

Parashat Bo - 'Come' (Exodus 10:1-13:16)

The title for the this week's Scripture portion comes from the first verse of this Scripture portion.

Vayomer HaShem el-Moshe bo el-paro ki-ani hichbaddi et-libo v'et-lev avadav l'maan shiti ototai ele b'kirbo.

HaShem said to Moses, 'Come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart, and the heart of his servants stubborn so that I can put these signs of Mine in his midst.'

(Stone Tanach translation)

The title of this week's Scripture portion comes from the Hebrew verb *Bo*. In biblical Hebrew it can mean "to come," or "to go." Many English versions translate *bo* as "go" in Exodus 10:1. The Stone Edition translates it as "come." The reasons become evident as you read this portion. This passage of Scripture is not about "going" - it is about "coming." Let me explain.

In last week's portion we were introduced to the way that G-d redeems His people. Studying those verses, we read of seven of the ten signs that G-d used to free Israel from bondage in Egypt. We understand them as "signs" and not plagues because that is what Scripture calls them, and it declares their purpose as such. They are *ot* [signs], just as the sun, moon, and stars are *ot*, declaring Who G-d is. Oh, they also are plagues [*nagaf* = to smite] - but our G-d does not amuse Himself in pouring out plagues upon people. These serve a purpose - they are **signs**. Read Romans chapter one, and you will understand the significance of this point.

We saw how the first three signs were experienced by both Israelites and Egyptians, but beginning with the sign of the swarms of wild beasts (often translated as "flies"), the Israelites were exempt from the horrible effects of the signs. Throughout last week's parasha, we read about seven signs. The first three: blood, frogs, and lice were shared by all who dwelt in Egypt. The next four: swarms of wild beasts, epidemic, boils, and hail were experienced only by the Egyptians.

This week's portion opens with a warning to Pharaoh, and then the last three signs. These last three, it turns out, were only experienced by the Egyptians as well. So in all the ten signs, only the first three were experienced by Israel - the remaining seven were entirely focused upon Egypt. There is something of a parallel in Revelation, in understanding the relationship between the last seven signs, and the seven bowls of plagues named there - but that is a study for another time. Our focus this week will be on these last three signs. They are different beloved - and it all has to do with the word, *bo* [come].

In the first seven signs, HaShem declares their purpose to be so that Egypt (and later the nations) will know Who He is.

And the Egyptians shall know that I am HaShem, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

Preceding the last three signs, G-d announces that their purpose is so that **Israel will know Who He is**. This is where we are reminded of the four "I wills." This is personal. HaShem is redeeming a people for **Himself**. In this entire process, it is as if HaShem is toying with the Egyptians and their gods as a display for *someone else*. The Holy One of Israel, blessed be He, is wooing His bride, and in this week's portion He makes the point. It as if He is saying, "*Come [bo], My beloved...*"

But first, He tells Moses, "*Come [bo] to Pharaoh...*" You see beloved, HaShem is not confined to a place, or to a "side." Like the Captain of the Hosts Who met Joshua on the plains of Jericho, HaShem is on **His** side - and He is inviting **us to join Him**. G-d's purposes were about humiliating the pseudo-deities of Egypt and their earthly servant, the Pharaoh. G-d told Moses to join Him in that endeavor. "*Come to [bo] Pharaoh...*"

The eighth sign was the sign of locusts. The ninth was the sign of darkness. Still, like "those who dwell on the earth" in Revelation, Pharaoh shakes his fist at the Almighty. It was time for the tenth sign. The sign of the death of the first born. This is the ultimate sign of redemption. This is the sign of Pesach, the Passover. These are the calls to Israel, "*Come [bo], My beloved...*"

*HaShem said to Moses, "**Come** to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, **that** I may show these signs of Mine before him, and **that** you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, **that** you may know that I am HaShem."*

Exodus 10:1-2

Notice the progression which reveals a primary purpose for the mighty wonders that G-d used in delivering His people from slavery in Egypt.

I have hardened [Pharaoh's] heart:

That I may show these signs of Mine

That you may tell in the hearing of your son and your son's son

That you may know that I am HaShem.

This week we will study the first Pesach, the first Passover. In it we see the pattern of the Redemption that our G-d brings for His own. We are often reminded of this pattern when we celebrate the Passover in our homes, as Messiah did with His family, His disciples. Every time we repeat the Passover account, we are reflecting upon the past, present, and future Redemption.

Many have forgotten Passover - replacing it with other things, and new man-made ordinances. In so doing, they obscure the truths of the Redemption of G-d. In so doing, they may one day be confused by what they see going on in the world around them: the birth pangs of Messiah. In so doing, they deafen the call that Messiah makes, "*Come [bo] My beloved...*"

And the Spirit, and the Bride answer, "*...Come [bo]...*"

*He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amein. Even so, **come** [bo], Yeshua Adoneinu.*

I believe with perfect faith in the coming of Messiah, and though He may tarry. I will wait for Him.

The Twelfth Principle of Faith
RAMBAM (Rav Moshe Ben Maimon 1135-1204 CE)

Ani Ma'amim [I believe]....

Bo. Come.

Haftarat Bo - 'Come' (Jeremiah 46:13-28)

This week's Torah portion details the final signs by which the Israelites were freed from their Egyptian captivity. The haftarah portion, like last week's, reflects upon G-d's judgment of Egypt. This prophecy of Jeremiah was concerning a later judgment than the one of the days of the Exodus. It seems that the plan of HaShem has patterns that are repeated. The fact is, national Israel is still in need of redemption - but Israel's enemies can still know for certain that the Almighty will bring vengeance upon them for touching His anointed people.

Like so many of these predictions of death and destruction upon the enemies of Israel, nestled within them there are words of comfort for Israel. Beloved, Israel has sinned, like all nations; but do not ever assume that Israel will be treated like all nations. No indeed. Judgment starts with the House of G-d - but the utter destruction of Israel will never occur. Nations come, and nations go - but Israel is forever, because the word of our G-d is forever. He ensures Israel's survival... forever.

This week's portion from the Prophets begins this way:

The word that HaShem spoke to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon would come and strike the land of Egypt. "Declare in Egypt, and proclaim in Migdol; proclaim in Noph and in Tahpanhes; Say, 'Stand fast and prepare yourselves, for the sword devours all around you.'

Jeremiah 46:12-14

Just like the days of the Exodus, so too, G-d does not permit Egypt to touch His anointed and to escape unscathed.

But judgment begins with the House of G-d.

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of G-d; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the good news of G-d? Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?

1Peter 4:17-18

Egypt had been G-d's instrument to chastise His people. Babylon would be His instrument to chastise His people. In the history of the world, there have been many nations used by HaShem

to chastise His people. The mistake would be to assume that those same nations can get away with persecuting His people. What irony.

Here is how our haftarah ends.

"But do not fear, O My servant Jacob, and do not be dismayed, O Israel! For behold, I will save you from afar, and your offspring from the land of their captivity; Jacob shall return, have rest and be at ease; no one shall make him afraid."

"Do not fear, O Jacob My servant," says HaShem, "For I am with you; for I will make a complete end of all the nations to which I have driven you, but I will not make a complete end of you. I will rightly correct you, for I will not leave you wholly unpunished."

Jeremiah 46:27-28

Many nations have risen up against Israel and subjugated her. They are gone, Israel remains. Many have said in ages past that the G-d of Israel was finished with Israel. They are gone, Israel remains. Even some so-called followers of Messiah have declared that Israel is no longer the chosen of G-d, because "they have rejected Christ." This is a dangerous and untenable position. It completely ignores one of the greatest facts of history. Those opposed to Israel in the past are all gone, Israel remains. It completely ignores the promises made to the Patriarchs. It completely ignores Scripture.

I say then, has G-d cast away His people? Certainly not!... G-d has not cast away His people whom He foreknew...

Romans 11:1a, 2a

Listen up! Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, take a number. "Palestinians," take a number. Iran, take a number. Replacement theologians, take a number. Anti-Semites all, take a number. Get in line. In the end you will discover as all have in the past: The G-d of Jacob may chastise His people - **but He will destroy those who hate them.**

I would suggest to all who fear the One true G-d to take heed to this **unconditional** and **eternal** word from the Creator of the Universe:

*I will **ble**ss those who bless you, and I will **cur**se him who curses you...*

Genesis 12:3a

Next week in our Torah reading, we will see the pinnacle of redemption from Egypt: the parting of the Sea of Reeds, and the Song of Moses. It seems appropriate at this time to remember that these patterns of the past play a role in G-d's redemptive pattern of the future.

*Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of G-d is complete. And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of G-d. **They sing the song of Moses, the servant of G-d, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are***

Your works, HaShem G-d Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the holy ones!"

Revelation 15:1-3

Prayer Focus for Bo - 'Ezrat Avoteinu' [Helper of our Forefathers]

When praying the Sh'ma for *shacharit* [the morning service], we have a number of blessings preceding and following the actual Sh'ma itself. One of those prayers is *Ezrat Avoteinu*, which praises G-d for our redemption from Egypt, and pledges our allegiance to Him forever. In this prayer, G-d is called "True" [*Emet*], and "the First and the Last." These titles are what John drew from in the revelation of Messiah in the book of Revelation.

The Helper of our forefathers are You alone, forever. Shield and Savior for their children after them in every generation. At the zenith of the universe is Your dwelling, and Your justice and Your righteousness extend to the ends of the earth. Praiseworthy is the person who obeys Your commandments and takes to his heart Your teaching and Your word.

True - You are the Master for your people and a mighty King to take up their grievance.

True - You are the First and You are the Last, and other than You we have no king, redeemer, or savior.

From Egypt You redeemed us, HaShem our G-d, and from the house of slavery You liberated us. All their firstborn You slew, but Your firstborn You redeemed; the Sea of Reeds You split; the wanton sinners You drowned; the dear ones You brought across; and the water covered their foes - not one of them was left. For this, the beloved ones praised and exalted G-d; the dear ones offered hymns, songs, praises, blessings, and thanksgivings to the King, the living and enduring G-d - exalted and uplifted, great and awesome, Who humbles the haughty and lifts the lowly; withdraws the captive, liberates the humble, and helps the poor; Who responds to His people upon their outcry to Him.

Praises to the Supreme G-d, the blessed One Who is blessed. Moses and the children of Israel exclaimed a song to You with great joy and they all said:

"Who is like you among the heavenly powers, HaShem! Who is like You, mighty in holiness, too awesome for praise, doing wonders."

With a new song, the redeemed ones praised Your Name at the seashore, all of them in unison gave thanks, acknowledged Your sovereignty, and said,

"HaShem shall reign for all eternity."

-- ArtScroll translation