

5782 - Exodus 10-13 - Bo (Go)

^{10:1}Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these signs of mine among them ²that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD."

1. בוא אֶל־פַּרְעֹה—Come to Pharaoh.

a. The verb בוא (*bo*)—the vast difference between Hebrew and English.

1) Genesis 15:15

¹⁵You (Avram), however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age.

2) Genesis 26:26-28

²⁶Meanwhile, Abimelek had come to (Isaac) from Gerar, with Ahuzzath ... and Phicol ... ²⁷Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?"

²⁸They answered, "We saw clearly that the LORD was with you; so we said, 'There ought to be a sworn agreement between us' ...

3) The English verb "go" generally means, to move from a position nearby to a position far away, while the verb "come" means to move from a far position to a position nearby. An example would be, "I will go to the store then I will come home." The context of this phrase implies that I am making the statement from home about leaving home for the store and then returning home.¹

4) In the two verses above, the one Hebrew verb בוא (*bo*) is being translated into two different English words in order to translate the context of its use.

5) THE VERB בוא (*bo*) DOES NOT MEAN "COME" OR "GO" IN THE SENSE OF DIRECTION but to "enter a void in order to fill it" in the sense of PURPOSE. Because there is no English word with this meaning the words "go" and "come" are used instead, but unfortunately this erases the more Hebraic meaning behind the word.

2. בוא (*bo*)—the fourth most frequently used verb in the Tenach, it is used 2570 times, for the most part with everyday meanings of "go, arrive, enter a house," or, more idiomatically, "to die" (go to the fathers) or for sexual relations (come in to her).²

a. Theologically the verb *bô* appears in varied but significant contexts. Four aspects can be identified.

1) First, בוא speaks of the LORD as the one who comes to his people.

a) At the founding of Israel as a nation he came in thick clouds to Mount Sinai (Exo 19:9; Exo 20:20).

b) From Sinai he came with his ten thousands to fight for his people (Deut 33:2-5; Hab 3:3).

c) In accordance with his promise that he would come to every place he chose to cause his name to be remembered (Exo 20:24), he came to Mount Zion with his ten thousands of holy ones (Psa 68:17 [H 18]).

d) Thus he comes to fight for Israel throughout her history (Isa 30:27), which is an earnest that in the future he will give Israel an ultimate and universal victory over evil (Psa 96:13; Psa 98:9).

e) As in the past he fulfilled his promise to judge the nations (cf. Isa 19:1; Jer 25:31), so he will come in the future to judge the evildoers (Isa 66:15).

f) He will come as a mighty warrior bringing back his people from the ends of the earth (Isa 40:9-11), and he will dwell in Jerusalem (Zech 2:10 [H 14]).

g) The notion that the Lord is a God who comes with salvation is succinctly captured by Hosea: "Let us press on to know YHWH; his going forth is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth" (Hos 6:3).

h) This anticipation which characterizes the (Tenach) finds its fulfillment in part in (Yeshua) of whom it can be enthusiastically heralded, "Blessed be he who enters (*bô* "cometh," ASV) in the name of the Lord" (Psa 118:26). God's coming to save is essentially an intervention and almost always regarded as imminent.

i) But he also comes to judge sinful Israel (Psa 50:3). In fact, one of the last prophecies of the (Tenach) is that (the LORD) will suddenly come to his temple as a refining fire (Mal 3:1).

2) Second, "coming" (בוא) is associated with the promise-fulfillment motif.

a) The verdict concerning the words (i.e. promises) of God by Joshua is that "all have come to pass" (Josh 23:14).

1 Jeff A. Benner, "Ancient Hebrew Research Center Biblical Hebrew E-Magazine," June, 2008, Issue #043, Word of the Month - Come.

2 The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, originally published by Moody Press of Chicago, Illinois. Copyright © 1980—BibleWorks 9.

- b) John Bright observes that as best he can tell, on every occasion when *bô* is used of God's word or purpose, it has the force of "**come to pass**," "**come true**"³
- c) The test of a true prophet is that his words **must come to pass** (Deut 18:22). Of course, the words of a false prophet may also come true, and thus one must examine the theological content of the word as well (Deut 13:3).
- d) By bringing to pass either his threats or his promises (the LORD) demonstrates his dominion over history (Josh 23:15; 2Kings 19:25; Isa 31:2).
- e) Frequently the predictions use the causative Hiphil stem with *bô* showing clearly that it is **(the LORD) who is sovereignly guiding history** (Exo 11:1; 1Kings 21:29). In a passage that extols (the LORD) above graven images one reads, "Behold the former things have come to pass" (Isa 42:9). Gods are challenged to declare "things to come" (*bô*) (Isa 41:22). **The promise of land and progeny to the patriarchs is only one of many promise-predictions that have come to fulfillment and which argue for the superiority of (the LORD).**
- f) A characteristic expression referring to the future, but not necessarily to the final days of the world history, is "days are coming" (participle of *bô*). Although employed by Amos (Amos 8:11; Amos 9:13) and Isaiah (Isa 27:6; Isa 39:6), it is Jeremiah who most frequently uses it as an introductory phrase, sometimes to announce judgment (e.g. Jer 9:26 [H 24]; Jer 19:6; Jer 48:12; Jer 49:2) **but also to announce salvation** (Jer 16:14), **including the establishment of the new covenant** (Jer 31:31) **and the appearance of a kingly messiah** (Jer 23:5).
- g) Our verb is also used in the proclamations of salvation that Israel will **come back** to the land (Mic 4:8; Isa 35:10; Isa 51:11; Zeph 3:20; Ezek 11:16; Ezek 34:13). Ezekiel, moreover, saw the glory of the LORD coming into the new temple (Ezek 43:4) and Haggai foresaw the wealth of all the nations coming to the temple (Hag 2:7). Ezra was among those of the Diaspora who came back to the house of God (Ezra 3:8).
- 3) Third, the word is used in connection with **the coming "Messiah"** who will bring salvation. Although Gen 49:10 is fraught with text-critical matters, it is at least certain that Jacob speaks of a ruler that will come from the tribe of Judah.
- a) Ezekiel and Zechariah further this hope for **the "coming" one** (Ezek 21:27 [H 32]; Zech 9:9ff.).
- b) According to Zechariah this triumphant king is poor, and **comes riding on a donkey**, a symbol of his lowliness.
- 4) Finally, *bô* is used with reference to **the man who comes** to the sanctuary in company with his community in order to pray and bring sacrifices (Deut 12:5; Deut 31:11; 2Sam 7:18; Isa 30:29; Jer 7:2, 10; Psa 5:7 [H 8]; Psa 42:2 [H 3]).
- a) Whereas priests had to satisfy specific regulations in order to enter this sacred sphere (Exo 28:29 ff.; Exo 29:30; etc.), all who enter must exhibit righteous behavior (Psa 15; ; Psa 24).
- b) Foreigners also could come to pray (1Kings 8:41), but eunuchs were excluded from the community (Deut 23:1 [H 2]).
- c) When the people came to the sanctuary they also went to the priests (Deut 17:9). They also went to the prophet to inquire of the Lord (e.g. 1Kings 14:3, 5; 2Kings 4:42; Ezek 14:4,7).
3. אֲנִי הַכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת־לְבֹ. —*I have made his heart ... stubborn.* The Midrashnotes that הַכְבַּדְתִּי, I have made stubborn, is derived from כֶּבֶד, liver. Bile, which is produced by the liver, is associated with anger. Concerning Pharaoh, **the heart had taken on the character of the liver.** The Midrash tells a parable to illustrate the function of the heart, the organ frequently mentioned with regard to Pharaoh. A lion and a fox were boarding a ship and encountered a donkey who insisted on collecting an entrance fee, even from the lion, the king of beasts. The fox remonstrated with the donkey, arguing that, on the contrary, any fee should be paid to the lion, considering his important position in the animal kingdom. The donkey responded that he was in fact collecting the money for the lion's treasury. However, the lion was not pleased and instructed the fox to kill the donkey and bring him all the limbs. The fox dismembered the donkey, but could not resist the desire to devour its heart. When the organs were brought before him, the lion immediately asked about the missing heart. The fox replied that the donkey never had a heart, for if he had one, how could he dare to tax the king? **Pharaoh is also regarded as lacking a heart, for if he had one he would not dare to call himself a god.** (Pharaoh went down to the Nile early in the morning to secretly tend to his physical needs so that he could maintain the fiction of his divinity ... (Yalkut Shimoni, 182).
- a. כָּבֵד (*ka-ved*) *be heavy, grievous, hard, rich, honorable, glorious, great, liver.*

3 John Durkam & J. R. Poner, eds., *Proclamation and Presence* (John Knox Press), p. 206.

1) See also Exo 8:15, 32

2) Genesis 43:1

¹Now the famine was still **severe** in the land.

3) Exodus 14:25

²⁵He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they **had difficulty driving**. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

JPS—He took off their chariot wheels, and made them to drive **heavily** ...

4) Exodus 18:18 (NAS)

¹⁸"You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too **heavy** for you; you cannot do it alone.

5) Leviticus 3:9-10

⁹From the fellowship offering you are to bring a food offering to the LORD: its fat ... the internal organs and all the fat that is connected to them, ¹⁰both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the long lobe of the **liver**, which you will remove with the kidneys.

6) Numbers 22:15

¹⁵Then Balak sent other officials, more numerous and more **distinguished** (or more **honorable**) than the first.

7) Psalms 86:9

⁹All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring **glory** to your name.

8) 1 Corinthians 15:41 (NJB)

⁴¹The sun has its own **splendour**, the moon another **splendour**, and the stars yet another **splendour**; and the stars differ among themselves in **splendour**.

9) Philippians 2:25-30

²⁵But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs ... ²⁹So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and **honor** people like him, ³⁰because he almost died for the work of Messiah. He risked his life ...

4. לִמְעַן שְׁתִּי—*So that I can put*. Hashem told Moses that while Pharaoh

may have contributed to his own stubbornness during the first plagues, his heart would now be hardened by Hashem, not as a pun-

ishment for Pharaoh, **but to show the Children of Israel God's glory** (Ramban).

Pharaoh stood in bold defiance of God for the third time, and did not honor his word to free Israel. His behavior from the beginning confirms Hashem's understanding of Pharaoh that he would not repent with all his heart. Rashi observes that at that point Hashem preferred that Pharaoh did become stubborn so that He could multiply His wonders to show Israel His power. This is an example of the manner in which Hashem brings punishment upon other nations so that Israel will take note and fear. This principle is illustrated by the words of the prophet: *I have cut off nations, their territories are in ruins ... I have said: Surely you [Israel] will fear Me, you will receive correction* (Zeph 3:6).

The wording of the first two verses in this *Sidrah* clearly supports Rashi's opinion. **Surely God could have sent a punishment which would have instantaneously destroyed the Egyptians**, thereby avoiding a protracted period of suffering. The purpose of multiplying the plagues was to convince the Children of Israel of the absolute supremacy of the God of their ancestors. The plagues made it very clear to them that God, Who was worshiped by the Patriarchs and proclaimed by Moses, was the Master over nature and over nations.

Would the Israelites have accepted the Torah on Mount Sinai if they had not experienced the extraordinary miracles of Egypt? It is possible that they would not have, **as is evident from the first words of the Ten Commandments, where God presents Himself to the people as the One Who brought them out of Egypt**. This confirms that the Exodus was the foundation of their belief in Him. These words call to mind the words ending v. 2, that you may know (through the plagues in Egypt) that I am Hashem. This remained the supreme goal of the Divine acts in Egypt. Ultimately, the salvation of humanity would depend on realization of this purpose.

a. 1 Chronicles 16:12-14

¹²**Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles**, and the judgments he pronounced, ¹³you his servants, the descendants of Israel, his chosen ones, the children of Jacob. ¹⁴He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

b. Nehemiah 9:16-19

¹⁶"But they, our ancestors, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and they did not obey your commands. ¹⁷**They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them**. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

Therefore you did not desert them, ¹⁸even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, 'This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt,' or when they committed awful blasphemies. ¹⁹"Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the wilderness ...

c. Psalm 77:11-15

¹¹I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, **I will remember your miracles of long ago.** ¹²I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds." ¹³Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? ¹⁴You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. ¹⁵With your mighty arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

d. Matthew 11:20-24

²⁰Then Yeshua began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, **because they did not repent.** ²¹"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²²But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. ²³And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

e. Luke 19:37-40

³⁷When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: ³⁸"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Psa 118:26) "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" ³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Yeshua, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" ⁴⁰"I tell you," he replied, **"if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."**

5. The Duration of the Ten Plagues:

- One day to go before Pharaoh and perform the serpent miracle (7:10-15)
- Seven days for the miracle of the waters to **blood** (7:15-25)
- Several days for **frogs** to cover all Egypt and accomplish the purpose in making life unbearable (8:1-8)—one day to destroy frogs (8:10-15)
- Several days for the **lice** plague to have the desired effect (8:16-19)
- Several days for the **flies** to plague all of Egypt. Two days are mentioned for bringing and removing them (8:23, 29)

- Two days—one to announce the **pestilence** and one to destroy the animals of Egypt, besides time for Pharaoh to harden his heart (9:1, 5, 7)
- Several days for **boils** to be upon the Egyptians (9:8-12)
- One day to announce the next plague (**hail**) (9:13); one day for the plague to begin (9:18); and one day for Moses to be called (9:27)
- Two days for **locusts** to cover Egypt (10:4-6, 13); one day for Moses to be called (10:8-11); a day or so for the locusts to cause their destruction in Egypt (10:12-17); and two days to remove them (10:18-19 with v. 13)
- Three days of **darkness** (10:21-23) and one day to call Moses (10:24-29)
- One day to ask the Egyptians for "articles of silver and gold"—one day to slay the passover (11:1-10; 12:29-36)—and the **death of the firstborn.**

So, it took **at least three to seven weeks** for the ten plagues.

- Twenty-six days are named, besides an unspecified number of days for certain plagues to become effective. On the basis of ten days for the first plague (7:25) and the ninth plague (10:22), and supposing that the other plagues lasted this long, **at least fifty days were needed for the plagues.**

^{10:21}Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt—darkness that can be felt." ²²So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and **total darkness covered all Egypt for three days.**

1. ²² *total darkness covered all Egypt for three days.*

a. Sanhedrin 99a

When will the Messiah come? ... When darkness covers those people ... *For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall shine upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee (Isa. LX, 2).*

b. Revelation 16:10-11 (cf., Rev 8:12)

¹⁰The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and **his kingdom was plunged into darkness.** Men gnawed their tongues in agony ¹¹and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but **they refused to repent** of what they had done.

c. Matthew 27:27-50 (Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44)

²⁷Then the governor's soldiers took Yeshua ... ³¹After they had mocked him ... they led him away to crucify him.

³⁸Two robbers were crucified with him ... ³⁹Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰and saying, **"You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself!**

Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" ⁴¹In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴²"He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

⁴⁵**From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.** ⁴⁶About the ninth hour Yeshua cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli Eli, lama sabachthani?*"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ... ⁵⁰And when Yeshua had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

1) **Darkness in the land of Egypt for three days.**

2) **Darkness in the land of Israel for three hours.**

d. **Darkness (9) (10:21-29)**

1) This was not an ordinary darkness. So dense it was that a person couldn't see the hand in front of his face and if he/she moved would trip over the darkness.⁴

The *Midrash* says that this darkness (*choshech*) wasn't of the natural world. It wasn't as a consequence of a solar eclipse or a moonless night. While it oppressed the Egyptians, the sun and universe operated normally everywhere else. It was as if each Egyptian was imprisoned in a black box of isolation, requisite punishment for their cruelty. This darkness catapulted the Egyptians back to a time before the creation when "darkness covered the face of the deep." (Genesis 1:2)

From whence did it come? And what did it mean? In Psalms (105:28) it is said; *Shalach choshech va-yach'shich*—"God sent darkness and it became dark." In our portion God instructs Moses; *N'tei yad'cha al ha-shamayim vi-hi choshech* ... —"Hold your arm over the sky that there may be darkness upon the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be touched." (Exodus 10:21) This darkness reflected the debased spiritual and moral condition of the Egyptians.

The Psalms tell us something else as well; *Yashet choshech sitro s'vi-vo-tav sukato*—"He makes darkness be His screen round about Him," (18:12) **suggesting that the spiritual light that abides at the very core of existence is always hidden** and could never enter the Egyptian heart. That same light, however, shone in all the Israelite dwellings. In its pure form this light was so powerful that no one

could see it and live. It is said that every angel and human being are able to receive only a very small measure of this Divine glow, each according to our spiritual capacity and development.

What does all this mean for us?—It is a certainty that each of us will suffer a broken heart once or more in our lives. Some of us bear chronic biochemical imbalances that need medical attention. All of us need love and support when we or our loved ones become ill, divorce, suffer the death of dear ones, the loss of jobs and income. **Every loss casts a darkness upon the human soul.**

Rabbi Isaac Meir Alter (19th century Poland) taught that **the worst darkness of all is that blindness in which one person will not "see another,"** and will refuse to look upon another's misery and lend a hand. Such a person is incapable of "rising from his/her place," that is, of growing in heart and soul.

Rabbi Yochanan taught that every eye has an area of white and black. We might think that the human being sees out of the white part. But no! We see out of the black part, which means **when we're in the dark we're capable of seeing what's in the light, but when we're in the light we can't see what's in the dark.** (*Yalkut Shi-moni* 378).

In other words, there is always hope out of darkness, and there is always light when we think there is none.

In Egypt, wherever Jews went light went with them because the light was in them. That is what it means to be a Jew—to live in the light, to be a light to others and to hope.

^{12:1}The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ²"**This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.**

1. Jeremiah 5:24 (cf. Joel 2:23)

²³But these people have stubborn and rebellious hearts; they have turned aside and gone away. ²⁴They do not say to themselves, 'Let us fear the LORD our God, **who gives autumn and spring rains in season**, who assures us of the regular weeks of harvest.'

2. Ta'anith (Fasts) 6a

Our Rabbis have taught: Former rain (falls) in (Cheshvan) and latter rain in Nissan ... perhaps it is otherwise, former rain in Tishri and latter rain in Iyar?

⁴ www.jewishjournal.com/rabbijohnrosovesblog/item/living_in_light_-_dvar_torah_parashat_bo_20120126—Rabbi John Rosove.