

A Hasidic Lens on *Parshat Bo*

Excerpted from *Iturey Torah* (Aharon Yaakov Greenberg, Yavneh, Tel Aviv, 1977) by Rabbi Lester Bronstein, Bet Am Shalom, White Plains NY

1. *And the Eternal said to Moses, "Come to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show these My signs before him. (Exodus 10:1)*
 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל־פְּרַעֲהוֹ כִּי־אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת־לִבּוֹ וְאֶת־לֵב עֲבָדָיו לְמַעַן שְׁתִּי אֶתְתִּי אֱלֹה בְּקִרְבּוֹ:

From Menahem Mendl Morgenstern of Kotzk (1787-1859):

“Come to Pharaoh” – The Torah does not say *lekh*, “go” to Pharaoh, but *bo*, “come” to Pharaoh. [The reason is] because one cannot “go” from the Blessed Holy One. It is impossible to distance oneself from God, because God exists in every *makom*/place. “The whole earth is full of God’s *kavod*/glory.” (Isaiah 6:3) Therefore [God] says here, “come,” as if to say, “come with me, *hineni*/I am here with you wherever you go.”

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל פְּרַעֲהוֹ... לֵךְ אֶל פְּרַעֲהוֹ אִין כְּתִיב כֹּאן אֵלֵּא „בֹּא אֶל פְּרַעֲהוֹ” — כִּי מִן הַקְּבִי"ה אִין הוֹלְכִים, אִי אִפְשֵׁר לְהִתְרַחֵק מִמֶּנּוּ. הוּא נִמְצָא בְּכֹל מְקוֹם, מֵלֹא כֹל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ. לְכֹן אָמַר כֹּאן „בֹּא” כְּלוֹמַר: בֹּא אֲתִי, הִנְנִי אֲתָךְ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ. ר' מ' סְקוּצָא

2. *Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them, "Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and slaughter the Pesach." (Exodus 12:21)*
 וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְכָל־זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מִשְׁכּוֹ וַיִּקְחוּ לָכֶם צֹאן לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתֵיכֶם וְשַׁחֲטוּ הַפֶּסַח:

From Yehuda Leib Alter of Ger, the Sefas Emes (1847-1905):

“Draw out and take you a lamb” – It appears that the generation of those who left Egypt was a generation of great people [“the greatest generation”?]. It was not an easy task to leave the service of Pharaoh and enter that of God at the drop of a hat.

On the verse, “draw out and take you a lamb,” our Sages tell us that the verse means “draw your hands forth from idolatry,” that there were Jews who had been deeply involved in idolatry, and it was very difficult for them to give this up (Mekhilta). But immediately afterwards we are told that “neither had they prepared for themselves any provisions (12:39),” that within a short space of time these same idolaters had become such great believers in God that they had not even bothered to prepare provisions for the way.

מִשְׁכּוֹ וַיִּקְחוּ לָכֶם צֹאן... נִרְאֶה שְׂדוּר גְּלוּת מִצְרַיִם הָיָה דוּר שֶׁל אַנְשִׁים גְּדוּלִים. לְצִאת בְּשַׁעַת קֵלָה מְכַלֵּל עַבְדֵי פְּרַעֲהוֹ וְלְהִיכַנֵּס לְכָלֵּל צֶבֶא ה' לֹא מִלְתָּא זוֹטְרָתָא הִיא. עַל הַכְּתוּב „מִשְׁכּוֹ וַיִּקְחוּ לָכֶם צֹאן” — דְּרִשׁוּ חוּז"ל (מְכִילְתָּא) „מִשְׁכּוֹ יִדְיָכֶם מֵעַבֹּדָה זֹרָה, כִּי הָיוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂטוּפִים בְּעַבֹּדָה זֹרָה וְקִשָּׁה הָיָה לָהֶם לְפָרוֹשׁ מִמֶּנָּה. וּמִיד אַחַר זֶה נֹאמַר: „וְגַם צֹדָה לֹא עָשׂוּ לָהֶם” (יב, לט), תוֹךְ שַׁעַת קֵלָה הִפְכוּ וְהִגִּיעוּ לְאַמוּנָה גְּדוּלָה בַּה' שֶׁאִפִּילוּ צִידָה לְדֶרֶךְ לֹא הִכִּינוּ לָהֶם. שֶׁפֶת אַמַּת



3. *And you shall explain to your child on that day, 'It is because of what the Eternal did for me when I went free from Egypt.' And it shall be a sign for you on your hand... (Exodus 13:8-9)*

והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה יהוה לי בצאתי ממצרים: והיה לך לאות עליך...

From She'arit Menachem (source unclear):

“And you shall explain to your child” – “...and it shall be a sign for you on your hand (13:9).” This verse is the basis of *she-eyno yodea lish'ol* “the one who does not know how to ask.” But regarding the *tam* “simple” child the verse is: “...and it shall be a sign on your hand,” but without the word “for you.” And why is this so?

It is possible to say that a child who does not know how to ask, who has no clue or concept of Judaism, is so on account of that child’s parents. The reason is that the parents’ home is void of any Jewish content. So “it shall be a sign for you” refers to the parent. Note that any sign or remembrance from Judaism would be recognizable to *you*, in *your* household, in *your* manner of personal conduct. [Were this the case], then you would not have a child who does not know how to ask, for in any case the child would have a trace of Jewish experience, and would at least know what to ask.

והגדת לבנך... והיה לך לאות על ירך... פסוק זה נאמר ב... שאינו יודע לשאול, ואילו אצל התם כתיב: והיה לאות על ירך ולא נאמר לך, ומדוע? — ואפשר לומר: בן שאינו יודע לשאול, שאין לו כל מושג ועניין ביהדות, הגורם לכך הוא האב, הסיבה היא הבית המרוקן מכל תוכן יהודי. והיה לך לאות נאמר לאב: ראה שאיזה אות וזכר מיהדות יהיה ניכר ונראה בך, בביתך ובהתנהגותך, ואז לא יהיה לך בן שאינו יודע לשאול, כי על כל פנים ידע שמץ מיהדות וידע לפחות על מה לשאול. לפי שארית מנחם

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