

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

An Interactive PARSHA EXPERIENCE



Parsha: Bo

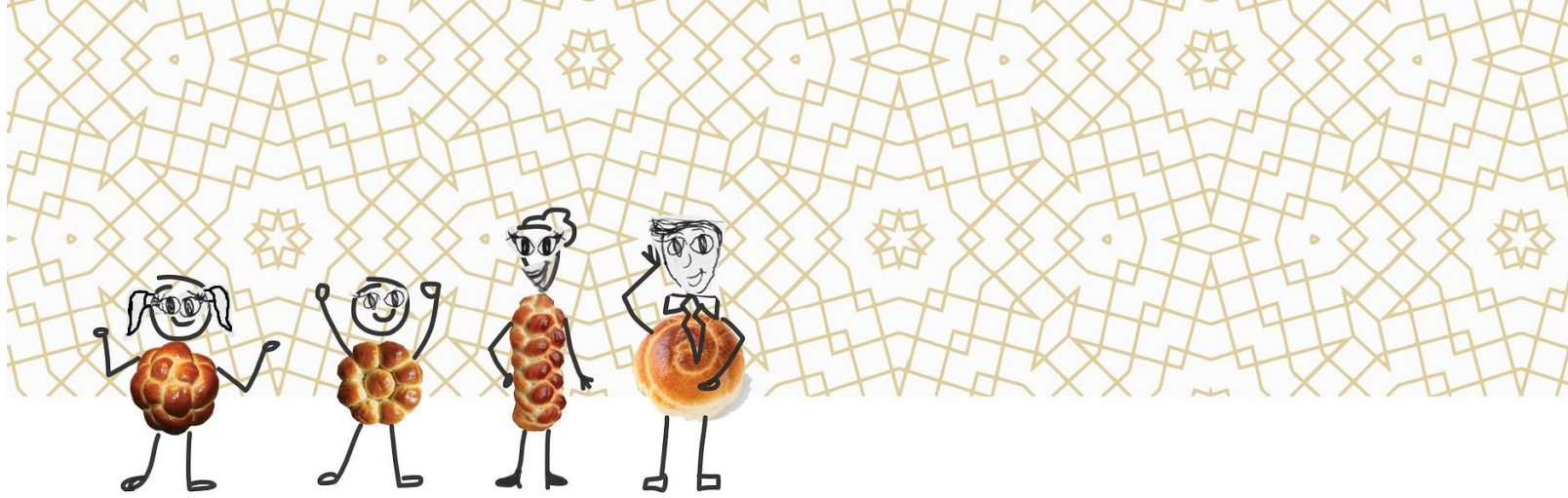
Title: The Eighth Plague – Cute Grasshoppers Fill the Land?

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The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

In last week's *parsha*, God smote Egypt with seven plagues - blood, frogs, lice, wild animals, farm animal disease, boils, and fiery hail - but none of those horrible attacks could convince Pharaoh to let the Children of Israel go! Nothing seems to affect the Egyptian king strongly enough to make him want to change



his mind. So as this week’s parsha begins, God decides to step it up and send an even worse plague than the previous ones: a plague of locusts.

Zooming In:

In Shemot chapter 10, Moshe and Aharon go to Pharaoh to let him know that if he won’t free the Israelite slaves, tomorrow God will “bring locusts in all your territory. They will cover the surface of the land, so that no one will be able to even see the land. They will devour whatever is left over after the hail, and they will eat all of the trees that grow in the field. Even more so, they will fill your places and the houses of all your servants and all of the Egyptians - it will be something that neither your fathers nor your fathers’ fathers ever saw!”

Pharaoh’s servants are really upset by this news. Who wouldn’t be?? The seventh plague, the fiery hail, destroyed almost all of the crops and grass in the entire country. And now locusts will eat up all of the rest? That is too much for the servants to bear, so they beg Pharaoh to just let Bnei Yisrael go already. As they say to Pharaoh, “Don’t you see yet that Egypt is lost?!” For a minute, it seems like he will agree to free them. But then, he changes his mind and says that only the Israelite men can go - not the women or children. And that’s certainly not enough for God! So God instructs Moshe to:

<p>12. ...“Hold out your arm over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come upon the land of Egypt and eat up all the grasses in the land, whatever the hail has left.”</p> <p>13. So Moshe held out his rod over the land of Egypt, and God drove an east wind over the land all that day and all night; and when morning came, the east wind had brought the locusts.</p>	<p>יב...נִטָּה יָדָךְ עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּאַרְבֶּה, וְנִעַל עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם; וַיֹּאכֵל אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב הָאָרֶץ, אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר הַשָּׂאִיר הַבָּרָד.</p> <p>יג וַיִּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת-מִטְהוֹ עַל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, וַיִּהְיֶה נֶהַג רוּחַ-קָּדִים בְּאַרְץ כָּל-הַיּוֹם הַהוּא וְכָל-הַלַּיְלָה; הַבִּקֹּר הָיָה--וְרוּחַ הַקָּדִים נָשָׂא אֶת-הָאַרְבֶּה.</p>
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14. Locusts invaded all the land of Egypt and settled within all the territory of Egypt in a thick mass; never before had there been so many, nor will there ever be so many again.

15. They hid all the land from view, and the land was darkened; and they ate up all the grasses of the field and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left, so that nothing green was left, of tree or grass of the field, in all the land of Egypt.

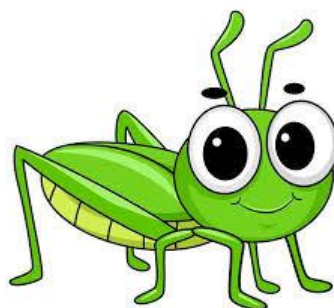
יָד וַיַּעַל הָאֲרֶבֶה עַל כָּל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם,
וַיִּנְחַ בְּכָל גְבוּל מִצְרַיִם: כִּבְד מְאֹד--
לִפְנֵינוּ לֹא-הָיָה כֵן אֲרֶבֶה כָּמוֹהוּ,
וְאַחֲרָיו לֹא יִהְיֶה-כֵן.

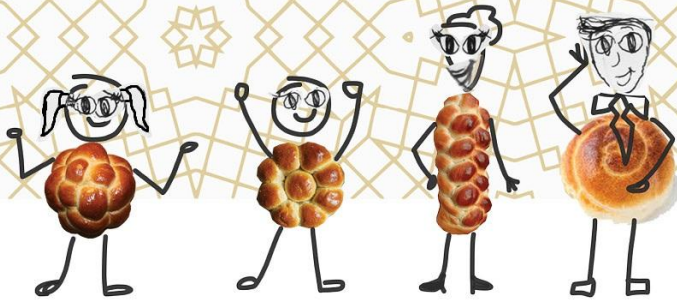
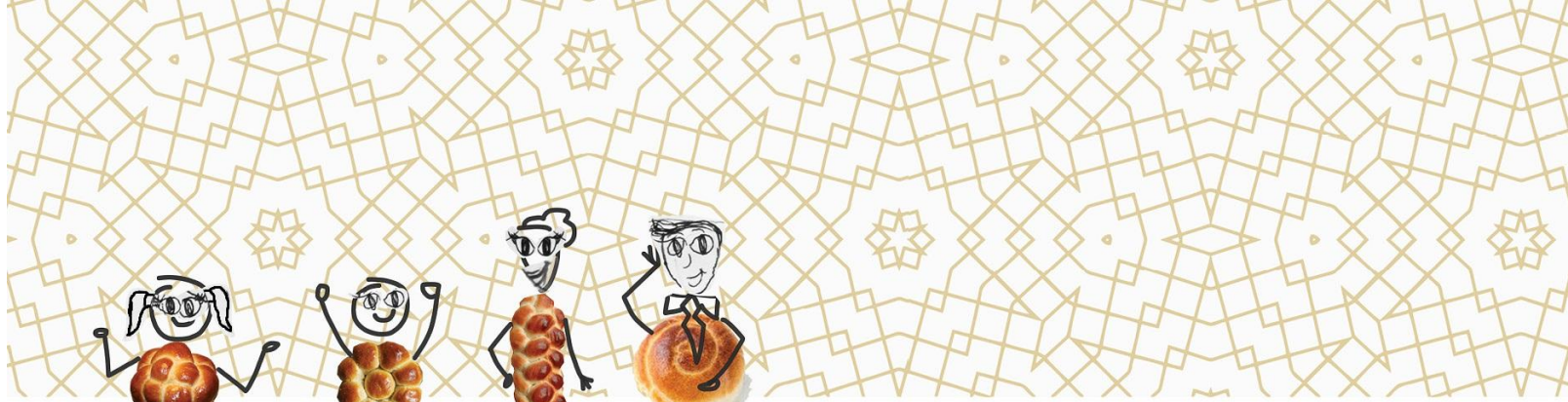
טו וַיִּכַס אֶת-עֵין כָּל-הָאֶרֶץ, וַתְּחַשְׂךְ
הָאֶרֶץ, וַיֹּאכַל אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב הָאֶרֶץ
וְאֶת כָּל-פְּרֵי הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר הוּתִיר הַבָּרָד;
וְלֹא-נֹתַר כָּל-יֵרֶק בְּעֵץ וּבְעֵשֶׂב
הַשָּׂדֶה, בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.

Questions for Consideration:

- Did you know that a locust is actually the same exact bug as a grasshopper? How could something that looks like this destroy Egypt??

Grasshoppers actually look like this:





And locusts like this:



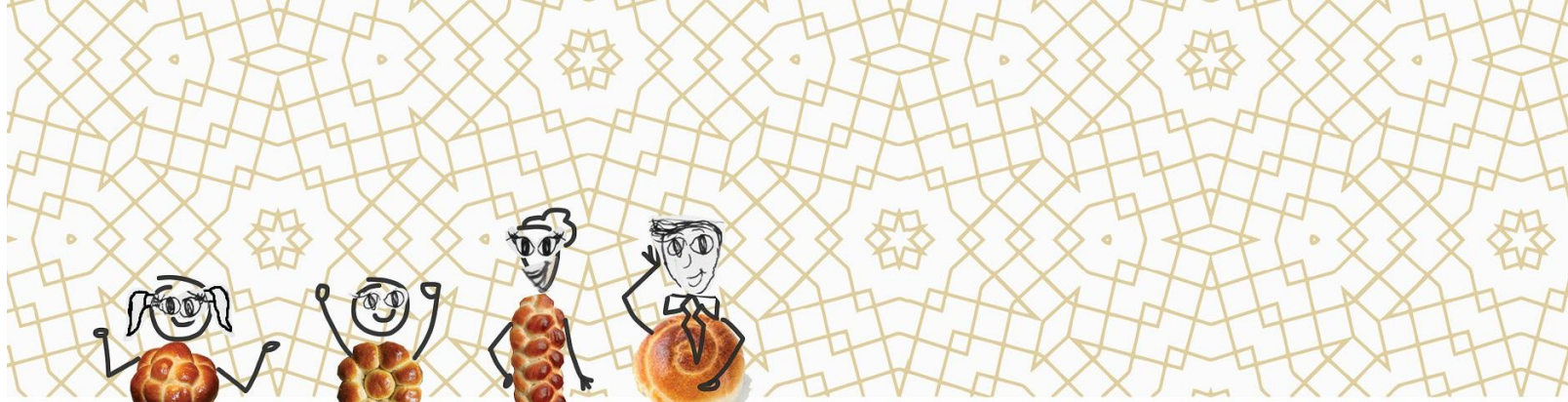
- And grasshoppers are usually considered nice bugs, while locusts are one of the plagues in Egypt!! What makes the difference between them?

The Parsha Through Another Lens

Torah Tag:

In order to try and understand how something as small and seemingly slight as a grasshopper/locust can destroy the entire land of Egypt, play a game of tag. Since we are assuming you are playing this near your Shabbat table, you may want to take a break and move to the family room or playroom for a bit!

- Choose one player to be "it."
- The player chosen to be "it" should count to 10, and then begin to chase the others, attempting to get close enough to "tag" one of them (touching them with a hand) while the others try to escape.
- If a player is tagged, s/he joins "it" as another "it." Meaning, both players remain "it"!
- The game ends when all players have become "it."



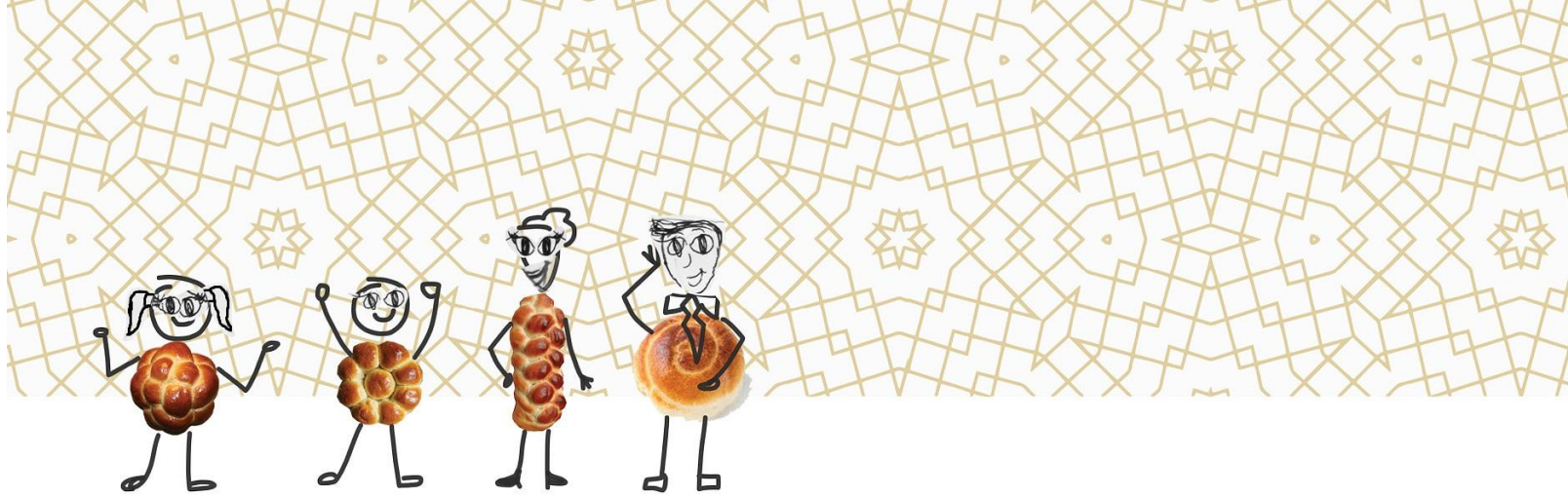
Discuss: How much faster and easier was it for a group of “its” to catch and tag the last player standing than for one “it” to catch and tag players? Why do you think that is?

Explain that one grasshopper/locust may seem harmless, but a large group of them that gets together and does something called “swarming” can eat all of the plants in an entire country, like this:



Another Look at Pharaoh and Locust Fun Facts:

You may want to continue the discussion by using the plague of locusts to help your family understand how someone like Pharaoh - just one person - could enslave an entire people!



In order to do so, here are some interesting facts about grasshoppers, locusts, and swarming:

- When these grasshoppers are in what is called “the solitary phase,” they are harmless, and do not pose a threat to plants or farming.
- However, under certain conditions, the grasshoppers begin to produce a brain chemical called serotonin. This is the same brain chemical we humans have that makes us feel happy! In the case of the grasshoppers, the serotonin causes major, major changes in their bodies and behavior.
- They begin to breed profusely, and feel the need to be together with other grasshoppers. This is called “the gregarious phase.” They form groups of wingless babies, which later become swarms of winged adults.
- Both the babies and the adults move around, traveling great distances, eating most of the green vegetation wherever the swarm settles.

Discuss: How could Pharaoh, who is just one person, enslave a whole nation (Bnei Yisrael)? Can you make an analogy between Pharaoh, his servants, and his people and one harmless grasshopper that ends up turning into a swarm of harmful locusts that flies around destroying things?

Shabbat Shalom!