

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Bo	20 Jan., 2018	4 Shevat 5778	Exod. 10:1-13:16	Jer. 46:13-28	John 19:31-37

Parashat Bo contains the last three plague that will lead to the end of 430 years of exile in preparation of entering the Promised Land as Hashem said, “To your offspring I will this land.”¹ Up until the seventh plague, the Pharaoh had the chance to choose his freewill to let go of Israelites from Mitzrayim. Until this moment, Hashem told Moshe, “to go to Pharaoh.” But now, Hashem says, “come to Pharaoh” which means “come with Me to Pharaoh.”²

The word “going” and “coming” has significant meaning: “Going” implies where home is. For example, we say, “I am going home.” “Coming,” on the other hand implies that one is moving his home, that he is going where he is going with his whole being. As we study Torah or in prayer, we are communing with Hashem. Therefore, our essence is “coming” to Hashem rather than “going” to Hashem. We are transcending our essence by “coming” to Hashem that can affect us and change us to holier status.

Let us examine a little closer to the plagues sent by Hashem. The first three plagues: Blood, frogs, and Lice demonstrates Hashem’s existence. The second three: The mixed horde, Epidemic, and inflammation of the Skin shows Hashem’s Providence. And the last three: Hail, Locusts, and darkness shows Hashem’s Power. Hashem is saying that “(1) I am YHVH. That I exist. (2) I am YHVH in the midst of the earth. That My providence pervades all creation. on the earth and the universe. (3) That there is none like Me in all the earth.” This explains why the lessons are given only for the first plague of each set of three and why the warnings follow a pattern repeated for each set of three.³

On 15th Sivan (May-June), 2447, Hashem tells Moses and Aaron to announce the first plague. Each plague lasted a month. Moses and Aaron spent three weeks of the month informing Pharaoh about what was going to happen and warning him of the consequences. The plague itself lasted a week. Thus, the 10 plagues spanned a time-period of 10 months.

Time	Plague	Warning or Announcement	Lesson for Pharaoh
8 Tammuz 2447 (June-July)	Blood Exod. 7:14-25	“Go to Pharaoh in the morning... Station yourself” – Exod. 7:15	“Through this you shall know that I am Hashem” – Exod. 7:17
8 Av 2447 (July-August)	Frogs	“Come to Pharaoh...”	None articulated
8 Elul 2447 (Aug - Sept)	Lice	No warning articulated	None articulated

¹ Genesis 12:7

² Zohar 2:34a

³ ibid, p. 46

8 Tishrei 2448 (Sept – Oct)	The Mixed Horde	“Rise early...Station yourself...”	“Thus you will realize that I am Hashem in the midst of the land.”
8 Marcheshvan 2448 (Oct – Nov)	Epidemic	“Come to Pharaoh...”	None articulated
8 Kislev 2448 (Nov – Dec)	Inflammation of the Skin	No warning articulated	None articulated
8 Tevet 2448 (Dec – Jan)	Hail	“Rise early...Station yourself...”	“So that you will know that there is none like Me in all the world.”
8 Shevat 2448 (Jan – Feb)	Locusts	“Come to Pharaoh...”	None articulated
8 Adar 2448 (Feb – Mar)	Darkness (lasted 6 days)	No warning articulated	None articulated
15 Nissan 2448 (Mar – Apr)	The Firstborn	Given while Moses and Aaron were already in Pharaoh’s presence.	“In order that you may know that Hashem in differentiating between the Egyptians and Israel.

The lesson we can learn from here is that no matter how estranged we may feel from Hashem, He will not shut the door to Him if our efforts are sincere to return to Him. He is inspiring us to summon a deeper and more powerful resolve to “come” to Him. The second lesson is no matter how far away or stray a person may be from Hashem, we must not give up on him. With true love and friendship, we can encourage him to mend his ways, and with Hashem’s help he will come back to his true, inner self.⁴

Rashi (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac) taught that during the ninth plague, the Israelites, four-fifth of population did not want to leave Egypt died first three days. The one-fifth of Israelites buried the dead during this period. Hashem did not want the Egyptians to think the Israelites was suffering same plague as they did.

In chapter 12, verse 1 “Hashem said to Moses and to Aaron in the land of Egypt saying: This month shall be for you the beginning of the months; the first it is for you of the months of the year,” which means the first day of Nissan. It is interesting that Hashem would start with beginning of the new month.

Rashi says, from Genesis 1:1 and all the way to Exodus 11:10 was a historical point or events to get to this chapter. This was the first commandment given by Hashem to the Israelites. He could have started with, “I am

⁴ Torah, the Book of Exodus, The Lubaviter Rebbe, p. 61

YHVH your Elohim. There will be no other elohim before you,” and other important commandments. Instead, Hashem starts with, “This month shall be for you the beginning of the months.”

An argument can be made that Hashem’s first commandment was “be fruitful and multiply”⁵ or to “circumcise.”⁶ The Sages teach that these commandments were given to all the people. But the commandment to sanctify the month was given to the Israelites as a community, a community who follows the will of Hashem.

Hashem is reminding us that on the first month of Nissan, He began to take the Israelites out from Egypt when they were at their lowest point of their life.

Until this point in history, Tishrei was considered the first month of the year. As the Sages teach that the world was created during Rosh Hashana. But now, Hashem is telling Moses that the first of Nissan will be the new year for Israelites to follow.

As we know, the moon calendar follows 29 ½ days a month for the total of 354 days whereas the Gregorian calendar uses the sun to calculate the month for the total of 365 days in a year. For this reason, the moon calendar resets every three years by including Adar II.

Rosh Chodesh is a technical mitzvah. It means we decide when the new month begins. Two witnesses look upon the sky and reports to Beit Din (House of Judges) who question them thoroughly to determine the new month. Once they were satisfied, they sanctify the month by declaring the new month.

Why do we need a calendar? Everything we do is defined by time. Hashem created space first then time. Time is needed to govern this world. For this reason, a calendar was made using the sun which is an easy cycle to follow for farming in ancient times. But the biblical calendar follows cycle of the moon.

Why did Hashem give mitzvot of Kiddush Chodesh, eat matzah, slaughter of animals? The Israelites were so steeped into the life of Egypt, they did not have any redeeming points to leave Egypt. Therefore, Hashem gave them the commandments, so they can have redeemable qualities.

Nothing is more important in human life than to get to know Hashem of the world. The more you get to know Him, you know what to do and not to do. Everything that we have or we don’t have is decided by Hashem. It is not decided by random roulette. Whether we like it or not, we actually brought it on ourselves. Every sickness, every prophecy, every agony or pain, sadness, fatigue, we at one point in our life, or previous life, we are responsible for it. We created the situation and brought it upon ourselves.

For example, King Saul was a righteous king. He made few mistakes, mainly with King David. He killed the priest. But at the conclusion of his life, he was righteous king. Some commentators say that he was more righteous than King David. What was very special about him? King Saul was a very modest person. It is not that he dressed modestly, i.e., covering his arm. But he was modest toward women on how he looks, talk, think toward them. Because of his modesty, he had two grandchildren, Mordechai and Esther that saved the entire Yahudim during the exile five hundred years later.

⁵ Genesis 1:28

⁶ Genesis 16:11