

Parshas Bo in a Nutshell

(Exodus 10:1–13:16)

The last three of the Ten Plagues are visited on Egypt: a swarm of locusts devours all the crops and greenery; a thick, palpable darkness envelops the land; and all the firstborn of Egypt are killed at the stroke of midnight of the 15th of the month of Nissan.

G-d commands the first mitzvah to be given to the people of Israel: to establish a calendar based on the monthly rebirth of the moon. The Israelites are also instructed to bring a "Passover offering" to G-d: a lamb or kid goat is to be slaughtered, and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel of every Israelite home, so that G-d should pass over these homes when He comes to kill the Egyptian firstborn. The roasted meat of the offering is to be eaten that night together with matzah (unleavened bread) and bitter herbs.

The death of the firstborn finally breaks Pharaoh's resistance, and he literally drives the children of Israel from his land. So hastily do they depart that there is no time for their dough to rise, and the only provisions they take along are unleavened.

(continued next column)



[Per] the myriad spiritual struggles that we all continually face: We have the power to persevere in our mission.

When we do, we find out that we are not alone. G-d is with us, supporting our efforts.

-- The Rebbe

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Before they go, they ask their Egyptian neighbors for gold, silver and garments—fulfilling the promise made to Abraham that his descendants would leave Egypt with great wealth.

The children of Israel are commanded to consecrate all firstborn, and to observe the anniversary of the Exodus each year by removing all leaven from their possession for seven days, eating matzah, and telling the story of their redemption to their children. They are also commanded to wear tefillin on the arm and head as a reminder of the Exodus and their resultant commitment to G-d. ❖

Join us each weekday morning Mon-Fri as we delve into the mysteries of Chassidic concepts. 5:55 am, followed immediately by Shacharis.

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Halachic Zmanim

Shabbos, Jan 8, 2022

Eastern Standard Time

Earliest Tallis..... 6:19 AM
Latest Morning Shema 9:39 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola) 12:28 PM
Plag Hamincha..... 3:51 PM
Earliest Evening Shema 5:17 PM

Anshei Lubavitch Congregation

Rabbi Levi and Leah Neubort

Adult education:

Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

Youth Outreach:

Rabbi Eli and Ruty Steinhauser

Shabbos Schedule

Erev Shabbos – Jan 7 / Shevat 5

Candle Lighting 4:27 pm

Mincha 4:30 pm

Shabbos Day – Jan 8 / Shevat 6

Shacharis..... 9:30 am*

Torah Reading..... 10:30 am

Mincha 4:30 pm

Rabbi's Drasha 4:50 pm

Shabbos Ends..... 5:31 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:39 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema at or before that time (even if at home).*

Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):

Minyan

Shacharis (Mon-Fri) 6:15 am

Shacharis (Sunday) 9:00 am

Mincha (Sun-Thurs) 1:45 pm

Maariv (Sun-Thurs) 9:15 pm

Bulletin

*This week's Bulletin
is sponsored by
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Chassidic Masters

Burning Night

*Based on the teachings of
the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com*

*They shall eat the flesh [of the
Passover offering] on that night,
roasted in fire, with matzot and
bitter herbs. Do not eat of it half-
done, or cooked or boiled in water;
only roasted in fire*

-- Exodus 12:8-9

We experience life as an endless chain of urges and strivings. We desire something, agonize over our lack of it, and expend our energies and resources in pursuit of it. And when our goal is actually attained, our pleasure and satisfaction are short-lived: already the next striving is forming in our hearts, already the fire of desire is consuming our lives.

We might, at times, envy the tranquility of those who are free of ambition, but it is the relentless seekers whom we admire and emulate. In our own experience, we look upon our periods of agitated quest as the high points of our lives. For we sense that while the tranquil person is at peace with himself, the striving person is relating to something greater than the self, something more than the here and now.

Three Offerings

In the twelfth chapter of Exodus, G-d communicates to Moses the laws of the korban pesach, the Passover offering.

On the whole, the Torah is a pragmatic document. The events it describes are almost always physical events, and the mitzvot it commands are for the most part physical actions.

But the Kabbalists and the chassidic masters insist that the Torah's every word also relates to the spiritual dynamics of our lives. Each law of Torah—each organ and limb of its body—has its corresponding element in the soul of Torah.

The same is true of the laws of the Passover offering. In addition to their practical observance, they also instruct and address the inner life of our soul. But before we can discuss some of the spiritual applications of the korban pesach, we need to take a more detailed look at its practical laws.

When the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem, every Jewish household, or group of smaller households, would bring a lamb or kid to the Temple on the fourteenth of Nissan, the day preceding the festival of Passover. The lamb would be slaughtered in the Temple courtyard, its blood would be sprinkled on the altar, and certain portions of it would be burned atop the altar. It would then be roasted on a spit over a fire. That night—the first night of Passover—its meat would be eaten with matzah and maror (bitter herbs), which together constitute the three staples of the Seder. (Today the meat of the Passover offering is represented at the Seder by the afikoman, a piece of matzah eaten at the end of the meal.)

Various types of korbanot were offered in the Holy Temple, but the Passover offering was unique in many ways, for it was governed by a set of laws that applied to no other offering. Some of these differences are specified in the fifth chapter of the Talmudic tractate of Zevachim, where the Talmud contrasts the Passover offering with two other

Korbanot — the firstborn offering (bechor) and the tithe offering (maaser):

The firstborn, tithe and Passover offerings are kodashim kallim. They can be slaughtered anywhere in the Temple courtyard, and their blood requires only one sprinkling, as long as it is directed toward the foundation of the altar. They differ, however, in how they are to be eaten. The firstborn offering is eaten by the priests, the tithe offering by anyone; both can be eaten throughout the city [of Jerusalem], in any form of food preparation, for two days and one night. The Passover offering can be eaten only at night, and only up to midnight, and only by those registered for it, and only roasted by fire. (Talmud, Zevachim 56b)

To briefly explain: The Torah commands the Jew to bring the firstborn of his cattle or sheep as an offering to G-d. Also to be offered is a tithe of the animals born in the herd or flock (once a year, the year's yield was herded into a pen, and the animals let out one at a time; every tenth animal to emerge was marked and pronounced holy to G-d, and brought as an offering). The firstborn, tithe and Passover offerings all belong to a class of korbanot called kodashim kallim, and they resemble each other in the procedures of their offering upon the altar; but the rules pertaining to the eating of the Passover offering differ from those relating to the first two.

The firstborn and the tithe offerings can be eaten for two days and a night (on the day it was offered, on the following night,

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and on the following day until sunset), while the Passover offering can be eaten only on the night following its offering, and only until midnight. Another difference is that the firstborn and the tithe offerings can be prepared in any way the eater desires—boiled, stewed, baked, roasted, etc.—while the Passover offering has to be roasted on a spit over the fire, and cannot be prepared in any other way (not even as a pot roast cooked in its own juices with no other liquid added).

All these details—the laws of the firstborn, tithe and Passover offerings, and the differences between them—have their counterparts in the inner life of the soul.

First, Last and Over

The teachings of Kabbalah describe our world as founded upon ten divine attributes (sefirot) from which derive the spiritual form and substance of reality. Thus, the number ten represents the seder hishtalshelut (literally, “order of evolution”)—the spiritual order of things that G-d instituted in His creation. “Firstborn” represents chochmah, the first and loftiest phase of the seder hishtalshelut; “tithe” refers to malchut, the last and lowest of the order. (Accordingly, the firstborn offering was eaten by the kohanim, who represent the higher, more spiritual callings of life, while the tithe offering was eaten by the farmer who brought it, representing the lowest, or most material, stratum of creation.) Together, the first and the tenth embrace the totality of the created reality.

Passover, as its name indicates, relates to that which transcends seder hishtalshelut, that which overleaps the standard processes of creation. The Passover offering is so named in attestation of the fact that G-d leaped over the homes of the Jewish firstborn when He killed all Egyptian firstborn on the night of the Exodus, despite the fact that by all standard criteria the Jews were no more deserving of life than the Egyptians. Passover is G-d’s disregarding of the very rules by which He ordered His world, and our reciprocation of His deed by rising above the dictates of nature and normalcy in our devotion to Him.

This explains the difference in how the Passover offering is eaten, as opposed to the firstborn and tithe offerings.

As we noted in the opening lines of this essay, life can be viewed as a cycle of striving and realization, yearning and gratification. The common metaphors for these two states are fire and water. Fire connotes thirst and upward striving; water suggests settling down and satiation.

A normal life—life as defined by the “order of evolution” from chochmah to malchut—is nourished by both fire and water. Some meals are cooked steeped in the water of contentment; others have lesser degrees of liquid to temper the fire of life; occasionally, one even partakes of a roast—a spurt of utter striving, of desire unsatiated by a single drop of gratification.

The Passover offering, however, can be experienced only one way—roasted on the fire. When a soul reaches for G-d—not for the glimmers of divinity to be found within creation and experienced by conventional spiritual endeavor, but for G-d Himself, as He transcends existence and reality—it is utterly consumed by an unceasing desire. For man can never capture anything of the divine essence. He can only strive for it, his soul a pure fire, with nary a drop of water to slake his thirst, without even a pot to contain his fervor.

Nighttime Meal

The firstborn and tithe offerings were eaten for two days and a night. The Passover offering was eaten only at night.

In the course of our history we have experienced days of divine light, as well as nights of spiritual darkness. Generally speaking, there were two daytime eras—the periods in which the first, and then the second, Beit Hamikdash manifested the divine presence in our world. Between these two days was a brief night—the seventy-year Babylonian galut, when the Holy Temple lay in ruins and the people of Israel were exiled from the Holy Land.¹ Following the sunset of the second day, we were plunged into the blackest of nights—into our current centuries-long galut, rife with suffering and persecution, confounded by doubt and spiritual dissonance, and marked by the near-total concealment of the face of G-d.

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A normal relationship with G-d could be had only in the “two days and a night” that preceded our present galut. These were times in which G-d showed Himself to man—even in Babylon we had prophets and other expressions of divine immanence. But when the sun set on the second day, the flesh of the firstborn and tithe offerings could no longer be eaten. No longer could the divine truth be experienced within the workings of nature or accessed by the conventional processes of spiritual endeavor. No longer could man experience gratification in his spiritual life, for a glimpse of the divine had become an elusive dream.

In this night of nights, man’s striving for the divine is an unquenchable fire, an unrealizable yearning, an unconsummable love. But for that very reason, it is deeper and truer than the fire-and-water concoctions of the past. In this night of nights, our yearning for G-d is not focused upon first or tenth attributes, or filtered through orders of evolution. In this night of nights, our yearning for G-d is not mitigated by plateaus of gratification. It passes over all systems and processes, to strive for the very essence of G-d—an endless striving for the most endless of objectives. ❖

From Our Sages

We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters (Exodus 10:9)

Pharaoh was willing to let the menfolk go, as long as the children remain behind; for as long as the younger generation remains “in Egypt,” there would be no future for the people of Israel.

The “Pharaohs” of our day have the same attitude. If the older folk wish to cling to Jewish tradition, that is perfectly acceptable; but the youth should be raised in “the spirit of the times” . . .

-- (Maayanah Shel Torah)

G-d spoke to Moses . . . : “Please, speak into the ears of the people, that every man ask of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, articles of silver, and articles of gold . . .” (Exodus 11:2)

To what is this comparable? To a man who is locked up in prison and is told: “Tomorrow you shall be freed from prison and given a lot of money.” Says he: “I beg you, free me today, and I ask for nothing more . . .”

[But G-d had said to Abraham at the “Covenant Between the Parts”: “Know that your children shall be strangers in a foreign land, [where] they will be enslaved and afflicted . . . and afterwards they will go out with great wealth” (Genesis 15:13–14).]

So G-d had to plead with them: “Please! Ask the Egyptians for gold and silver, so that the Righteous One should not say: ‘They will be enslaved and afflicted’ He fulfilled, but He did not fulfill ‘and afterwards they will go out with great wealth.’”

-- (Talmud, Berachot 9b)

This chodesh (new moon, month) shall be for you the head of months; it shall be for you the first of the months of the year (Exodus 12:2)

G-d showed Moses the new moon at its moment of rebirth, and said to him: “When the moon is reborn, mark the beginning of a new month.”

-- (Mechilta)

Time is the first creation (see Sforno on Genesis 1:1); thus, the sanctification of time is the first mitzvah commanded to Israel.

-- (The Lubavitcher Rebbe) ❖

Haftorah for Bo in a nutshell

Jeremiah 46:13–28

In this week's Torah reading, we read of the devastation of the Egyptian nation through the final three of the Ten Plagues. In the haftorah we read of the punishment G-d visited upon Egypt centuries later, through the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

G-d reveals Egypt's fate to Jeremiah: "Proclaim it in Egypt and let it be heard in Migdol, and let it be heard in Noph and in Tahpanhes. Say, 'Stand fast and prepare yourself, for the sword has devoured round about you.'" The prophet then goes on to describe Egypt's helplessness and the destruction that it will incur at the hands of the Babylonians.

The haftorah ends with G-d's assurance to the Jewish people not to fear, for though they too will be punished and exiled, ultimately they will be redeemed:

"You fear not, O Jacob My servant, and be not dismayed, O Israel! for behold, I will redeem you from afar, and your children from the land of their captivity, and Jacob shall return and be quiet and at ease, and there shall be none who disturb his rest. You fear not, My servant Jacob, says the L-rd, for I am with you, for I will make a full end of all the nations where I have driven you." ❖



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Good Shabbos to all!