

**Wembley Synagogue**

ב"א

Insights from the commentators on the Sidra of Bo 5768**What's the Sidra about?**

1st & 2nd Aliyot: Moshe and Aharon warned Pharaoh about the Locust. His advisors begged Pharaoh to consider Moshe's request, and Pharaoh attempted to negotiate with Moshe and Aharon that the children should stay behind. When his offer was refused, all negotiations broke down and Pharaoh chased Moshe and Aharon away. The Locust swallowed up Egypt, but Pharaoh still refused to send away the Jews.

3rd Aliya: Darkness enveloped Egypt for three days. Pharaoh told Moshe that he could take out his people, but he had to leave the cattle behind. Moshe refused and Pharaoh warned Moshe that he could not come to him again. In truth, the next time they saw each other would be after the Death of the First Born, when Pharaoh went to Moshe.

4th Aliya: Moshe warned the Egyptians about the Death of the First Born. In 12:2 Hashem commanded Moshe and Aharon with the very first Mitzvah to be given to the Nation. The very first Korban Pesach was described along with the Mitzvot of Matzoh, Chametz, and Pesach.

5th Aliya: Bnei Yisrael were commanded to mark the inside of their doors with the blood of the Korban Pesach.

6th Aliya: The plague of the Death of the First Born left Egypt in mourning. Pharaoh and the Egyptians hurried the Jews out of Egypt. Approximately 600,000 men besides women, children, and the elderly as well as the Erev Rav – the mixed multitude who left Egypt during the Exodus. It was the year 2448, and the Pasuk says that the Jews had been in Egypt for 430 years. (Exactly 430 years from the Brit Bein Habetarim - The Covenant between the Pieces). The laws of the Korban Pesach were reviewed.

7th Aliya: The Parsha concludes with a review of the laws of Pesach as well as introducing the commandment to exchange all first born, male donkeys for a sheep; Pidyon Haben - redeeming the first born male child; and the Mitzvah of Tefillin.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל-פַּרְעֹה כִּי-אֲנִי הִבְבַּדְתִּי אֶת-לִבּוֹ וְאֶת-לִבְ עַבְדָּיו לְמַעַן שְׁתִּי אֶתְתִּי אֵלָה בְּקִרְבּוֹ
Hashem said to Moshe, "Come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart and the heart of his servants stubborn." (10:1) The concept of hardening of the heart, and basically removing one's free will, is a difficult idea to accept. G-d has endowed man with the ability to choose between right and wrong, good and evil. This concept plays a critical role in providing the correct balance for reward and punishment. Why did Hashem take this opportunity from Pharaoh? In his Sefer Simchat HaTorah, Harav Simchah HaKohen Shepps, z"l, applies the following analogy to explain and validate hardening Pharaoh's heart. A Jew once had a court case with a gentile, which necessitated going to a secular court for settlement. The Jew, realising what he was up against, went to the gentile judge on the day of the trial and offered him a hefty bribe. The judge, understandably, was taken aback. "Is it not written in your Bible that one should not accept a bribe, because it blinds the eyes of even the most astute individual?" the judge asked indignantly. "How can you justify giving me a bribe?" The Jew quickly responded, "Your honour, what I did was really not inappropriate. After all, you and my litigant are both non-Jews. It makes sense, therefore, that you are predisposed to hear his side of the case with greater sensitivity than you would my claim. Thus, by giving you a bribe, I am only balancing the scales of justice by attempting to override your predisposition." The same idea applies to Pharaoh's hardening of the heart. The plagues wreaked havoc on Egypt. They left an indelible impact on the Egyptian psyche. Hence, Pharaoh and his people were partial to the Jewish cause. He was inclined to let the Jews leave the country, but for the wrong reason. He had no remorse; he did not regret the evil decrees that he had directed against the Jewish People. His contrition was insincere. Hashem, therefore, hardened his heart, in order to counteract the effect of the plagues. (Source: Peninim on the Torah)

And Moshe said, "With our young and our old we will go; with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds we will go; for we are to hold a festival unto Hashem." (10:9) What message did Moshe seek to convey to Pharaoh with such a long-winded response? He could have simply said, "We must all go because it is a holiday to Hashem for us." Kli Yakar explains that Moshe's response reflects the essence of Jewish observance. Indeed, if they had just been going to the wilderness to offer sacrifices, then the only individuals that should have gone would have been those who were to sacrifice. Moshe explained to Pharaoh that our religion does not work in this manner. If this was to be a festival for G-d, then simchat ha'chag - the joy inherent in celebrating the holiday- would have been obvious. How can one express joy without his family's presence? How can one experience true happiness without his possessions? He can have no joy if his wife and children are being held "hostage" in Egypt. The halachah states that one is obligated to be happy with his wife and children during the festival. In other words, one must see to it that his family is happy in order for his simchah, joy, to be complete. Thus, a simchah which does not include one's family is lacking. If one is to have a "relationship" with Hashem he must be b'simchah, at peace with himself, without worry or concern about family or possessions. Moshe told Pharaoh that the Jewish people must cooperate as a single unit - including family and possessions -if this holiday experience in the wilderness was to have the proper effect on them. (Source: Peninim on the Torah)

וַיִּקְרָא לְמֹשֶׁה וְלְאַהֲרֹן לַלַּיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר קוּמוּ צֵאוּ מִתּוֹךְ עַמִּי נְסִיאֵתֶם וְנִסְבְּנוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלָכוּ עִבְדוּ אֶת ה' כְּדֹבְרֵכֶם
 And he (Pharaoh) called to Moshe and Aharon at night and he said "Arise, go out from among my people" After the Plague of the Firstborn, Pharaoh proclaimed that the Jews were free to leave Egypt. The long-awaited redemption had finally arrived. Yet, not one Jew left Egypt at that moment. Instead, they waited until daybreak in order to fulfill G-d's commandment
 לֹא תֵצֵא אִישׁ מִפֶּתַח בֵּיתוֹ עַד-בֹּקֶר
 "No man may leave the entrance of his house until morning" (Exodus 12:22) Even though the redemption was imminent, the tantalising prospect of freedom did not dull their sense of judgment. No one thought of violating G-d's commandment in order to gain freedom more rapidly. (Source: R' Ya'akov Kamenetzky - P'ninim Mishulchan Govoha)

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים רֵאשֶׁן הוּא לָכֶם לְחֹדְשֵׁי הָעֵנָה - This month (Nisan) is for you the head of months (12:2) Nisan is referred to as the head or first of the Jewish months although Rosh Hashanah, is celebrated on the first of Tishrei. The Jewish New Year is so designated because the world was created on that day. Jews count calendar years from the creation of the world and accordingly the anniversary of creation marks the beginning of the Jewish year. The title conferred upon Nisan as 'the head of the months' means that whenever the Torah mentions a month, it is referred to by a number counting Nisan as the first month and so on. Thus, Rosh Hashanah is referred to in the Torah as the first day of the seventh month! What is so significant about the month of Nisan that it serves as a focal point for the entire year? Why doesn't the Torah simply count months from Tishrei, the first calendar month? While Tishrei marks the creation of the world, Nisan is the month of the Redemption from the land of Egypt. The creation of the world is important to commemorate because it demonstrates Hashem's mastery over the universe. Hashem -so to speak- is Master of the Universe because it is His creation. On the other hand, the Redemption from Egypt was the Jewish people's first experience of how Hashem continues to exercise control over the world. Egypt was known to be inescapable by prisoners. According to the expected course of events, the Jews would have remained enslaved there forever. Only Hashem's special intervention freed the Jews from bondage in Egypt. It is incumbent upon every Jew not only to remember that Hashem created the world, but also that Hashem governs all of the world's affairs. Every world event is part of the Divine plan and Hashem carefully guides the course of global affairs. Because the message of Nisan is so important, it has been given high prominence among the months of the Jewish calendar (Source: Parsha Pearls)

שבת שלום!
Shabbat Shalom!



Shabbat starts 3.59pm



Shabbat ends: 5.09pm

The **Sedra Insights 5768** sheet is edited by Chazan Anthony Wolfson
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