



SHABBAT ZEST

Parshat Bo 4th Shevat 5777

Torah Reading / Haftara:

Artscroll – p.340/1151

Living Torah – p.300/1102

SHABBAT TIMES:

Candle Lighting:
4:34pm

Kabbalat Shabbat
Davening: 6:30pm

Shabbat Morning
Davening: 9:15am

Mincha: After Kiddush

Shabbat Ends 5:48pm

NEXT SHABBAT
BESHALACH

CANDLE LIGHTING
@ 4:47 PM

Parsha In a Nutshell

Exodus 10:1-13:16

The last three of the Ten Plagues are visited on Egypt: a swarm of locusts devours all the crops and greenery; a thick, palpable darkness envelops the land; and all the firstborn of Egypt are killed at the stroke of midnight of the 15th of the month of Nissan.

G-d commands the first mitzvah to be given to the people of Israel: to establish a calendar based on the monthly rebirth of the moon. The Israelites are also instructed to bring a “Passover offering” to G-d: a lamb or kid is to be slaughtered, and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel of every Israelite home, so that G-d should pass over these homes when He comes to kill the Egyptian firstborn. The roasted meat of the offering is to be eaten that night together with matzah (unleavened bread) and bitter herbs.

The death of the firstborn finally breaks Pharaoh’s resistance, and he literally drives the children of Israel from his land. So hastily do they depart that there is no time for their dough to rise, and the only provisions they take along are unleavened. Before they go, they ask their Egyptian neighbours for gold, silver and garments—fulfilling the promise made to Abraham that his descendants would leave Egypt with great wealth.

The children of Israel are commanded to consecrate all firstborn, and to observe the anniversary of the Exodus each year by removing all leaven from their possession for seven days, eating matzah, and telling the story of their redemption to their children. They are also commanded to wear tefillin on the arm and head as a reminder of the Exodus and their resultant commitment to G-d.

Haftorah

Jeremiah 46:13-28

In this week’s Torah reading, we read of the devastation of the Egyptian nation through the final three of the Ten Plagues. In the Haftorah we read of the punishment G-d visited upon Egypt centuries later, through the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

G-d reveals Egypt’s fate to Jeremiah: “Proclaim it in Egypt and let it be heard in Migdol, and let it be heard in Noph and in Tahpanhes. Say, ‘Stand fast and prepare yourself, for the sword has devoured round about you.’” The prophet then goes on to describe Egypt’s helplessness and the destruction that it will incur at the hands of the Babylonians.

The Haftorah ends with G-d’s assurance to the Jewish people not to fear, for though they too will be punished and exiled, ultimately they will be redeemed:

“You fear not, O Jacob My servant, and be not dismayed, O Israel! for behold, I will redeem you from afar, and your children from the land of their captivity, and Jacob shall return and be quiet and at ease, and there shall be none who disturb his rest. You fear not, My servant Jacob, says the L-rd, for I am with you, for I will make a full end of all the nations where I have driven you.”

Please do not take this sheet to or from shul on Shabbat - Please discard this sheet appropriately as it contains the name of G-d

UPCOMING EVENTS

31st January – Shiur 8pm 1 Alderton Mews ‘Tefillin – What’s in them and why wear them?’

8th February: Israel Advocacy Evening. Talk given by David Olesker founder and Director of JCCAT. £5 per ticket. Book through Shul Office

12th February: Sunday Shacharit 8:45am

12th March: Purim including 9am Shacharit, 10am Breakfast, 10:30am Megillah reading followed by Purim Party

21st March – Ladies Guild Lunch – Guest Speaker film and documentary producer Pamela Wagman

11th May: AGM

Recurring Events

Cheder OPEN

Mummy and Me Running

Yahrzeits for the coming week 8th – 14th Shevat:

8. Shirley Leach – Mother

9th – Dawn Allen – Sister

13th – Mark Weigler – Mother

14th – Cyril Laderman - Brother

A Little Deeper – War Reparation

In the aftermath of World War II, Germany offered to pay reparations to victims of the Nazi regime. This offer was met by an incredibly heated debate in Israel. In fact, the controversy was so great that there was actually speculation in the Israeli media that acceptance of the reparations would cause a civil war.

Indeed some were most particular not even to benefit at all from German manufactured items. My late maternal grandfather was meticulous in refusing to purchase or indeed use any German manufactured product. I recall him telling me with pride that he was offered a perfect second hand BMW from his employer who was purchasing a new car, yet my grandfather flatly refused it much to the surprise of his boss!

So in 1952 When Prime Minister Ben Gurion ultimately agreed to accept the reparations, riots took place and there was a march on the Knesset which resulted in the Knesset building being stoned. Though peace and order was eventually restored, it is clear that for many Israelis at the time it was despicable to think that any "blood money" should be accepted.

A similar phenomenon is found in this week's Torah portion, Bo. The Jewish people are being led out of Egypt to FREEDOM, but before their departure, God tells Moses to encourage each Jew to take from his Egyptian neighbour vessels of silver and vessels of gold. (see Exodus 11:2)

There are two puzzling issues raised by this verse. First, since the Jews would be travelling into the desert, why did they need gold and silver? Second, why did the Jews have to be "encouraged" to take these vessels? In answer to the first question, Rashi explains that a promise had been made centuries earlier to the patriarch Abraham: After his descendants would suffer many years of bondage in Egypt, they would be freed, and in the process, they would despoil the Nile Kingdom of much of its wealth.

A fascinating Midrash describes why this despoiling of Egypt was fair and proper. Thousands of years later, the Egyptians came before Alexander the Great and registered a claim against the Jewish people, demanding that they should be compensated for all the wealth that the Israelites had seized from their forefathers a millennium earlier. In response to this claim, Gevia ben Psesia, acting as the Jews' defence attorney, noted that the Israelites had not received any wages for all the centuries they toiled as slaves in Egypt. Thus, justice demanded that the Jewish people be granted a form of reparations - i.e. compensation for the exploitation they had undergone at the hands of the ancient Egyptians.

Oznaim L'Torah, a modern commentator, offers a fascinating insight at why the Jews had to be encouraged by Moses to take this wealth, if indeed they did merit it. As victims of two centuries of unspeakable horrors, the Jews simply abhorred having contact with anything connected to Egypt. Additionally, they did not want their seizure of Egypt's wealth to be seen as some type of "quid pro" for all the suffering they had endured. Thus Moses had to encourage them to take this property - in order to fulfil the Almighty's promise to Abraham.

Incredibly this reluctance to take any money from the hands of their murderous exploiters is an issue that was tragically duplicated by the Jews in Europe some three millennia later.

Wishing you all Good Shabbos.