

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	KETUVIM
Bo	12 Jan 2019	6 Shevat 5779	Exo. 10:1-13:16	Jer .46:13-28	John 19:31-37

In this week's Torah portion, Bo (Come) contains last three of the plagues, locusts, darkness, and the slaying of the firstborn which led to the exodus from Mitzrayim. It also contains commandments to sanctify the New Moon which is the basis for the festival cycle and the Moon calendar; the laws of Pesach, the sanctification of the firstborn; the mitzvah to tell the story of exodus. So, let us discuss about money. It is said, "Speak now in the hearing of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor, objects of silver and objects of gold. And YHWH gave the people favor in the eyes of the Mitsrites." (Shemot 11:2-3) "And YHWH gave the people favor in the eyes of the Mitsrites, so that they gave them what they asked, and they plundered the Mitsrites." (12:36)

On pashat level, we could make following arguments: (1) Hashem created situations which favored the Yisraelites by placing fear in the Mitsrites. The Ten Plagues (Shemot 7:15-12:29) (2) The Yisraelites conned the Mitsrites that they would return three days later. (Shemot 3:27; 8:27) (3) Hashem is teaching us that it is alright to lie, steal, and cheat. Hashem forbid.

Why the handout? What would money do in the desert? If Hashem wanted you to have money, why ask for it? Do we not have enough trust in Hashem that He will provide the money for us? In Beresheet 15:14 says, "But the nation whom they serve I am going to judge, and afterward let them come out with great possessions." In Shemot 3:21, "And it shall be, that when you go, you shall not go empty-handed." In Shemot 11:2, "And let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor, objects of silver and objects of gold."

This has become a contention¹ 1,500 years later when the Mitsrites contended with Yisrael before Alexander the Macedonian who said, "And Hashem gave the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians and then lent them gold and silver and other valuables, which the Jews never returned. Thus, we claim from the Jews: "Give us the silver and gold that you took from us!" Geviha ben Pesisa responded, "Give us, then, the wages for the labor of the 600,000 men that you enslaved in Egypt for 430 years." The president of Egypt, Anwar el-Sadat (1970-1981) also wanted "gold and silver" that the Yisraelites took during the exodus.

We learned from previous parashat that Hashem is "measure for measure." The word, "pharaoh" can also be translated "*pha.reck*" meaning "soft mouth". The Pharaoh tricked the children of Ya'akov with his mouth that eventually led to slavery. The sages teach that we create the world we live in. For example, we want perfection from others without examining ourselves first. So, the taking of "silver and gold" is not about the loss wages, it is about giving back the dignity, pride, and honor back to the people.

The Kabbalah goes further that it is a mitzvah to work as it is said, "For six days you shall labor and do all your work." (Shemot 20:9) That the money is given to us so that we can do mitzvot to overcome the desires of our inclination. The Gemara teaches that Ya'akov returned to the ford to pick up a jar of oil that he left behind. We are here on this earth so that we can connect our physicality with spirituality above.

In Beresheet 1:2 says, "And the Spirit of Elohim was moving (hovering) on the face of the waters." The Hebrew word for "hovering" is '*me.ra.che.fet*' (מְרַחֵף). It is a compound word '*ra.chef*' (fell) and '*met*'

¹ BT, Sanhedrin 91a

(death; died). ‘*Ra.chef*’ has a numerical value of 288 (80+8+200 פ,ח,פ). There were 288 ‘godly sparks’ that fell (died) into the water. The majority of ‘godly sparks’ fell into Mitsrayim. Therefore the children of Ya’akov had to go to Mitsrayim to elevate these ‘sparks’ to the heaven above. When the people left Mitsrayim, they came out with “mixed multitude” (*erev rav*; עֶרֶב רַב), with ‘*rav*’ (many; great) having the numerical value of 202. Now, there remains 86 ‘godly sparks’ which has same numerical value of Elokim (אֱלֹהִים, 40+10+5+30+1), and these ‘sparks’ (silver and gold) were used to build the Tabernacle in the desert.