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Bo | Faith in The Sages - Basis for Belief in G-d





# MESILOT Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha of Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l

From the weekly lessons of his son Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

פרשת בא | אנגלית

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Parashat Bo - An Uplifting Journey with An Unfeeling Heart



# An Uplifting Journey with An Unfeeling Heart

On an early wintry morning, Thursday the 19<sup>th</sup> of Tevet 5783 (2023), the airplane's wheels touched the landing strip at Ben-Gurion Airport.

The passengers rose, stretched their limbs, and slowly descended from the airplane, tired but under a spell of inspiration. They were all elated after experiencing an uplifting trip.

One passenger, however, felt a tinge of disappointment deep in his heart. A sense of having missed out filled his entire being and made him feel downtrodden.

He gathered his suitcases and sat down in one of the quiet corners of the terminal and began to recall what had transpired in the past few days:

"The rumor had spread rapidly, 'Beit Midrash 'Hameir La'aretz'

was organizing a journey to the holy Jewish sites in Poland."

I, too, had heard, and my heart filled with hope mingled with anxiety. I had been invited to join the journey and waited impatiently for it to begin.

I can hardly describe the excitement when we prayed Shacharit in Krakow and visited the tomb of the great Rema.

In the two days of our visit, there was hardly a dull moment. With every passing hour, we merited to go to one holy site after another.

I was surrounded by friends and fellow Jews, their faces all glowing with devotion, and from their closed eyes streamed tears of yearning and dedication to the service of G-d.

I stood on the side and found my heart to be as dry as wood, Parashat Bo - Was Belief in Moshe Rabbeinu Necessary?

my emotions were bottlenecked and could not surface.

I searched deep inside my heart for some inspiration to grasp onto that I would feel some spiritual elation as did all the others, but to no avail. I could find nothing to work with. I had felt as if someone had tarnished and painted over and darkened my entire field of vision.

The short but intense journey passed by at a quick pace, and in conclusion, we merited to visit the resting place of the righteous Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, the "Noam Elimelech."

The buses came to a halt, the doors opened, and dozens of fellow travelers, wrapped in holy fervor of longing, ran to the sacred resting place of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, their hearts illuminated with sublime light.

I stood there, lifeless and unfeeling, and despite my best efforts, could not feel anv of the spiritual sensations that encompassed me.

I kept wondering, why? Why did I not merit to bask in the light of G-d like the others? How could this dull feeling be explained?"

As we hear of the traveler's morose thoughts while sitting in the corner of the Tel Aviv airport terminal, we surely ask ourselves what advice and insight could we offer him? Additionally, what can we learn from his experience that will shed light on the not-uncommon phenomenon of an unfeeling and unfazed heart in face of great spiritual experiences and revelations?

# Was Belief in Moshe Rabbeinu Necessary?

Giant posters by the "Dirshu" organization invited the general public to a grand celebration marking the completion of the study of all of the "Mishnah Berurah", which would be held in a large hall, in the presence of Torah leaders and integrated with a rich and unique musical performance.

Parashat Bo - Was Belief in Moshe Rabbeinu Necessary?

Yossi had not completed all of the Mishnah Berurah, yet his feet nonetheless led him to take part in the celebration, and, together with thousands of his Jewish brethren, he rejoiced in the joy of the study of the Torah.

The event turned out to be perfectly orchestrated, the production was exceptional, the food was plentiful, and the sounds of the orchestra were pleasing to the ears.

The rabbis' speeches were the of highlight the evening. Inspirational and fiery speeches were delivered and explained the greatness of those who study halachah,¹ and the exceptionality of those who diligently invest efforts with determination and consistent accumulating perseverance knowledge mastery and halachah, one step after another until all of the sections of Mishnah Berurah would be completed.

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**1.** This is especially true about shabbat, since it is only through studying halachah that enables one to properly observe Shabbat, which is a primary source of holiness and connection to G-d.

In connection with the great holiness of Shabbat, the following tale is told (Magen Avot, Bobov – page 400):

One Friday evening, Rabbi Chaim of Sanz sat at his Shabbat table, surrounded by his chassidim, and began to share:

The righteous Polish convert Avraham Potocki was famously known for generations for having sacrificed his life in the sanctification of G-d's name. Was is less known is the circumstances that led to him accepting upon himself the Jewish religion. It began with a scene that he had witnessed with his own eyes:

Among the Jews living on the estate of Count Potocki (Avraham's father), was a particularly cheerful man, who possessed a sharp and witty tongue, and an extraordinary talent for mimicking and imitation.

When the Count discovered his rare talents, he enthusiastically informed him, "Henceforth, you are to be my family's official entertainer."

From then on, at every event, the Jew would appear with a collection of jokes and mischievous acts in hand.

One Thursday evening, knocks were heard at the Jew's door.

Standing at the entrance was the Count's messenger, who announced: "Tomorrow - Friday afternoon - the Count is throwing a party and requests that you appear."

Parashat Bo - Was Belief in Moshe Rabbeinu Necessary?

Suddenly, Yossi began to burn with a passion, and the decision

crystallized within his mind: "I, too, must join this cycle of Torah

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The Jew had no choice and he came, despite the oncoming Shabbat. As the hour grew late and the day was nearing its end, the Jew asked the Count to allow him to return home before the onset of Shabbat.

The Count, drunk from the abundant wine he had consumed, became furious and began to beat him mercilessly. He set his dogs upon him, while the guests sat and laughed from the grand entertainment.

After a prolonged hour of such torment, the Jew rose from the ground with his last remaining strength and returned home wounded and injured.

Since little time remained until Shabbat, he hurried to wash and bandage his wounds, and then dressed in his fine Shabbat garments, and welcomed the Shabbat Queen with a radiant face and with an inner peace and joy.

The Count's son, who had observed his father's deeds, was angered and grieved in his heart. He was deeply pained by his father's cruelty and the abuse of the poor Jew, who had done nothing wrong.

As the day turned to night, the son feared that perhaps this Jew was not able to treat his wounds properly, and he took medicine and bandages and headed towards the Jew's home.

As he walked toward the Jew's home, dreadful visions swirled in his mind; he was certain that he would find the Jew lying on his bed bleeding and wounded, and his groans filling the air. Surely, his wife and children would be standing around him in despair, wringing their hands.

Yet, when he arrived and peeked through the window, he was shocked and what he witnessed caused him to freeze in place.

The house was flooded with many luminous candles. A table was set with sparkling glassware, and at the head of the table stood the Jew, like a king among his retinue, gracefully reciting Kiddush over wine. His face shone and was radiant. His voice was sweet and clear.

In disbelief, he rubbed his eyes. Was this the same Jew who had just a short while ago been humiliated, scorned, and attacked by dogs at his father's behest?!

How did he manage to raise his spirit so high, his face shining and gleaming with pride, more than the faces of all of the wealthy and noble counts of Poland?

This left an enormous impression upon him, and it was a primary reason that, in the course of time, he chose to join the Jewish nation, ultimately giving up his life at the stake to remain steadfast and loyal to G-d and his people.

Parashat Bo - The Guarantee of Redemption

study. I, too, wish to learn this great part of the Torah."

Indeed, the very next day, Yossi joined a class on the 'Amud Yomi,' and his joy knew no bounds.

Day after day passed, his knowledge and mastery grew.

Eventually, he reached Siman 51 in Shulchan Aruch, and he reflected on the words of the Mishnah Berurah (subsection 17):

"One should recite the 'Song of the Sea' with joy and envision in his mind as if that very day he had crossed the sea; One who recites it with joy is forgiven of their sins."

Yossi took this halachah to heart and made the firm decision: "Starting tomorrow, I will recite the Song of the Sea with thoughtfulness and genuine intention."

The next morning, Yossi arrived at the synagogue, and the various melodies for the words of the 'Song of the Sea' began to run

through his mind: "Which melody will be most helpful in enhancing my prayers; which shall I use?"

The prayers began, and before long, Yossi found himself starting the prelude to the 'Song': "*G-d saved the people of Israel that day from the hand of Egypt*" (Exodus 14:30).

He continued and reached the words: "And they believed in G-d and in Moshe, His servant" (ibid., verse 31), and stopped to consider the words that were so familiar, yet to which he hadn't given enough thought.

"I don't understand: What need was there for them to believe in Moshe Rabbeinu in addition to their belief in G-d who had sent him? Furthermore, did Moshe have anything to gain from their believing in him?"

His forehead wrinkled in thought, and he sought to recall an explanation.

# The Guarantee of Redemption

Avraham Avinu, at the age of seventy, having led a life of

holiness and purity, filled with acts of kindness and love of

Parashat Bo - The Guarantee of Redemption

mankind, was privileged to divine prophecy of the loftiest kind.

The sun began to set in the west, and Avraham, the greatest of spiritual giants, began to feel a deep trance of prophecy; the coveted and wondrous feeling in which the physical body ceases for a moment to separate the person from seeing visions of G-dliness.

G-d revealed Himself to Avraham and said to him words of encouragement and approval: "Fortunate are you, Avraham, you will be greatly blessed for all of the divine service which you perform for Me and for the tremendous satisfaction you bring Me' - 'Know that 'Your reward is very great'" (Genesis 15:1).

Avraham responded and pleaded: "G-d, what can You give me, being that I am childless?" (ibid., verse 2).

G-d promised Avraham Avinu: "Look now toward the heavens and count the stars if you are able to count them.. so shall your offspring be" (ibid., verse 5).

Avraham Avinu accepted the promise and believed in G-d with perfect faith: "And he believed in G-d, and it was considered before Him as righteousness" (ibid, verse 6).

In that same prophecy, G-d showed him a wondrous vision; He showed him all that the nation of Israel - his descendants - would endure under the yoke of the nations of the world over thousands of years: persecutions, killings, cruelty, and wickedness.

G-d continued to reveal to him: Know that this long and arduous path will begin with the birth of your son, Yitzchak Avinu, and from the time of his birth, four hundred years of living as strangers in a foreign land will begin:

"And He said to Avram, 'You must know that your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will subject them to slavery and afflict them for four hundred years'" (ibid., verse 13).

Our sages explained that this verse describes two distinct periods.

Parashat Bo - Exile - A Subservient Mindset

The first period: "Your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not theirs," yet despite being in foreign lands, they will be able to live peacefully and tranquilly.

The second period: "And they will subject them to slavery and afflict them," refers to harsh and bitter afflictions of the severest kind, to the point of eroding and ultimately stripping away their identity.<sup>2</sup>

In the commentary of the Gaon of Vilna (Orach Chaim,

430:2), we find that these four hundred years, which began with Yitzchak's birth, came to an end on the Shabbat before their exodus from Egypt, which is also known as "Shabbat HaGadol":

From Shabbat HaGadol the redemption began through the taking of the Paschal offering on that day.

We must understand: what connection is there between the taking of the lamb and the dramatic redemption from Egypt?

#### **Exile - A Subservient Mindset**

The 86 years of servitude that were prophesied to Avraham in the Covenant Between the Parts

are described in the verse as the Egyptians "subjecting them to slavery and afflicting them"

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**2.** The Chatam Sofer points to these two categories in the verse, *'Your offspring will be strangers.. for four hundred years'* (Genesis 15:13):

"The last 86 (1") years were years of enslavement, affliction, and hard labor. 86 is the numerical value of 'Elokim,' which is the divine attribute of judgment.

However, during the prior 314 (שי"ד)

years they were merely strangers in a land not theirs, living in relative comfort.

This corresponds numerically to the divine name of 'Sha-dai.

Thus, G-d later told Moshe that he had revealed his names of 'El[okim] Sha-dai, but my name of 'Havayah' (Tetragrammaton), I did not make known to them' (Shemot 6:3), until Moshe Rabbeinu arrived."

Parashat Bo - Exile - A Subservient Mindset

(Bereishit 15:13). However, the verse does not explain how this drastic transition occurred.

The Torah does not seem to clarify how the Egyptians succeeded in taking the princely nation of Israel and enslaving them.

How, after 314 years of normative life, did the Egyptians manage to turn the people of Israel into lowly slaves?

We find that the Torah explains this matter elsewhere:

"Has any L-rd ever tried to come and take for Himself a nation from within another nation through trials, signs, wonders, war, a mighty hand, an outstretched arm, and awesome miracles, like all that G-d your L-rd did for you in Egypt before your eyes?" (Devarim 4:34).

With these few words - to "take for Himself a nation from within another nation" - the Torah describes how the Egyptians succeeded in their subjection of the Jewish people to slavery.

As explained in the Midrash:3

"Rabbi Abba bar Acha said in the name of Rabbi Chanin: What is the meaning of taking 'a nation from within a nation'? It is like a person who pulls out an embryo from within the womb of an animal.

Rabbi Avin said in the name of Rabbi Simon: They were swallowed up within their innards, as it says, *'They have swallowed us alive'* (Tehillim 124:3)."

During the many hard years of servitude, the people of Israel were entirely consumed and immersed within the wicked Egyptians, just like an embryo in the belly of an animal.

Rabbi Simcha Kessler explained this concept in the name of Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, of blessed memory:<sup>4</sup>

"Exile, in the simplest sense, is a physical punishment; the nations enslave us, cause us

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<sup>3.</sup> Midrash Tehillim (Psalm 114).

<sup>4. &#</sup>x27;Kovetz Beit Chayeinu' – Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot (page 146).

Parashat Bo - Exile - A Subservient Mindset

distress, and decree harsh decrees upon us.

But, as is known, every physical matter has an inner, spiritual root, and the root of the physical exile is a spiritual exile - when the nations succeed and influence us with their perspectives, opinions, and modes of thought.

Therefore, it is only if there arises in our hearts a feeling of respect and importance towards the nations under whose dominion we were placed, and we submit to them and are influenced by them due to their perceived superiority - only then do they gain the capacity to rule over us in the physical sense.

If we would have, however, succeeded in completely isolating ourselves from the influence of the nations among whom we dwelled, they would have had no control over us whatsoever.

A prime example is the Tribe of Levi, who were freed from slavery in Egypt.

From a purely logical standpoint, there is no explanation for this

anomaly. The sole reason for this is that the Tribe of Levi clung to the Tree of Life, the Torah. They separated themselves entirely from the ways of the nations, isolating themselves within the walls of the Beit Midrash. Consequently, the Egyptians had no ability to control or enslave them.

It follows that the primary aspect of the exile in Egypt was the influence of the Egyptians upon us that weakened our faith.

All of the beliefs that existed and were prevalent in Egypt at that time - the Egyptian idols, the wisdom of sorcery and astrology - all influenced and seeped into the Jewish hearts and raised their esteem of the Egyptians while simultaneously weakening and blurring the foundations of the Jewish faith that they had received from their forefathers.

Thus, the Jewish people sadly slipped and descended into forty-nine gates of impurity."

Parashat Bo - Enslavement of The Mind

#### **Enslavement of The Mind**

The following is an excerpt from a lecture delivered by the Biala Rebbe, Rabbi Bentzion Rabinowitz:<sup>5</sup>

"When the Midrash describes the depth of the exile, it uses the analogy of removing an embryo from an animal's womb. The state of the Jewish people in the Egyptian exile was indeed akin to an embryo in its mother's womb.

As is known, when the embryo is in its mother's womb, it receives its vitality from its mother. The fetus resides in the mother's womb and has no independent life force; it lives merely from the life of the mother.

Likewise, when the Jewish people were enslaved in Egypt, they had no independent vitality. They drew their vitality from the Egyptians. They were consumed by the evils of Egypt, and the essence of their exile was an exile of the soul.

The Egyptians' impurity, their culture, and their twisted worldview completely permeated the Jewish people and immersed them in the forty-nine gates of impurity to the point that it became nearly impossible to distinguish an

Egyptian from an Israelite.

This is the deeper meaning of the Sages' statement that "no slave could escape from Egypt."

This does not mean that it was literally impossible to escape, for we have seen in recent generations as well, under the notorious Communist rule when the Iron Curtain fell over Russia's gates, that many of our Jewish brothers still managed to individually escape from the tyrannical regime.

Rather, the meaning of the statement is that even if a slave escaped Egypt physically, only his body was freed from servitude; his soul, however, remained under the influence of Egypt's enslavement.

Parashat Bo - Enslavement of The Mind

Their influence, culture, and mindset were all pervasive and spanned from one end of the earth to the other.

It was seemingly impossible to completely free oneself from the shackles of their worldview and their terrible impurity; Egypt, indeed, was "the naked lowliness of the land" (Bereishit 42:9).

There, in Egypt, the holy souls of the Jewish people were enslaved and seemed to have no respite in sight.<sup>6</sup>

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**6.** Admiring gentile culture is the root of great spiritual downfall.

Such admiration is often the symptom of a weakened G-dly soul; a person who identifies within himself admiration for foreign and undesirable cultures should feel mercy for the divine spark within him that is captive and in exile under the powers of impurity.

We bring a story that illustrates and contrasts a pitiful soul of this lowly sort, and a holy soul with the exact opposite kind of perspective.

One day, Rabbi Sholom Dovber Schneersohn, the Rebbe Rashab of Lubavitch, learned that a group of wayward Jews, led by a rebellious fellow named Krepes, had gathered and decided to inform on Torah-observant Jews to the Russian authorities.

They compiled material, written evidence and proof, and claimed that the Jewish religion harms the culture of the land, and added many other slanderous assertions. They demanded in their petition an absolute prohibition against

Torah study, and especially the study of Kabbalah and Chassidut.

This subversive man, Krepes, had no real knowledge of the Torah but nonetheless considered himself an expert in Judaism, and was appointed by the authorities as the "government appointed rabbi" of the city of Odessa.

He would curry favor with government officials, and was eventually appointed as an advisor to the government on Jewish matters

He moved to St. Petersburg, then the capital of Russia, and Krepes, who was cruel by nature, took advantage of his position and authority to oppress his fellow Jews who observed Torah and mitzvot.

When the Rebbe Rashab discovered that Krepes and his radical group had finalized their collection of incriminating material and planned to present it to the government in the coming days, he asked his son, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the Rebbe Rayatz, to travel to St. Petersburg and make every effort to cancel the evil decree.

#### Parashat Bo - Enslavement of The Mind

The Rebbe Rayatz met in St. Petersburg with Jewish activists and government officials, but with no success.

Having no further options, the Rebbe Rayatz returned to Lubavitch to inform his father, the Rebbe Rashab, that he had failed to avert this decree.

When the Rebbe Rayatz arrived in Lubavitch, he found the Rebbe Rashab pacing the room back and forth, his tallit draped over his shoulder as he inspected the tzitzit before the morning prayers.

Upon hearing from his son that the mission had not been met with success, the Rebbe Rashab said to him: "Do you see this tallit? A tallit has the power to blind the forces of evil and the impure husks."

The Rebbe Rayatz grasped the tzitzit of his father's tallit, kissed them firmly, and caught the next train back to St. Petersburg, certain that he would succeed in annulling the evil decree this time.

When the Rebbe Rayatz arrived in St. Petersburg for the second time, he decided to meet with Krepes himself.

He went to his office and asked to schedule a meeting with him in the coming days.

"Why postpone our meeting?" Krepes declared to the Rebbe Rayatz, "I have some free time now, let's talk immediately."

Krepes, who knew the Rebbe Rayatz from previous encounters, did not know of his intentions or the purpose of his visit, and received him with honor and a pleasant demeanor.

At first, they spoke about various matters, until the conversation naturally turned to the new decree that Krepes intended to propose. The one that would be imposed upon the Torah observant Jews.

With great arrogance, Krepes boasted about the extensive material he had gathered against those who kept Torah and mitzvot, stating that he hoped to present the incriminatory file to the government in the coming few days.

He taunted the Rebbe Rayatz, "Let us now see who will win. This time a decree will be issued against your cherished Judaism from which you all will not be able to recover."

The Rebbe Rayatz asked Krepes to show him the voluminous material. Krepes, who suspected nothing, handed over all of the documents that he had compiled.

As soon as the Rebbe Rayatz received the numerous handwritten pages from Krepes, he tore them into small fragments before Krepes's shocked eyes.

Krepes tried to stop the Rebbe Rayatz from tearing the pages, but all to no avail. The Rebbe Rayatz determinedly continued with commitment until all of the papers were shredded into small pieces.

Seeing years of his life's work destroyed before his eyes, Krepes shouted and cursed at the Rebbe Rayatz, "What have you done to me? I have been collecting this material for a long time and I have no additional copy of it. How will I present it

#### Parashat Bo - The Time of Redemption Arrived

Their vitality was drawn from the Egyptians, and they could not see any path for themselves to be redeemed.

As the author of the Haggadah said: "If the Holy One, blessed

be He, would have not taken our forefathers out of Egypt, we, our children, and our children's children would still have been enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt."

# The Time of Redemption Arrived

Many years of exile passed, and the appointed time to redeem the people of Israel arrived. Since they had no merit of their own, the Holy One, blessed be He, gave them two commandments: the Passover offering and circumcision.

In this connection, Rabbi Yoram Abargel of blessed memory explained the following ('Imrei Noam,' Bo, Essay 2):

In our Torah portion, Parshat Bo, the Holy One, blessed be He, commands the people of Israel to take a lamb on the tenth of the month of Nisan and keep it in their home until the fourteenth day of the month, when they are meant to slaughter it as the Pesach offering.

#### Rashi explains:

Why did G-d require they take it four days before its slaughter, something that He did not command in future generations?

Rabbi Matya ben Charash said: It is because it is written, "And I passed over you and saw you, and

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now? I have a meeting scheduled in two days time with government ministers who are going to rule on the issuance of the decree. What will I show them now?!"

For a lengthy duration of time he continued to scream, curse, and rage, and in his tremendous fury he violently struck the Rebbe Rayatz on the face.

The Rebbe Rayatz fled from Krepes's office and immediately returned to Lubavitch to inform his father of the successful efforts in the cancellation of the decree.

A short while later, Krepes became severely ill and he died not long thereafter ('Rabboteinu Nesieinu', Part 2 – page 96).

Parashat Bo - The Time of Redemption Arrived

behold your time was the time of love" (Yechezkel 16:8). propitious time had arrived to fulfill the oath that I swore to Avraham to redeem his children. But they had no mitzvot in their "possession' with which to occupy themselves in which merit they were to be redeemed, as it is written, "And you were naked and bare" (ibid., verse 7), so He gave them two mitzvot: the blood of the Pesach and the blood of circumcision which they performed that night, as it says, "You were wallowing in your blood" (ibid., 6), in the two forms of blood. It also says, "Also, through the blood of your covenant, I have freed your prisoners from the pit in which there was no water" (Zechariah 9:11).

After thev circumcised themselves and slaughtered the Pesach offering, the Holy One, blessed be He, performed a great and tremendous miracle on the night of Pesach, as described by the Targum of Yonatan ben Uziel:

"And I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me" (Shemot 19:4) - this teaches that the

Holy One, blessed be He, sent clouds of glory that lifted up the people of Israel, similar to how an eagle carries its chicks on its wings, and flew them from Egypt to the Temple in Jerusalem, where Jewish people joyously conducted the Seder night with joy and songs and ate from the Pesach offering as they were commanded. Afterwards, on that very night, the clouds returned them to Egypt.

of the mitzvah οf Part slaughtering the lamb for the Pesach offering included the command that the people of Israel collect the lamb's blood in a vessel and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of their houses, as it says:

"They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they shall eat it" (Shemot 12:7).

Yet the details of this commandment contain quite a wonder: When Moshe Rabbeinu conveyed this commandment to the people of Israel, he changed the order of what G-d had commanded.

Parashat Bo - The Time of Redemption Arrived

G-d said to Moshe: "They shall take.. the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel." - First on the doorposts and afterward on the lintel.

When Moshe, however, transmitted this commandment to the Jewish people, he said to them:

"Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and apply it to the lintel and to the two doorposts" (ibid., verse 22), reversing the order and mentioning the lintel first and only then the doorposts.

This requires some explanation. After all, there was no one as exacting and meticulous in fulfilling G-d's commands as Moshe Rabbeinu, who transmitted G-d's word to the Jewish people precisely as he received them, without any alterations or changes, Heaven forbid. Why, then, did Moshe Rabbeinu alter the order?

Indeed, we find an insightful commentary on this matter by the Kli Yakar (Shemot 12:7):

The two doorposts correspond to Moshe and Aharon - the right

doorpost corresponds to Moshe, and the left to Aharon. The upper lintel that overlooks from above corresponds to the Holy One, blessed be He, who looks down upon the entire world, as it is said, "For He looked down from His holy heights, G-d gazed from heaven to earth" (Tehillim 102:20).

The Holy One, blessed be He, commanded Moshe to relate and tell the people of Israel to first apply the blood on the two doorposts and only afterward on the lintel to demonstrate and show them that the Holy One, blessed be He, accords great honor to the sages and places their honor even before His own.

However, Moshe Rabbeinu, in his great humility, when transmitting the commandment to the people of Israel, was embarrassed and felt ill at ease to hint to his own honor before that of the Holy One, blessed be He, and therefore mentioned that G-d's command was to apply the blood first to the lintel and only afterward to the doorposts, thus placing the honor of the Holy One, blessed be He,

first and foremost.

Parashat Bo - Elevation Through Moshe and Aharon

With regard to what the people of Israel actually did in practice, the Torah testifies:

"The Children of Israel went and did as G-d commanded Moshe and Aharon" (Shemot 12:28).

The people of Israel first applied the blood to the doorposts and only afterward on the lintel, as the Holy One, blessed be He, had in fact commanded Moshe, not in the order that Moshe had presented them.

In other words, they fulfilled the will of the Creator, blessed

be He, and accorded great honor to the sages and great Torah scholars.

Thus, when the Holy One, blessed be He, came to redeem the Jewish people from Egypt and gave them the mitzvot of the Pesach offering and circumcision, the Holy One, blessed be He, also hinted to another mitzvah through which, they would be worthy of redemption: mitzvah of honoring the sages Moshe and Aharon - and having awe and respect for them.

### **Elevation Through Moshe and Aharon**

The people of Israel understood internalized and the divine message, and therefore, when they took the lamb into their home, they also took to heart to internally connect themselves to Moshe and Aharon, the leaders and spiritual giants of the generation.

In the words of Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, of blessed memory:7

"And the Children of Israel went and did as G-d had commanded Moshe and Aharon, so they did" (Shemot 12:28). The Mechilta expounds: "So they did' - this includes Moshe and Aharon as well."

The additional phrase "So they did" does not merely teach us that Moshe and Aharon also performed

Parashat Bo - Elevation Through Moshe and Aharon

the Pesach offering - that is quite obvious, being that they told all of the Jewish people to do so.

The intention of the verse is to teach us that the Jewish people joined and participated in this mitzvah together with Moshe and Aharon and conditioned their performance of the mitzvah that it be done according to the intent that they - Moshe and Aharon - had received directly from the Divine Presence, and through this, their mitzvot were elevated to a very great level."

To explain this from yet an additional angle:

As above mentioned, in order to be redeemed, the Jewish nation was in need of merits, and for this purpose G-d gave them two positive commandments.

However, for a mitzvah to be properly fulfilled, it must infuse and encompass all of the dimensions of a person: action, speech, intention, and the feeling of the heart.

Alas, in Egypt the people of Israel were immersed in the impurity of Egypt, and the spiritual intention and the feeling of the heart were unattainable to them. Even those righteous individuals who could relate to such concepts, certainly could not attain the spiritual depth of a mitzvah as Moshe and Aharon did.

Therefore, they connected themselves to be united with Moshe and Aharon, and thus, the mitzvah they performed would be joined and infused with the feeling of heart of Moshe and Aharon, and thus, their mitzvah too, would be completed in its entirety, to the lofty standards and ideals and with the holiness of Moshe and Aharon.

Consequently, the forces of impurity could not tamper their mitzvah that involved Moshe and Aharon, and it was received on High with mercy and favor.

There was yet an additional benefit:

By connecting themselves with Moshe and Aharon, they were able to disengage from the vitality of Egypt and receive a new spiritual vitality and light from the souls of Moshe and Aharon.

Parashat Bo - The World Created with the Attribute of Mercy

Let us now return to the commentary of the Gaon of Vilna, who wrote that the four hundred years of "bondage" which began with Yitzchak's birth, came to an end on the day of Shabbat HaGadol, the Shabbat before their exodus from Egypt, with the taking of the Paschal lamb into the home.

The connection between taking the offering and the redemption from Egypt is now clear:

The essence of the Egyptian exile was the enslavement to the vitality of Egypt, while redemption said enslavement from the consisted of receiving a new lease on life and to be freed to breathe pure spiritual air of freedom, and this was afforded to them through the divine vitality they received from Moshe and Aharon.

From the very moment that they took the Pesach offering to their homes in fulfillment of the divine command, the Jewish people merited to truly and deeply connect to Moshe and Aharon.

# The World Created with the Attribute of Mercy

"What tremendous spiritual power that must have been," Yossi thought to himself. "It's a shame I didn't live at that period of time. At least once I would have performed a mitzvah properly and completely."

These thoughts troubled him, and he consulted with his rabbi. who informed him that these spiritual heights are within reach today as well.

This will be understood with a preface:

When G-d desired to create His world, He initially wished to create it with the Attribute of Judgement. He perceived, however, that the world would not exist in this manner and added to it the Attribute of Mercy.

In the Torah this is hinted at in the verses of creation: "In the beginning, the L-rd (Elokim) created the heavens and the earth" (Bereishit 1:1). The name "Elokim" is associated with the Attribute of Judgement.

Parashat Bo - The World Created with the Attribute of Mercy

But afterwards, it states: "This is the chronology of the creation of the heavens and the earth when they were created, on the day that G-d, the L-rd (Hashem, Elokim), made the earth and the heavens" (Bereishit 2:4).

Here, the creation of the heavens and earth are associated with both names Hashem and Elokim - Hashem (the Tetragrammaton) the divine Name of Mercy and "Elokim" which is associated with the Attribute of Judgement - being that the world was indeed created by the Name and attribute of Mercy as well.

Moreover, this divine name of Mercy preceded the Name Elokim of Judgement.

In the words of Rashi: "In the beginning, the L-rd (Elokim) created' - and it does not say 'G-d created,' for initially, it arose in the divine will to create the world with the Attribute of Judgement. He perceived that the

world would not endure thus, so He preceded the Attribute of Mercy and joined it together with the Attribute of Judgement. This is what is later written: 'On the day that G-d, the L-rd made the earth and the heavens.'"

This integration and merging of the divine Mercy in Creation bestowed us many great benefits, one example being the ability of the righteous to reveal G-dliness in the world.

We bring in this context the words of the righteous Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, of blessed memory:8

"Our Sages declare that initially it was intended to create the world with the Attribute of Judgement, but upon the realization that the world could not thus exist, He added to it the Attribute of Mercy, namely, the revelation of G-dliness through the righteous."

The explanation is as follows:<sup>9</sup> The Name Elokim is the Name of

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<sup>8.</sup> Tanya – Shaar HaYichud VeHaEmunah (Chapter 5).

<sup>9.</sup> See 'Biur HaTanya' (ibid., page 96) by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel.

Parashat Bo - How to Study Torah

divine Judgement and Severity, which contracts and conceals the Divine light and presence both inwardly as well as outwardly.

If the world would have been created the way that G-d initially desired to, under the dominion of the Attribute of Judgement, the divine would presence have remained hidden and concealed. We would not have been able to have ever perceived manifestations of Divine light in the world; we would be entirely grasped and enveloped limitation, materiality and bv largely forgetting G-dliness.

G-d saw that if the world were created in such a manner, it would be too difficult for his creations to serve Him. The concealment would be too great. Therefore, He included the Attribute of Mercy in

Creation, through which flashes of light appear within the double and redoubled darkness of concealment; rays of the light that lies beyond occasionally sparkle within the darkness.

Walking in this world is akin to a person who walks in complete darkness, and their path is suddenly lit up by a lightning flash for a brief moment, illuminating the world before the darkness sets in again.

For one short moment, the person gains a bit of orientation - where he stands and in what direction to go - giving him the strength to continue on his path.

These G-dly revelations appear in our world through the work of the righteous, whose souls perceive beyond the limits of our natural world

# **How to Study Torah**

We have all heard much about the greatness of the holy Torah and the lofty qualities it bestows upon those who learn and study it.

However, many times we learn, yet do not feel that we are

progressing or achieving significant strides in our studies.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, of blessed memory, addressed this issue and explained that for the light of the Torah to be revealed in

Parashat Bo - How to Study Torah

a person, he must connect himself to the righteous individual whose Torah he is currently studying.<sup>10</sup>

If this connection is made with love and profound humility, one will merit to draw upon himself a revelation of G-dliness during his Torah learning:<sup>11</sup>

"When a person learns in holiness and purity a law and ruling that a Tanna innovated, one attains a state of "Neshikin (kisses), which is the adhesion of 'rucha berucha' - one spirit with another; this ruling was the Tanna's speech and vitality, as it is written: 'l'nefesh chayah' - a living soul (Bereishit 2:7), which is translated in Aramaic as 'l'ruach memalela' - a speaking spirit.

When the Tanna innovated some teaching and spoke of this novel concept, the speech itself is an aspect of the Oral Torah he innovated, and now when one learns this concept, reciting this study and concept verbally, one is attached to the Tanna's spirit - through the speech of the learning of this concept.

This adhesion of spirit to spirit is called 'Neshikin' - kisses. And when learning a halachah that the Tannaim innovated, the Tanna's spirit clings to the learner's spirit, as though he is actually kissing the Tanna."

"Do you understand?" the Rabbi said to Yossi. "You too can attain tremendous levels of holiness if you study Torah with true connection to tzaddikim; even the level of prophecy is not beyond reach, just as we find with the Jewish people in Egypt,

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**10.** Rabbi Ze'ev of Zbarazh, of blessed memory, before beginning to study a section of the Gemara, would prepare himself with extensive spiritual preparation that lasted several days.

Afterward, when he would learn and mention the name of an Amora (Talmudic Sage) mentioned in the particular passage,

that Amora would appear to him and teach him the difficult matters related to that passage, including all of the questions and answers associated with it ('Torat HaMaggid MiZlotchov', page 308, section 12).

**11.** Likutei Moharan (Part 1, Torah 12, section 1).

Parashat Bo - How to Study Torah

who, due to their belief in Moshe, merited a great deal of prophecy.

To quote Rabbi Elazar of Lizhensk:12

"Behold, we find in the Song of the Sea that it is written: 'And they believed in G-d and in Moshe His servant.'

Of what significance is the fact that the Jewish people believed in Moshe?

Indeed this was the fulfillment of G-d's promise to Moshe: 'And they will also believe in you forever' (Exodus 19:9), but what did Moshe gain from this?

Did he desire at all that the Jewish people believe in him? Did he not wish no more than their belief in G-d?"

Rather, the holy Torah reveals something of great importance here.

G-d's intention by bringing us out of Egypt was for us to receive the Torah.

To be worthy, the Jewish people had to be refined sevenfold like purified silver, hence all of those spiritual events - the splitting of the sea and all the other miracles.

Moshe Rabbeinu, by virtue of these experiences sanctified himself until he attained the highest level of prophecy and ascended on high to bring down the Torah to the Jewish people.

However, clearly, not all of the Jewish people could be on Moshe's level of prophecy and receive the Torah directly at that same prophetic level. But since they believed in Moshe and were deeply connected to him, he was able to bestow upon them a sacred and holy spirit, raising them up to his level, so to speak.

Thus, through this unity and connection with Moshe, they too, could all receive the Torah."

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Parashat Bo - Hishtatchut - Connection to Tzaddikim Who Have Passed

# Hishtatchut - Connection to Tzaddikim Who Have Passed

The Mitteler Rebbe of Chabad, the righteous Rabbi Dovber, penned an entire treatise, 'Kuntres HaHishtatchut' (The Treatise on Prostration), to extensively explain the lofty concept of prostrating oneself at the graves of tzaddikim.

The Rebbe details the virtues of hishtatchut in five ascending categories and elaborates upon each one.

We will focus on the fourth level, which is essentially about faith, which the Baal Shem Tov described thus: 13 "Faith is attachment, and attachment is unification."

One who comes to the resting place of a tzaddik, and his heart overflows with faith in the righteousness of the tzaddik, can merit an attachment of 'rucha berucha' - spirit-to-spirit - through which one can attain lofty and exalted levels.

To quote from the 'Kuntres HaHishtatchut':

"Through powerful attachment of faith in the tzaddik's soul from the innermost point of one's heart, one's soul can attach to an aspect of the tzaddik's soul resting there.

As a result, one's prayer, offered there, ascends on high together with the ascent of the tzaddik's soul, and one's prayer can then bear fruit both above and below in this world; this is the faith in the righteous and of the people who travel to their graves."

In this connection we bring what the Rebbe Rayatz related:

"When I was in our Holy Land, I heard people say among themselves: 'I went to the Rashbi and now I'm going to Rabbi Elazar' or 'I visited Rabbi Chiya and now I'm going to Rabbi Akiva.' when these words are

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**13.** Quoted in 'Netiv Mitzvotecha' (Netiv HaYichud, 4:4) by Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Komarna.

Parashat Bo - Hishtatchut - Connection to Tzaddikim Who Have Passed

said sincerely, this is genuinely the concept of hishtatchut."

When a person arrives at the resting place of a tzaddik, he should be filled with immense joy, as though he found a great

treasure, and he must be deeply grateful that G-d in His abundant mercy enabled him to reach the tomb of the tzaddik, where he can experience a tremendous spiritual elevation and great sanctity.

#### **Shabbat Shalom!**



Parashat Bo - Summary and Practical Conclusions

# **Summary and Practical Conclusions**

We find ourselves currently in exile - both physically and spiritually.

Physically, the nations enslave us, cause us distress, and issue harsh decrees.

Spiritual exile is characterized by the influence of the gentile nations on our perspectives, opinions, and mindset.

2. The physical exile stems and is rooted in the spiritual exile.

Therefore, only if we exhibit and experience some feeling of importance towards the nations under whose dominion we exist, and this takes root in our hearts - only if we submit to them and are influenced by them due to their perceived superiority - do they have the possibility to rule over us physically.

3. Therefore, the way out of physical exile and to redemption is through exiting the spiritual exile.

If we succeed in isolating ourselves from the undesirable influence of the nations among whom we dwell, and they hold no importance in our eyes, we will succeed in removing their dominion from upon us.

4. Freedom from spiritual exile is possible through connecting to the tzaddikim.

By connecting to tzaddikim with faith, love, and humility, we merit to detach from impure forces and vitality and we receive a renewed vitality.

5. It is very important that a person who studies Torah, connect themselves to the tzaddik whose Torah they study.

Through this, one merits that the holy light of the Torah will be drawn upon them, and that the tzaddik, to whom he has attached himself will teach him how to repent and amend his ways which were lost in darkness.

6. G-d's will is that the people of Israel accord great honor and awe upon Torah scholars, sages, and the righteous of the generation just as they honor and fear G-d Himself.

Parashat Bo - Summary and Practical Conclusions

Moreover, G-d places the honor of the sages of Israel before His honor and is own more particular and stringent about a breach in their honor than of His own honor.

Therefore, a person must be exceedingly careful with the honor of the sages and Torah scholars of the generation, and to follow all their instructions precisely.

Through this, their home will be protected from all harm, and will be filled with abundant blessing, success, robust health, and all good things. Amen!

#### Shabbat Shalom!



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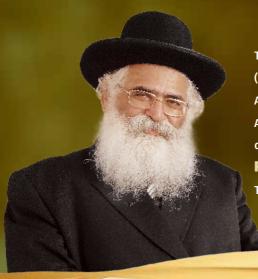
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New York	4:55 pm	5:57 pm	6:26 pm
Miami	5:46 pm	6:40 pm	7:17 pm
Los Angeles	5:05 pm	6:03 pm	6:36 pm
Montreal	4:42 pm	5:48 pm	6:13 pm
Toronto	5:10 pm	6:14 pm	6:41 pm
London	4:30 pm	5:43 pm	6:02 pm
Jerusalem	4:57 pm	5:49 pm	6:23 pm
Tel Aviv	4:53 pm	5:45 pm	6:19 pm
Haifa	4:51 pm	5:46 pm	6:20 pm
Be'er Sheva	4:55 pm	5:49 pm	6:23 pm

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HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l With any challenge we encounter, we must dedicate significant effort and time-whether it is raising our sons and daughters in the path of the Torah, ensuring he becomes an upstanding Torah scholar or that she establishes a family that follows the proper path of Judaism. The full reward for our efforts will come in the afterlife, at the conclusion of one's life, when it will be clear whether a person was truly a servant of G-d. At that moment, everything will be evident, but it will no longer be possible to change or influence the



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