

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל-פְּרַעֲהוּ כִּי-אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת-לְבוֹ וְאֶת-לֵב עַבְדִּי לְמַעַן שְׂתִי אֶתְנִי אֶלָּה בְּקִרְבוֹ:

MEKOR

SHEMOS 10:1

Hashem said to Moshe, "Come to Pharaoh. For I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, in order that I may display these signs of Mine in his midst."

MEANING

RASHBAM, AVI EZER

Moshe was confused how Pharaoh could have so explicitly expressed his wickedness and yet rapidly change his mind (per the end of Va'eira). Hashem explains that Pharaoh was sincere - Hashem had intervened to harden his heart. Hashem uses the word "Bo", "come", in a way that would be grammatically incorrect for humans to use in order to demonstrate that He is everywhere, and that He alone can rightly say "come" even when referring to a faraway place. There is no place distant from the *Mekom Shel Olam!*

MESSAGE

SEFAS EMES

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה: Hashem speaks to the intellect within each Jew, saying, **"בֹּא אֶל-פְּרַעֲהוּ"**: When facing a spiritual challenge and the compulsion to choose to act against the Torah, pause for a moment. Recognize that the capacity for limit within the Limitlessness of Hashem embodied in our ability to act against His expressed will is, in fact, the greatest revelation of His Glory. Remember that, distant from Hashem as it may appear, the theoretical ability for a human being to choose sin reflects the true extent of His infinite greatness. **"כִּי-אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת-לְבוֹ"**: "Realize that it is I, Hashem, Who grants the *yetzer hara* the ability to attempt to divert your attention from Me and My Love. Find Me in the very attack of the *yetzer hara* itself and understand that you are not alone! I am holding you and giving you the strength to overcome!"

OUR INNER DIAMOND

THE BEAUTY OF a diamond is inherent. The way it is cut and angled allows the diamond to reflect light in a manner that causes it to sparkle and shine with brilliant illumination. Indeed, all it takes to appreciate the beauty of a diamond is to first ensure it is clean of any dirt and then to hold it up to a source of light. When mounted in an ornate setting of gold or silver, the diamond shines even brighter.

The Chassidic masters revealed that every Jewish soul contains a point of ultimate goodness within, an aspect of our personality that is inherently pure and intrinsically holy. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov famously referred to this as the "נקודה טובה", the point of good. Other tzaddikim referred to it as the "פינטלע יוד", the innermost holiness of the Jewish soul. No matter how distant one may appear from a life of elevation and connection with our Father in heaven, there is a place of untainted innocence and purity that abides deep within the essence of each and every Jew - a "pilot light" of holy desire and yearning to at last break out of the lowliness and dirt and rise in communion with the Infinite One. Like the "כר שמן טהור", the single jar of pure oil that was discovered among the shattered vessels of the Beis Hamikdash, this tiny spark of ever-sparkling goodness has the ability to miraculously light the lamp of our yiddishkeit, purifying our entire being and granting us the wings with which to escape the bonds of physicality.

Although we may believe in its existence, many find it difficult to perceive this point of yearning and holy desire within. We don't feel its warmth. Its holiness fails to move us. As the years pass with little progress made, we begin to wonder whether our spark has been extinguished.

The holy Rizhiner explains that although it always retains its intrinsic holiness and abiding presence, in order to shed the miraculous light of spirituality on all aspects of one's life, the נקודה טובה must be mounted in the setting of Torah and mitzvos and held up to the proper light source, the Master of the world. When exposed to the inner light of the Torah where Hashem's presence is most tangible and surrounded by the grandeur of His mitzvos, it is there that the perfect point of holiness will naturally reflect the light of its Source and shine brilliantly with the fire of spiritual rapture and joy.

Referring to the light enjoyed by the Jewish nation while the Egyptians were struck with חושך, the verse states **וְלִכְלֵבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אֹר** - "And for the entire Jewish nation, there was light in their dwellings". The holy Rizhiner teaches that this verse hints to our lesson. **וְלִכְלֵבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אֹר**: Every single Jew contains light within his soul. **בְּמוֹשְׁבַתָּם**: Broken up, this word reads "בְּמוֹשֵׁב תָּם", "a complete setting". Here, the Torah is teaching that while every Jewish soul possesses a perfect point of light and purity, the only way to perceive its beauty and splendor is "בְּמוֹשֵׁב תָּם", by ensuring that we provide it **the proper setting** and bring it close to the infinite Light of Hashem couched within the Torah's inner dimension. Then, the inner point will begin to illuminate the world with its natural glow.

IN ORDER FOR THE INNER DIAMOND OF THE JEWISH TO PROPERLY SHINE, IT MUST BE MOUNTED IN A SETTING OF TORAH AND MITZVOS AND HELD UP TO THE BRILLIANT LIGHT OF THE INFINITE ONE.

- Rebbe Yisrael of Rizhin zy"a



Removing Locust, Reaching Skyward



Based on a *shiur* given by Rav Moshe Weinberger *shlit"a*

In *Shemos* 7:25, *Rashi* notes that each of the Ten Plagues lasted one week, followed by three weeks of warning and caution.

Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev zy"א, on the first *pasuk* in *Bo*, states that the final three plagues coincide with future *chagim*. Rav Weinberger elaborates on the inverse relationship between *Mitzrayim/tum'ah* and the world of *kedusha*:



מכת ארבה

מכת חושך

מכת בכורות

The opposite manifestation in the world of *kedusha*:

Tu B'Shvat
ראש השנה לאילנות

Shushan Purim
ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה...

Pesach
בני בכורי ישראל

יהי רקיע בתוך המים ויהי מבדיל בין מים למים:
Division between above and below, which encourages us to reach/ascend.

יהי אור ויהי אור:
Enlightenment of the *neshama*, *Elokus* is the light of our lives

בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ:
The starting point of Hashem's Presence in the physical world.



... ויעל הארבה על כל ארץ מצרים... ויכס את עין כל הארץ ותחשף הארץ ויאכל את כל עשב הארץ ואת כל פרי העץ...
Locust **covered** and **darkened** the land, devoured all the grass, and **destroyed** all the fruit of the trees...

שמות
י: יד-טו



...whereas *Tu B'Shvat* is the complete opposite; it's about **revealing** the strong connection between above and below, **renewal** of the natural world, and the **blossoming** of fruit trees.

What are the deeper messages of *Tu B'Shvat*?

- The first *mishna* in *Rosh HaShana* states that 15 Shvat is the New Year for **trees**.
- It is a day that **highlights** the **connection between roots and branches**, i.e., the unbreakable bond between (a) parents/ancestors – who are the **roots** of *Knesses Yisrael* – and (b) children/descendants, who are the **outgrowth** of those roots.
- The day is a *תקון* for our failures in matters of *קדשת הברית* that occurred in *Mitzrayim* (and in exile, generally).
- A crucial part of that *תקון* is remembering that despite those failures, **we are still connected to our roots** (our holy *Avos* and *Imahos*), and that **the *kochos* Hashem gives us are not lost**. ועץ השדה יתן פרו - the trees produce fruits of its kind.
- We maintain our belief that we can activate the abilities Hashem has given us, and we are sustained and guided by the strong examples and righteous merits of our predecessor role models.

אם-בחקתי תלכו ואת-מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אתם: ונתתי לשמיכם בעתם ונתנה הארץ יכולה ועץ השדה יתן פרו:

ויקרא
כג: ג-ד

- If we follow Hashem's rules, He ensures that trees will bear fruit, i.e., we'll have physical produce and spiritual nourishment.
- *Mishlei* 30:27: **מלך אין לארבה**; "Locust have no king", meaning, they represent the concept of having **no unifying authority**.
- *Mitzrayim* represents the barrier between heaven and earth; living only for the pleasures of this world, failing to connect to a higher realm, and not laboring to bring 'spiritual fruits' into our daily lives.
- Our mandate is to **seek, recognize and appreciate** our Creator, and to **strive to connect earth with heaven**.

The buildup to, and day of the 15th of Shvat, is a reminder of our responsibility to imbue the world with fruits of *kedusha*, to recognize Hashem's Hand in everything, and to improve and refine our existence.