

In the sefer about R' Chaim Kanievsky on chumash, which was beautifully done by Rabbi Shai Graucher, the pasuk is quoted from פרשת בהר (25:21) וְצִוִּיתִי אֶת בְּרַכְתִּי לָכֶם בְּשָׁנָה הַשְּׁשִׁית וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת הַתְּבוּאָה לְשָׁלֹשׁ הַשָּׁנִים. R' Chaim quotes the משנה שביעית in חזון איש that this ברכה is still in effect in our times. Many people don't see it, but often, people do see it. He brings down a מעשה which happened in the famous מושב of קוממיות. At the time the story was written, it had happened 60 years earlier, today it's about 75 years ago. I wanted to share this story for two reasons. Number one: משיח is coming, and it behooves us to spend some time learning about the מצוות התלויות בארץ. Number two: the Brisker Rav, upon hearing about this מעשה, said it's a mitzvah to publicize and repeat the story. So if you didn't hear it yet, although I'm sure most of you have, I'm fulfilling the צוואה of the Brisker Rav, which is a tremendous זכות.

The שמיטה year was 5719, and at that time, very few people were keeping the mitzvah of שמיטה. However, קוממיות was a place dedicated exclusively to people who kept שמיטה. Those of us not involved in agriculture cannot really fathom the depths of commitment that required to the mitzvah of doing שמיטה. Imagine taking off an entire year - how will you support your family? What will you return to after the year is over? The farmers of קוממיות did not look for any היתרים, they did not hold of מכירה, and they did only that which was required to preserve the land as the תורה permits. The rest of the time they went to kollel, sat down in בית מדרש and learned, which is exactly what the sefarim say שמיטה is all about. To feed their livestock, the farmers would plant special crops called fodder in the summer of the sixth year, so that the majority of the growth would occur before שמיטה. That way, they could harvest and use it during שמיטה in accordance with the הלכות, ensuring their animals had food.

That year, 5719, a tremendous plague of ארבה hit the Middle East. The only place where it didn't hit, as we know the famous רמב"ן מצרים, was מצרים. But ארץ ישראל is affected by ארבה, Hashem never promised that ארץ ישראל that locusts wouldn't come there. Swarms were devastating fields and orchards throughout the land. The people of קוממיות began to worry: if the plague reached their fields, they wouldn't be able to feed their animals. They couldn't plant anything after the locusts left, because it was שמיטה. As Shabbos was coming closer and closer, R' Medelson, the rav of קוממיות said, "Don't worry, Hashem's ברכה is upon our observance of this mitzvah. Hashem will save us."

As the sun set and Shabbos began, everyone could hear the loud, eerie sound of the insects devouring everything in their path. A dark cloud of ארבה was coming from the southwest, and the nearby settlement of זבדיאל was being destroyed. However, before the astonished eyes of all the people of קוממיות, they saw a נס in our own time, just 75 years ago, The locusts were literally jumping around the borders of קוממיות, like a קריעת ים סוף. Everything around the מושב was hit, but קוממיות remained completely untouched, not a single blade of grass was eaten. R' Mendelson said, "The רידב"ז said back in 5649 that when people did not keep שמיטה, a plague of locusts came and destroyed everything as a punishment from Hashem. But we kept שמיטה, and Hashem protected us. He showed us His חן, and now we must sing זמירות and thank Him." R' Medelson traveled to ירושלים to relate to the Brisker Rav what had happened. And the Brisker Rav quoted to him the רמב"ן which I mentioned, that ever since Hashem said that ארבה would not come to מצרים, it has never been there. And the fact that the plague bypassed their מושב is ממש a נס and must be publicized, as the pasuk in Tehillim (105:2) says: שִׁיחוּ בְּכָל נֶפֶלְאוֹתָיו.

Every single media outlet in ארץ ישראל was notified of this מעשה, and they all came to see it. People saw this, and who knows whether or not that stimulated the growth of שמיטה. So the bottom line of the story is we should be learning these הלכות, we should know what is allowed, what is not allowed. The הלכות are there, it's all in the גמרא and שולחן ערוך. And bezras Hashem, may we have the זכות to be able to merit fulfilling these מצוות very quickly when משיח will come אמן במהרה בימינו.

