

אֲשֶׁרֵינוּ  
יְצִיאֵנוּ

פרשת בא  
Parshat Bo

Ashreinu | אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



PLEASURE TO SERVE

RABBI AVI WASSER

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LEORA WINOGRAD ('21)

BATSHEVA SHEKHTER ('20)

ARIELLA GROSS ('21)

DONIE ZAK ('21)

As we begin reading Parshat Bo, we find that Moshe and Aharon approach Pharaoh yet again with the request for the Jewish people to leave Egypt and serve Hashem in

the desert. They ask that Pharaoh allow the entire nation, young and old, to celebrate a chag for Hashem.

Pharaoh's response is perplexing, however:

לֹא יָנֹכְחוּ הַגִּבּוֹרִים וְעַבְדוּ  
אֶת-ה' כִּי אֵתָהּ אַתֶּם מְבַקְשִׁים

“No! The men can go and worship Hashem, since that is what you want” (Shmot 10:11).

At no point in the narrative so far have Moshe and

Aharon requested that only the men should go. What was Pharaoh referring to? Rashi explains that Moshe and Aharon never specifically mentioned going with the men, but previously they had requested that the Jews go to serve Hashem, נְזַבְּחָהּ לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ. Pharaoh assumed that they meant just the men because it is not typical for children to participate in sacrifice.

The Kometz Mincha points out that that this conversation reveals a fundamental difference in the view of worship between the Egyptians and we as Torah Jews, even today. The Torah gives us the opportunity and even requires us to serve Hashem at every stage of life. There is no difference between children and adults, young and old. We all have a role to play in the mission of the Jewish people. The children were even listed first in Moshe's request and seem to be a priority.

“חג-ה' לנו”, Moshe expresses, the times when we celebrate Hashem, are with the family together around the table. Not so with the Egyptians, or many other

religions, in which their “service” is reserved for the elite, the priests, the appointed few. We, rather, are commanded **וּשְׁנַתֶּם לְבָנֶיךָ**, to teach Torah to the young.

This is an extremely powerful point. The Chofetz Chaim in *Shmirat HaLashon* describes in great detail that one of the strategies of the *yetzer hara* is to make us feel small and insignificant. Under its guidance, we convince ourselves that we are not worthy of achieving greatness. We are persuaded that Hashem does not want the meager mitzvot that we manage to scrape together with our limited abilities. The great danger of this is that it causes us, or rather gives us, the excuse to abandon what we can accomplish in light of what we cannot. In some way, it is easier to believe that we are insignificant because it gives us an out. It absolves us of responsibility to do things that are difficult. It gives us the excuse to not grow. But the truth is that the essence of a Jew is an intrinsic greatness. The price of that greatness, though, is responsibility.

The Jewish people are a nation of children, teenagers and adults. Each person has the potential to serve Hashem in a capacity that is unique to his or her stage of life and abilities. In unlocking and fulfilling that potential we accomplish what the greatest man who ever lived accomplished – we become an *Eved Hashem*.

## STARTING ANEW

LEORA WINOGRAD ('21)

In Parshat Bo, after 210 years of slavery in the foreign land of Mitzrayim, we were freed. However, before Bnei Yisrael has full freedom they are given two mitzvot, Korban Pesach and the establishment of the new moon (Rosh Chodesh). These two mitzvot are some of the most detailed and complex mitzvot in the Torah. Establishing new months and creating the calendar requires tremendous knowledge of astronomy, and the Korban Pesach includes details for how one should eat, prepare, and who can partake in the korban.

Why is the introduction of mitzvot filled with such strict detail? Shouldn't Bnei Yisrael have gotten a break after being enslaved for 210 years? Shouldn't they be able to indulge the way they please in the first real bites of food they eat after slavery?

Dr. Viktor E. Frankl was an Austrian Jewish prisoner during the holocaust. As a psychiatrist, Dr. Frankl created a plan for survival. He learned how to enjoy every spiritual and physical thing he could grasp. In his free time he would analyze every bit of good left in his existence. He would stare at the beautiful sunset and along with his fellow prisoners he would think about how beautiful life can be.

Every bit of life is filled with spirituality. The moon that Bnei Yisrael watched for 210 years now became something that resembles spirituality. The experience of feasting would become infused with Torah and mitzvot. The korban would include no barbaric behavior, rather it would be one of instruction with each step having a sense of spirituality. The Jewish people were no longer starving prisoners who would eat anything in sight. The slow and precise process of the korban required patience. Instead of grabbing the food and diving right in, they had to make sure no bone was shattered and that the meat was not raw. In the smallest details one can find great significance. In the significance of these actions one can recognize the magnitude of Hashem. May we all be *zoche* to see the spirituality and meaning of all the small details in our everyday lives.

## FREE TIME

BATSHEVA SHEKHTER ('20)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Bo, Bnei Yisrael are instructed to begin the process of leaving Egypt. In addition to learning about the Korban Pesach and preparing their homes for the plague of the death of the firstborns, Hashem gives Bnei Yisrael the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh and keeping a calendar. The pasuk states:

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים רֵאשׁוֹן  
הוּא לָכֶם לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה

“This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you” (Shmot 12:2).

Why would the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh be the first mitzvah given once Bnei Yisrael left Egypt? Wouldn't there be more appropriate mitzvot to be given first to a newly freed nation?

The Sforno focuses on the word **לכם** -- “for you.” He explains that Hashem is telling Bnei Yisrael that from now on, their months will be theirs and they can do as they like. They are given permission to organize their own schedule.

A possible answer to this question is the relationship between slavery and time. A slave does not have control over his time; his time is regulated by his master. What he does at every minute of the day is controlled by his master. Now that Bnei Yisrael is free from slavery, they have the ability to choose how they want to spend their time. Hashem gives them an opportunity to sanctify their new free time. Bnei Yisrael now has a calendar year full of special dates for joy, celebration, and thanksgiving.

We learn from this mitzvah the value of our time. We are free to choose how we spend our days and it is our responsibility to live each day to its fullest. Every second, we can choose to waste our time or sanctify it by doing mitzvot, learning Torah, and interacting kindly with others. May we all merit to be given many opportunities to productively and significantly spend our time.

## LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

ARIELLA GROSS ('21)

This week's parsha, Parshat Bo, discusses the plague of darkness, which immobilized and blinded the Egyptians for three days. However, while the Egyptians were frozen, the Jews, who were unaffected by the plague, enjoyed the light.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה נִטֵּה יָדְךָ עַל הַשָּׁמַיִם וְיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ עַל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּמַּשׁ חֹשֶׁךְ: וַיֹּט מֹשֶׁה אֶת-יָדוֹ, עַל-הַשָּׁמַיִם; וְיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ-אֲפֹלָה בְּכָל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים - לֹא-רָאוּ אִישׁ אֶת-אָחִיו, וְלֹא-קָמוּ אִישׁ מִתַּחַת יוֹשְׁלֵת יָמָיו; וְלִכְל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אֹר בְּמוֹשְׁבֹתָם

“Then Hashem said to Moshe, “Hold out your arm toward the sky that there may be darkness upon the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be touched.” Moshe held out his arm toward the sky and thick darkness descended upon all the land of Egypt for three days. People could not see one another, and for three days no one could get up from where he was; but all the Israelites had light in their dwellings” (Shmot 10:21-23).

Why did Hashem choose darkness as the ninth plague? And what can we learn from it?

The word Mitzrayim is related to the word *maytzarim*, which means boundaries, constraints, or limitations. Therefore, Mitzrayim is a symbol of all limitations and hardships we experience in the physical world, including sickness, relationship issues, and financial troubles. The plague's darkness, which froze the Mitzrim, also temporarily “froze” the Jews' hardships, giving them temporary freedom from oppression and personal troubles. The plague of darkness enabled the Jews to enjoy the light, which represents the good in their lives, and become more appreciative of everything Hashem has given them.

Additionally, the pasuk juxtaposes a detailed description of the darkness to a depiction of the light to remind us to have a positive outlook on life. The immobilizing darkness is present alongside the light to remind us that all of our hardships occur simultaneously with good events. Even as we endure challenges and difficulties, we must recognize the good in our lives -- the light -- that is always present.

Therefore, when we face challenges that seem impossible to overcome, we should focus on the light in our lives and remember the blessings Hashem has given us.

# A SPECIAL CONNECTION

DONIE ZAK ('21)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Bo, Hashem gives the Jews their first mitzvah, the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh. Immediately afterwards, He gives the mitzvah of Korban Pesach:

בְּעֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם  
אִישׁ שָׂה לְבֵית אָבֹתָא שָׂה לְבֵית

“On the tenth of this month each of them shall take a lamb to a family, a lamb to a household” (Shmot 12:3).

Hashem also explains his reasoning for performing the miracles of the plagues in Egypt:

לְמַעַן רַבּוֹת מוֹפְתֵי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

“In order that My marvels may be multiplied in the land of Egypt” (Shmot 11:9).

Why does Hashem need to perform a miracle in order to multiply his marvels? Doesn't that seem like circular logic? Furthermore, why does Hashem need to make these plagues at all? Why can't He just take the Jews out without the plagues?

By taking us out of Egypt in such a miraculous way, Hashem is improving his relationship with us by showing that he has a unique and special focus on the Jewish people. The mitzvah of Korban Pesach cannot be done by a man who is not circumcised or a Jew who deliberately and knowingly violates the Torah. This proves that the purpose of the mitzvot Hashem gave us is to better our relationship with Him. Since one who is not circumcised or purposefully violates Torah law clearly denies the existence of a relationship with Hashem, he therefore should not perform the Korban Pesach, a reminder of this relationship. Similarly, Hashem performed one miracle in order to create more miracles and continue with each additional miracle to strengthen his relationship with the Jewish people. We must always recognize the special connection that we are lucky enough to have with Hashem and strive to improve that connection by performing mitzvot. Have a great Shabbos!



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