

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. Before they go, they ask their Egyptian neighbors for gold, silver,

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In our own lives, each one of us can be a Moses in a certain sense, for we all have spheres of influence where others look up to us for guidance and direction. If what we give them is ourselves, then our message will have a limited scope. But if we can rise above ourselves and communicate G-dly truth, our message will have universal appeal.

-- The Rebbe

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.

Thank You to:
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Halachic Zmanim

Shabbos, Jan 28, 2023
Eastern Standard Time

Earliest Tallis.....6:12 AM
Latest Morning Shema9:38 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola) 12:35 PM
Plag Hamincha..... 4:10 PM
Earliest Evening Shema 5:38 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 27 / Shevat 5

Candle Lighting.....4:49 pm

Mincha4:50 pm

Shabbos Day – Jan 28 / Shevat 6

Shacharis9:30 am*

Torah Reading10:30 am

Kiddush.....12:00 pm

Mincha4:50 pm

Rabbi's Drasha5:10 pm

Shabbos Ends5:52 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:38 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
The Berman Law Office .*

Chassidic Masters

Sparks

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

At the “Covenant Between the Parts” G-d said to Abraham: “Know that your children shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they will enslave them and afflict them . . . and afterwards they will go out with great wealth.”

For much of our history, we have indeed been strangers in a land not ours. There was the Egyptian exile that preceded our birth as a nation; the Babylonian exile that followed the destruction of the First Temple; the Greek exile during the Second Temple era; and our present exile, which began with the Roman destruction of the Holy Temple in 69 CE, and from which we have yet to emerge after more than nineteen centuries under the hegemony of alien powers.

Exile—galut, in Hebrew—is much more than a person’s physical removal from his homeland. A person in exile is a person severed from the environment that nourishes his way of life, his principles and values, his spiritual identity. In exile all these are in jeopardy, for the onus is now on him alone; he must call upon his own resources of resolve and perseverance to survive. In the words of our sages, “All journeys are dangerous.”

Why are we in galut? Galut is commonly regarded as a punishment for our national and individual failings. Indeed, the prophets repeatedly describe it as

such, and in our prayers we lament the fact that “because of our sins we were exiled from our land.” But if galut was solely punishment for sin, its intensity would gradually diminish as the sins that caused it are atoned for; yet we find that galut grows darker and deeper as it progresses. Furthermore, our state of galut was foretold to Abraham in his covenant with G-d as an integral part of the Jewish mission in history long before the sins for which it atones were committed.

The Promise

A clue to a deeper significance of galut can be found in the “great wealth” that G-d promised to Abraham as the result of his children’s sojourn in the land of Egypt. Indeed, this promise is a recurrent theme in the Torah’s account of the Egyptian exile and the Exodus—to the extent that one gets the impression that this was the very purpose of our enslavement in Egypt.

In G-d’s first communication to Moses, when He revealed Himself to him in the burning bush and charged him with the mission of taking the Jewish people out of Egypt, He makes sure to include the promise: “When you go, you will not go emptyhanded. Every woman shall ask from her neighbor, and from her that dwells in her house, vessels of gold and vessels of silver, and garments . . . and you shall drain Egypt [of its wealth].”

During the plague of darkness, when the land of Egypt was plunged into a darkness so thick that the Egyptians could not budge from their places, the Jewish people—whom the darkness did not affect—were able to move about freely inside the Egyptians’ homes.

This, says the Midrash, was in order that the Jews should be able to take an inventory of the wealth of Egypt, so that the Egyptians could not deny the existence of any valuable objects the Jews asked for when they left Egypt.

And just prior to the Exodus, G-d again says to Moses: “Please speak into the ears of the people, that each man ask his [Egyptian] fellow, and each woman her fellow, for vessels of silver and gold.” G-d is virtually begging the Children of Israel to take the wealth of Egypt!

The Talmud explains that the Jewish people were disinclined to hold up their departure from Egypt in order to gather its wealth:

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 be given a lot of money. Says he: I beg of you, free me today, and I ask for nothing more . . . [So, G-d had to beseech them:] Please! Ask the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, so that the righteous one (Abraham) should not say: He fulfilled “They will be enslaved and tortured,” but He did not fulfill “and afterwards they will go out with great wealth.”

But certainly Abraham, too, would have been prepared to forgo the promise of great wealth if this were to hasten his children’s liberation. Obviously, the gold and silver we carried out of Egypt were indispensable components of our redemption.

(Continued next page)

The Glitter in the Gold

The Talmud offers the following explanation for the phenomenon of galut: “The people of Israel were exiled amongst the nations only so that converts might be added to them.”

On the most basic level, this is a reference to the many non-Jews who, in the course of the centuries of our dispersion, have come in contact with the Jewish people and have been inspired to convert to Judaism. But chassidic teaching explains that the Talmud is also referring to souls of a different sort that are transformed and elevated in the course of our exiles: the sparks of holiness contained within the physical creation.

The great Kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria taught that every object, force and phenomenon in existence has a spark of holiness within it—a pinpoint of divinity that constitutes its soul, its spiritual essence and design. This spark embodies the divine desire that the thing exist, and its function within G-d’s overall purpose for creation. When a person utilizes something to serve his Creator, he penetrates its shell of mundanity, revealing and realizing its divine essence.

It is to this end that we have been dispersed across the face of earth: so that we may come in contact with the sparks of holiness that await redemption in every corner of the globe.

Every soul has its own sparks scattered about in the world, which actually form an integral part of itself: no soul is complete until it has redeemed those sparks related to its being.

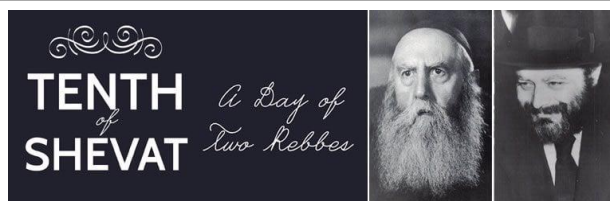
Thus, a person moves through life, impelled from place to place and from occupation to occupation by seemingly random forces; but everything is by divine providence, which guides every man to those possessions and opportunities whose soul is intimately connected with his.

Thus the Torah relates how Jacob risked his life to retrieve some “small jugs” he had left behind after crossing the Jabbok River. “The righteous,” remarks the Talmud, “value their possessions more than their bodies.” For they recognize the divine potential in every bit of matter, and see in each of their possessions a component of their own spiritual integrity.

The Lesson

At times, a person might be inclined to escape galut by enclosing himself in a cocoon of spirituality, devoting his days and nights to Torah study and prayer. But instead of escaping galut, he is only deepening his entrenchment within it, for he is abandoning limbs of his own soul—his sparks of holiness—in the wasteland of unrefined materiality.

It is only by meeting the challenges that divine providence sends our way, by utilizing every bit of material gold and silver toward a G-dly end, that we extricate these sparks from their galut, achieve a personal redemption, and hasten the universal redemption, when “the great shofar shall be sounded, and the lost shall come from the lands of plenty, and the forsaken from the lands of stricture, and they shall bow to G-d on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.” ❖



On Yud Shevat on the Jewish calendar, upon the passing of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, of righteous memory, in 1950, leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement passed on to his illustrious son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of righteous memory. In the decades that followed, the Rebbe revolutionized, inspired and guided the post-Holocaust transformation of the Jewish people that continues to this day.

This day, so relevant to every Jew in our generation, is surely a day for reflection, learning, prayer, positive resolutions and acts of loving-kindness. ❖

From Our Sages – Bo

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)

Stretch out your hand towards heaven, that there shall be darkness over the land of Egypt (Exodus 10:21)

Why did G-d . . . bring darkness upon the Egyptians? Because there were transgressors in Israel who had Egyptian patrons and who lived in affluence and honor, and were unwilling to leave. So G-d said: “If I bring upon them publicly a plague from which they will die, the Egyptians will say: ‘Just as it has passed over us, so has it passed over them.’” Therefore He brought darkness upon the Egyptians for three days, so that the [Israelites] should bury their dead without their enemies seeing them.

(Midrash Rabbah)

A man did not see his fellow, nor did anyone get up from his place for three days (Exodus 10:23)

There were six days of darkness. . . . During the first three, “a man did not see his fellow”; during the last three days, one who was sitting could not stand up, one who was standing could not sit down, and one who was lying down could not raise himself upright.

(Midrash Rabbah)

There is no greater darkness than one in which “a man did not see his fellow”—in which a person becomes oblivious to the needs of his fellow man. When that happens, a person becomes stymied in his personal development as well—“nor did anyone get up from his place.”

(Chiddushei HaRim)

It came to pass, on that very day, that G-d took the children of Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 12:51)

In the Passover Haggadah we say: “If G-d had not taken our forefathers out of Egypt, we, our children and our children’s children would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt . . .”

Our sages explain that the children of Israel had become so entrenched in the paganism and depravity of Egypt that the Exodus came at the very last possible moment, as they approached the very brink of total indistinguishability from the Egyptians. Had they remained slaves in Egypt a moment longer, there would have been no “children of Israel” to redeem.

(Rebbe’s Haggadah)

You shall relate to your son on that day, saying: This is done because of what G-d did for me when I came out of Egypt (Exodus 13:8)

In every generation, a person is obligated to see himself as if he himself came out of Egypt; as it is written: “This is done because of what G-d did for me when I came out of Egypt.”

(Talmud, Pesachim 116b) ❖

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!