“for I am **impaired** of speech”

“Abraham was **greatly** wealthy”

כבדות

abstract noun - “heaviness; weightiness”

“locked wheels so they drove **heavily**”

כבד

noun - “heaviness; seriousness; gravity”

כבד

noun - “distinction; honor”

“vestments made for **honor** and **glory**”

← **synagogue usage**

כבוד יהוה

כבוד שמו

כבוד יישראאל

כבוד יעקב

כבוד הלבנון

כבוד גויים

כבוד מלכיותו

Biblical citations

“the glory of God”

“the glory of God’s Name”

“the honor of Israel”

“the glory of Jacob” [i.e. Israel]

“the splendor of Lebanon”

“the dignity of the nations”

“the splendor of his kingdom”

התכבד

reflexive - “be **honored**”

איזהו מכובד המכבד את הבריות

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

שנאמר כי מכבדי אכבד ובוזי יקללו

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-

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-פְּרָעָה**], requires “**sweeping away**” everything but that one fact. Merciless cruelty and humiliation to the Israelites—

Deuteronomy 23:8 -

**לֹא-תַתְהַעַב מִצְרַי בַּיּוֹם
הַיּוֹם בְּאֶרְצָךְ**

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 מִכֶּבֶד מִכֶּל יָמִים כִּי בָּו שְׁבָת צָור עֲזָלָמִים

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

**שְׁשָׁת יָמִים תַּעֲשֶׂה מִלְאָכְתָּךְ וַיּוֹם הַשְׁבִּיעִי לְאֱלֹהִיךְ
שְׁבָת לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה בָּו מִלְאָכָה כִּי כָל עֲשָׂה שְׁשָׁת יָמִים
יֹם זֶה מִכֶּבֶד מִכֶּל יָמִים כִּי בָּו שְׁבָת צָור עֲזָלָמִים**

**הַשְׁמִים מִסְפָּרִים כְּבָזְדוֹ וְגַם הָאָרֶץ מַלְאָה חָסְדוֹ
רָאוּ כִּי כָל אֱלֹהָה עָשָׂתָה יְדוֹ כִּי הוּא הַצּוֹר, פְּעָלוֹ תְּמִימִים
יֹם זֶה מִכֶּבֶד מִכֶּל יָמִים, כִּי בָּו שְׁבָת צָור עֲזָלָמִים**