

# The Irrefutable IMPRINT OF G-D

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## Weekly Torah Video Series: Parshas Bo

**Featured Video:** The Slippery Slope: From Clarity to Confusion

### The Gradual Extraction from Bondage to Freedom

1. Midrash: The Jews acquired wealth at 3 junctures.
2. A: When the water in Egypt turned to blood the Egyptians purchased water from the Jews.
3. B: Leaving Egypt they borrowed silver & gold vessels from the Egyptians.
4. The 3rd juncture was at the Red Sea.
5. The sea cast the remains of the Egyptians & diamond & gold bedecked chariots onto the seashore.
6. Midrash: The spoils of the sea were greater than the spoils of Egypt.
7. Why was it necessary for the Jews to become wealthy through the sale of the water if they were leaving Egypt with the wealth they borrowed leaving?
8. Each Juncture had another value.
9. Egyptians needed water to live; selling the water, the Jews dictated mastership over their masters.
10. They were elevated with a sense of self worth & had special favor in the eyes of the Egyptians.
11. The Egyptian felt privileged to lend his valuable possession to the Jew.
12. This gave the Jew a sense of value that did not understand he had.
13. The spoils of the sea were specific for the building of the Mishkan.
14. When told to build a sanctuary for Him to dwell in their midst there was no hesitation to do the Mitzvah.

### The Absurdity of the Intransigence of One Who has been Beaten

1. Moshe & Aaron say to Pharaoh "To what point do you refuse to submit before me".
2. To submit in Hebrew is "Leianos".
3. Rashi: The root of the word Leianos is "Aani" – impoverished.
4. You refuse to behave like a poor man who is naturally low spirited & humble.
5. Gemara: G-d despises a poor man who is arrogant.
6. Although haughtiness & arrogance are negative traits, when attributed to financial status or accomplishment it can be tolerated.
7. The poor man, dependent on others, should be humble.
8. Pharaoh witnessed 7 Plagues that could not be denied as the hand of G-d.
9. Egypt has been traumatized & reduced to rubble by the plague of Hail.
10. Pharaoh should now understand that he is a beneficiary not a benefactor.
11. His realization should be no less than the poor man who is humble.
12. Moshe uses the term "Leianos" (impoverished) for "submit" and "low spirited".

## Weekly Torah Commentaries Series: Parshas Bo



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### G-d's Restoration of the Jewish People

The Midrash tells us that the Jewish people amassed wealth on three occasions: during the plague of blood, when they borrowed the silver and gold vessels from their Egyptian masters, and from the spoils of the Sea.

The Torah tells us that the first of the Ten Plagues that came upon Egypt was the plague of blood. All the water of Egypt was transformed into blood. The Jewish people were not affected by this plague. If an Egyptian needed water, he had to purchase it from the Jew. If the Egyptian would take the water from the Jew without payment, it would turn to blood.

The second occasion that the Jewish people amassed wealth was when they borrowed the precious silver and gold vessels of their Egyptian masters. The Jewish people were told before the tenth plague to borrow precious vessels and garments from their Egyptian masters.

This accumulation of wealth, due to their borrowing, was the fulfillment of the promise that G-d had given to Avraham our Patriarch at the Covenant Between the Parts. The verse states, **You shall know that your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not their own... The nation that will enslave them will be judged, and then they will go out with great wealth.**

If the Jewish people would have been redeemed from bondage and not amassed the great wealth that they had borrowed from their Egyptian masters, Avraham our Patriarch would have said that G-d fulfilled the

first half of the Covenant; however, He did not fulfill the second half regarding the great wealth.

The third occasion the Jewish people amassed even greater wealth was after the Sea had closed upon the Egyptian armies that were pursuing them. The Sea cast out the remains of the Egyptians along with their horses and chariots upon the seashore. The chariots and horses were bedecked with gold and precious jewels from the treasures of Pharaoh.

Chazal tell us that the spoils of the Sea were greater than the spoils that they had taken when they left Egypt. Although each Jew had left Egypt with no less than forty pack animals of gold and silver, the spoils at the Sea were even greater.

If the Covenant that G-d had made with Avraham was fulfilled through the borrowing of the silver and gold vessels, why was it necessary for the Jewish people to be given the opportunity to accumulate even greater wealth at the Sea?

In order for the Jewish people to gradually extricate themselves and transition from their state of bondage to a state of freedom, they needed to undergo an internal process that evolved. This process was a prerequisite to becoming G-d's holy people at Sinai.

Since the Jewish people had been enslaved and were regarded as lowly chattel, they needed to regain their standing and appreciate their own

self-worth. The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos tells us that wealth is referred to as y'kum (to stand). Why is it called this? It is because wealth allows one to stand on his own feet. When one has wealth, one feels secure. At this point in time, it was necessary for the Jew to feel secure and empowered.

During the plague of blood, the Egyptian master needed to turn to his Jewish slave to purchase water from him in order to live. The Jew was thus in a position to dictate life and death to his master. If the Egyptian was willing to pay for the water, it would remain water and he would live. This interaction between the Jew and the Egyptian was an empowerment for the Jew.

Although the Jewish people had become wealthy at the time of the plague of blood, their self-esteem and status as free men needed to be restored. This was brought about as a result of the Jew being seen as special in the eyes of his master. This occurred when the Egyptians felt privileged to lend their most precious possessions to the Jewish people. As it states, **"G-d said to Moshe, Please speak in the ears of the people: Let each man request of his fellow and each woman from her fellow silver vessels and gold vessels. Hashem granted the people favor in the eyes of Egypt."**

Initially, when the Egyptians needed to purchase the water from the Jew to survive, he did not give special value to the Jewish people. He needed to pay the Jew only so that he should survive. While it gave a sense of empowerment to the Jewish people, it did not give them a sense of self-worth because the Egyptian had no choice but to purchase the water from them in order to live.

It was only when the Egyptians gladly gave their wealth to the Jew because they felt privileged to accommodate the Jew that the Jewish people gained a sense of self-worth and value. Having a sense of one's true worth was a prerequisite for them to receive the Torah at Sinai to become G-d's holy people.

After the Jewish people had accumulated the wealth from the selling of the water and the borrowing of the silver and gold vessels, G-d brought them to a greater level of wealth after the splitting of the Sea.

Since the Jewish people would need to build a Mishkan in the desert that required enormous amounts of silver, gold, and other precious items, G-d wanted to provide them with an additional abundance of wealth at the Sea so that they should not feel that the wealth that they received in Egypt was going to be taken from them and it would be an infringement on their security and confidence. G-d thus endowed them on this third occasion to receive an even greater amount of wealth so that they would appreciate and understand that G-d is the ultimate Provider and Benefactor.

## Precipitating a Sanctification of G-d's Name

The Torah states, **"G-d said to Moshe, Please speak in the ears of the people: Let each man request of his fellow and each woman from her fellow silver vessels and gold vessels. Hashem granted the people favor in the eyes of Egypt."**

Why does the Torah use the term please to indicate that it was of the utmost necessity that the Jewish people should borrow the precious vessels from the Egyptians?

Rashi cites Chazal: G-d asked Moshe to plead with the Jewish people to borrow the wealth of the Egyptians so that the devoutly righteous Avraham should not claim that the first half of the decree was fulfilled (the Jewish people were enslaved and afflicted in a land that was not their own); however, the second half of the decree, regarding leaving

with great wealth was not fulfilled. The verse states, **"You shall know that your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not their own. The nation that will enslave them will be judged, and then they will go out with great wealth."**

If the Jewish people would have had no difficulty or concern to ask to borrow the silver and gold vessels from the Egyptians, why was it necessary for Moshe to plead for them to make this request?

Sforno explains that Moshe needed to plead with the people to borrow the precious vessels because they were concerned that if they were to do so and not return them, the Egyptians would pursue them into the desert. Therefore, there would be resistance to not borrow the vessels.

After Egypt had been devastated by the ten plagues and was reduced to rubble, all which remained in the possession of the Egyptians was their personal wealth. If the Jewish people were to take all that was left from the Egyptians under the guise that they were only borrowing it, the Egyptians would surely pursue them when they would later realize that they were deceived (the Jewish people were not going to return). G-d thus said to Moshe that he should **please speak in the ears of the people.**

Another explanation can be given why Moshe needed to plead with the Jewish people to borrow the precious personal effects of their masters despite the fact that Egypt was destroyed.

The Jewish people still regarded themselves as slaves and mere chattels of their Egyptian masters. It was thus not a simple matter to ask their masters to relinquish what was most precious to them.

Because there was a basis for this concern, G-d performed a miracle on behalf of the Jewish people that they found special favor in the eyes of their masters. The Egyptians felt privileged to be able to offer their precious personal effects to the Jewish people who had been their slaves.

The Torah states regarding the Splitting of the Sea, **"The Children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the Sea; the water was a wall (choma) for them, on their right and on their left."**

Chazal tell us that the word **choma** (wall), which refers to the water of the Sea surrounding the Jewish people is written with the letter vav deleted. The word without its vowels can be read as **cheima** (wrath).

The Midrash tells us that spelling of the word alludes to the fact that when the Jewish people walked through the Sea, surrounded on each side by walls of water, the angels in heaven began an intense prosecution against them before G-d.

The angels said to G-d, "Why are you sparing the Jewish people and destroying the Egyptians? These are idolaters and these are idolaters."

The angels were saying that since the Jewish people were idolaters no less than the Egyptians, why are the Egyptians considered to be more culpable? The Jewish people deserve to perish in the Sea as the Egyptians do. In order for the Jewish people to overcome the intense prosecution of the angels, they needed to have great merit.

Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the Egyptians initially chose to kill the male Jewish newborns through water, rather than any other method, because they believed that when the G-d of Jews avenges His people, He does so within the context of measure for measure.



If they were to kill the Jewish newborns through fire, G-d would kill the Egyptians through fire. If they were to kill the newborns with the sword, G-d would kill them with the sword.

However, if they were to kill the newborns through water, G-d would not be able to respond because He had made a covenant with existence after the Great Flood (that destroyed the world) that He would never again bring destruction upon mankind with a great flood. Since Egypt was the greatest and most advanced civilization in existence, destroying Egypt through water would be the equivalent of destroying the entire world. They thus believed that they had outwitted G-d.

G-d, being the True Judge who metes exact justice in the context of measure for measure, wanted to prove to the world that justice would be served. He thus needed to destroy them with water.

However, in order to reconcile the covenant that He had made with the world and the destruction of the Jewish people, He said, "I will not bring water upon Egypt, but the Egyptians will go into the water and perish."

By borrowing the personal precious vessels from the Egyptians, the Jewish people precipitated the pursuit of the Egyptians, which ultimately caused them to perish in the Sea. In essence, when the Jewish people borrowed the vessels from the Egyptians, it provided on their behalf the merit of the sanctification of G-d's Name.

As a result of requesting the precious vessels of the Egyptians, which was most dear to them, the Jewish people caused a sanctification of G-d's Name, which was a display of His Justice which is measure for measure. This merit contributed to quell the prosecution of the angels at the Sea.

As difficult as it was for the Jewish people to make the request of their masters, because of its vital necessity, G-d told Moshe to plead with them to do so.

## Regression, Setting the Stage for Advancement

The Torah states in the Portion of Bo regarding the exodus from Egypt: **"They baked the dough that they took out from Egypt into unleavened cakes, for they could not be leavened, for they were driven from Egypt for they could not delay, nor had they made provisions for themselves."**

The reason the dough they had made in preparation for bread did not become leavened was because the Jewish people did not have sufficient time to allow it to rise before they were suddenly driven out.

Rashi cites Chazal who explain the conclusion of the verse, **nor had they made provisions for themselves**. Chazal state, "This is to give praise to the Jewish people that they did not ask G-d, 'How are we to go out into a barren desert without sufficient provisions?' Rather, they believed and they went."

The verse from Yirmiya states: "G d said, I will always remember on your behalf the kindness of your youth, the love of our engagement, that you followed Me into an unplanted desert."

What was their reward for this? They were sanctified to be the holy people of G-d. Because the Jewish people went into a barren desert as G-d had commanded them without sufficient provisions, it was a confirmation of their total belief and faith in Him.

During the Musaf Service of Rosh Hashanah, in the portion of Zichronos (Remembrances) we cite a number of verses that cause G-d to recall events of the past that will cause the Jewish people to be remembered in a positive vein. One of the verses that is recited is this verse from Yirmiya cited by the Midrash.

It is interesting to note that the Jewish people had been informed at the beginning of the month of Nissan that their departure from Egypt would be on the 15th of the month. This was in fact the exact time of the exodus.

If this was known to the Jewish people, why did they not prepare themselves sufficiently regarding the baking of the dough or preparing sufficient provisions before entering into the desert?

Reb Moshe Feinstein zt"l explained that the Jewish people did not prepare themselves for their imminent exodus from Egypt because they had been previously disappointed by Pharaoh. He had said multiple times prior to the exodus that he would allow them to leave and then reneged on his word.

The Jewish people, because of their many disappointments, could not accept the fact that they were going to be released until they witnessed it with their own eyes. Thus, the basis for the dough not to be leavened was a result of their lack of faith in the word of G-d.

Reb Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains that the symbolism of the matzah and the lesson to be learned from the unleavened bread is that the Jew must believe that despite one's perception that circumstances seem bleak and hopeless, a Jew is not permitted to despair. As it states, G-d's salvation comes about like the blink of an eye. We thus eat the matzah to remind us of this fact.

Because the Jewish people lacked faith, the dough remained unleavened and they did not prepare sufficiently for their departure from Egypt. Their lack of faith (although it was a failing) brought about a setting where they could demonstrate their faith in G-d.

If they had initially believed that the exodus was imminent and would have prepared sufficiently, their going into the desert would have not been an expression of their unusual level of faith because they would have been sufficiently secure in the material sense. It was only because they had initially lacked in faith and did not prepare provisions to go into an unplanted desert, that their faith was considered by G-d as a kindness of their youth.

The initial failing of the Jewish people regarding their faith in leaving Egypt brought about their ultimate merit. G-d said that this event would not be forgotten to Him until the end of time. Every Rosh Hashanah at the time of the most intense level of prosecution, this verse activates G-d's Mercy in conjunction with the sounding of the shofar, which silences Satan.

Ramak writes in his work Tomer Devorah that the Jew has an obligation to emulate G-d in all of His characteristics of Mercy. He writes that because of G-d's infinite Mercy, He is willing to forgive the individual and be kind to him although it would seem that there is no basis to even consider anything positive for the individual. G-d will deal with this individual as if he had never failed only because of His infinite Mercy.

For example, if one is found to be a sinner (even on an extreme level) and does not have any apparent merit or spiritual achievement that will stand in his stead to be a counterbalance to prosecution, G-d reflects back upon the life of this individual to a time when he was innocent. G-d even

goes back as far as the time of the childhood of the sinner when he was truly pure and innocent.

This is derived from the verse of the prophet Yirmiya who said, "I will remember the kindness of your youth." Although the Jewish people have sinned over the millennia on an extreme level, G-d will always remember the kindness that they had done.

Since a Jew has the obligation to emulate G-d's characteristics, he must seek merit in his fellow even if it means going back to the time of his innocence to be merciful and kind to him.

## Moshe Acting as a Responsible Agent

The Torah states regarding the last of the ten plagues, the killing of the firstborn: **"Moshe said (to Pharaoh), So said Hashem: At about midnight I shall go out in the midst of Egypt. Every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die."**

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos states: Although G-d had said to Moshe that He would kill the firstborn exactly at midnight, when Moshe communicated it to Pharaoh, he said about midnight. Why did he not communicate it as G-d had spoken to him?

Moshe was concerned that that if the astrologers of Egypt would incorrectly calculate the exact moment of midnight, it would cause them to believe that the plague did not take place as Moshe had said it would. Moshe would thus be accused of being a liar.

Moshe said, "If I cannot prove and confirm that the plague is taking place exactly at midnight, I prefer to present its moment in an ambiguous context so that I should not be accused of being false."

As G-d's agent, Moshe's objective was for Pharaoh and the Egyptian people to acknowledge G-d as the Almighty and Omnipotent Being. If Moshe would be perceived as a liar, regardless of how clear and obvious the revealed miracles had been, his credibility would come into question, thus causing him to be ineffective. He therefore chose to deliberately be vague so as to remain effective as G-d's agent who had brought the plagues upon Egypt.

We are able to extrapolate from Moshe's behavior that when an individual presents a position, he needs to communicate it in a manner that is should not be rejected because of a lack of understanding. It is thus preferable to state things in a vague manner in order to retain one's credibility.

Regarding the killing of the first born, G-d had decreed that all the firstborn of Egypt would die; however, when the plague came upon them, many families had multiple members of the same family die.

The Egyptians perceived this to mean that the plague was even more extreme than what Moshe had said it would be. They cried out, "We are all dying! If only the firstborn were meant to die, why did more than one member of the family die?"

Rashi cites Chazal who explain that if an Egyptian woman had committed adultery with multiple men who had never fathered a child previously, although she had born a child who had opened her womb, all the other children that were born to her from the adulterous relationships would be considered to be the firstborn of their fathers. Thus, they would all die during the plague.

The Egyptians, not understanding this fact, drew from what they had seen that the plague was even more severe than Moshe had said it would be. If Moshe, as the agent of G-d, did not want his words to be misunderstood so that he should retain his credibility as G-d's agent, why regarding the actual killing of the firstborn did he not forecast it in a clearer manner?

The actual killing of the Egyptian firstborns is not comparable to the accuracy of the timing of the plague. If the G-d of the Jews decreed that only the firstborns would die and multiple members of the same family died, it would only be understood that the punishment was actually more severe than initially decreed. This would not call into question the credibility of Moshe as G-d's agent.

However, if he had said that the plague would commence exactly at midnight and they miscalculated the time, then they could conclude that plague was actually brought about by something other than the G-d of the Jews since this plague did not occur exactly at midnight. This would undermine Moshe's credibility and the effectiveness of the plague.

One could also say that regarding the communication of the actual killing of the firstborn, Moshe did not have a choice in phrasing it and presenting differently. What had come upon Egypt was a reality that could not have been communicated in a more lucid manner. However, regarding the accuracy of the timing of the plague, Moshe did have a way of stating it ambiguously in order to retain his credibility as G-d's agent and not be rejected.

This is similar to the manner in which Yaakov had spoken to his father Yitzchak when he came to get the blessings under the guise of being his brother Esav. The Torah tells us that when Yaakov came to his father Yitzchak to receive the blessing that he had intended to give to Esav, he went to great lengths to disguise himself as Esav.

However, when Yaakov spoke to his father, he did not emulate the manner of speech to which Esav was accustomed. For example, he addressed his father in a more respectful and refined manner. In addition, Yaakov mentioned the name of G-d, which was something that Esav never did. If Yaakov wanted to be perceived as Esav by his father, why did he not speak to him as Esav would have spoken?

Yaakov, as one who personified Torah could not be compromised under any circumstance. If he would have said that he had come upon the game (for the delicacies) through his own initiative rather than saying that G-d brought it to my hand, it would have been equivalent of heresy.

In addition, if he were to address his father in a less respectful and refined manner, it would have been considered to be a breach of honoring one's father. Although Yaakov went to great lengths to disguise himself for the sake of the blessings, which was crucial and critical for the future of the Jewish people, he was not able to not do so in a manner that would have been contrary to halacha.

Despite Yaakov revealing his identity through his manner of speech, he succeeded in receiving the blessings because that was the will of G-d. However, Moshe was able to reconcile the problem by speaking in a vague manner, and it was not considered to be a breach of his agency. He thus said, about midnight and not exactly at midnight.

We learn from this that although one must take initiative and do everything within one's power to achieve proper spiritual objectives, he should not do so if it violates the precepts of the Torah. The end under no circumstance justifies the means.

## Bringing Merit to the Meritorious (Vaeira)

The Torah tells us that G-d told Moshe to present the Jewish people with the four expressions of redemption. The Torah states, **“So Moshe spoke accordingly to the Children of Israel, but they did not listen to Moshe because of shortness of wind (kotzeir ruach) and hard work.”**

Sforno explains that the Jewish people did not reflect sufficiently upon the salvation of G-d. If they would have had faith and accepted the imminent redemption, G-d would have considered it a righteousness. Regarding Avraham our Patriarch, after he was informed by G-d that he would have a son, the Torah states, “He believed in Hashem, and it was considered a righteousness.” Therefore, although G-d had promised the Jewish people in Egypt that they would inherit the Land, because they did not have sufficient faith in the redemption, G-d gave the Land to their children and not to them.

Based on the words of Sforno, the generation of the Jewish people in Egypt did not merit entering into the Land of Israel because they did not have sufficient faith in G-d's redemption due to their lack of reflection. However, the Torah tells us that the generation that left Egypt did not merit to enter into the Land because of the sin of the spies.

The spies that were initially sent to scout out the land returned with slanderous reports, which were believed by the Jewish people despite G-d's promise that they will conquer the Land. How do we reconcile Sforno's explanation with the incident of the spies?

The spies questioned G-d because of their lack of faith. Yehoshuah and Calev were the only two spies from the ten who entered into the Land who returned with positive reports. However, it was not a simple matter that Yehoshuah and Calev would have been able to have sufficient faith to do what they had done. Therefore, before they went to scout out the Land, Moshe added a letter to Yehoshuah's name and Calev went to the graves of the forefathers in order to supplicate G-d to give him the ability to maintain his faith despite what he would see in the Land. From this we see that Yehoshuah and Calev needed to have special protection to safeguard them against the influence of the spies.

The Jewish people, on the other hand, did not have this level of protection. Had the Jewish people had sufficient faith in Egypt regarding the redemption, they would have embraced Moshe's words and internalized the fact that they would be redeemed. This would have been considered a righteousness by G-d.

As a result of demonstrating this level of faith in Egypt, they would have all merited special Divine Protection to be able to maintain their level of faith when the spies would return with their slanderous reports.

However, because they did not demonstrate sufficient faith in Egypt, when they heard the four expressions of redemption, they forfeited the protection that they needed to maintain their faith later when the spies

returned with their negative reports. G-d thus decreed after the sin of the spies that the generation of the desert would not merit entering into the Land. They were to die in the desert, and their children would be given the Land.

Very often we are confronted with situations that are too difficult with which to contend. In these instances one needs Divine Assistance. However, in order for G-d to intercede and provide this Assistance, one needs to merit it. One needs to have previously done something special in order to merit Divine Assistance.

Had the Jewish people in Egypt reflected sufficiently upon G-d's imminent redemption, it would have been considered for them a righteousness. They would have thus merited Divine Assistance that would have protected them from failing in the desert.

During the time of Communism in Europe, many children of Jewish families were drawn into the movement and became heretics. However, there was a family in Brisk that despite all of the influences, the entire family was able to maintain their commitment to Judaism.

Someone asked Reb Chaim of Brisk zt”l, what was so special about this family that they were able to maintain their commitment to Judaism and not submit to the influences of Communism? What merit did they have to be protected?

Reb Chaim responded that many years earlier the Czar of Russia inducted Jews to work for him and to go around to different cities and forcibly take Jewish children to be part of the Russian army. This was the way he wanted to take them away from their Judaism.

One day, one of these Jews who was working for the Czar came into a classroom to snatch one of the ten year old boys. He grabbed the collar of a child and dragged him outside while the boy was kicking and screaming. One of the Rebbes of the school heard the boy screaming and came out of his class and struck the Jew who had grabbed the child across the face. As a result, the Jew dropped the child and ran out.

By striking this Jew who was working for the Czar, the Rebbe put his life in jeopardy because the traitor could have reported him to the Russian soldiers who were waiting outside of the school. They would have come into the school and killed the teacher immediately.

Reb Chaim of Brisk explained that in the merit of what that teacher had done, his grandchildren and great grandchildren were protected from being assimilated by Communism. The teacher's demonstration of his faith in G-d protected his progeny later to maintain their faith.



**Yad Avraham Institute**