



Parashat Bo



English version

THINKING about ME.org

EMOTIONAL OXYGEN TUBES

At the beginning of the Parasha, before the plague of the locust, G-d tells Moshe, לִמְעַן תִּסְפָּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֶיךָ, וְיָדַבְּרֶנּוּךָ. I will bring these plagues on Pharaoh, in order for you to tell of it in the ears of your children and grandchildren. What was so special about the plague of the locust that only here, not in reference to any other plague, G-d said that we are to tell our children and grandchildren?

It is interesting. Each plague was a month. A week of plague and three weeks' break. That means that the plague of Firstborn was Nissan, Darkness was Adar, (ליהודים היתה אורה ושמהה וששון ויקר), And Locust was Shevat. Even before this plague of Locusts, in the beginning of Shevat, Pharaoh had tried to bargain. Let only the men go now. The children stay in Egypt. Only the men need to go to serve G-d, not the kids. Moshe said, nothing doing. We are not leaving anyone behind. So Pharaoh refused, and opted for the plague.

In essence, if we wanted to worry about our own spirituality, alone, we could have just left the children behind, for the meantime, while we go to Har Sinai and accept the Torah. But, by staying for another three months, until Pharaoh gave in, by slowing down our own spirituality for the sake of the spirituality of the children, we merited וְלִמְעַן תִּסְפָּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֶיךָ וְיָדַבְּרֶנּוּךָ. The power of connection, that our children will be willing to listen to religion, and to trust in it enough, to pass it down to their own children. Because the only way we can affect our children, to keep them religious, is to slow down for them.

Slowing down does not mean lowering our own level of observance, for their sake. It means having patience with them; it means taking interest in their seemingly simple values. It means recognizing that they are not moving at our pace, and it requires us to learn what is on their mind. To be emotionally present with them.

There is a power-question I use when trying to connect with people. *What do you do in your spare time?* This question helps me find the values of the person I am trying to connect with. And in order for me to coach someone successfully, I need to build rapport. And rapport is dependent on how well you connect. It is a mistake to think, "I am too much above this", "My Shabbat table should be only Divrei Torah". If you want to influence, you need trust. If you want trust, you need rapport. If you want rapport, you need to slow down.

When R Moshe Feinstein came to test yeshiva bachurim on the Perek they learnt, R Moshe did not end up testing them. He asked them, What do you do in your spare time? They said, "We play basketball". R Moshe opened up the conversation: "In what ways can you play basketball like a Jew, differently from a Gentile?" Because R Moshe knew that to influence, you need rapport, you need to bond. To be Mekarev effectively, you cannot use the "Join Us" method. That one does not work. Effective Kiruv is about getting a person from his own point A to his own point B. From the Jew he is, to the Jew he wants to be. **ON THEIR TERMS.** Because *the only way you can connect*, is on their terms.



This reminds me of a story from Rabbi Nachman of Breslov. There was once a prince who went through an identity crisis and came to the conclusion that he was really a turkey and not a human being. The king was ready to do anything to cure his son. The finest doctors and psychiatrists tried to cure the prince, all to no avail. The king was at a loss, until a gentle-looking, wise man came to the palace. He offered his help, which the king and queen were ready to accept.

The following day, the prince had company under the table. It was the wise man. "What are you doing here?" asked the turkey prince. "Why are you here?" "I am a turkey." "Well, I am also a turkey," The wise man began to gobble like a turkey and peck at the crumbs on the floor. The prince was convinced. A few days passed in this fashion.

One morning, the wise man signaled to the king to bring him a shirt. He said to the prince, "I don't see any reason a turkey can't wear a shirt." The prince thought about it and agreed, and soon the two of them were wearing shirts. The wise man asked to be brought a pair of pants. He said to the prince, "Is it forbidden for turkeys to wear pants? Of course not!" The prince thought it over and agreed, and soon the two of them were wearing pants.

The process continued. The wise man convinced the prince that it was not forbidden for turkeys to eat human food, which surely tasted better. Then came sitting at the table and enjoying human conversation. Within a short time, the turkey prince, although still maintaining that he was a turkey, began conducting himself exactly like a regular person.

So many times, we can't help others because we are so busy with our own spirituality, projects, or just busy being busy. Rabbi YY Rubinstien said, in the name of his Rebbi, something very powerful. We know that Reuven saved Yosef from his brothers, by putting him in the pit. Then, the brothers sat down to eat lunch, and during lunch, Shimon and Levi decided to kill Yosef. Yehuda saved Yosef by selling him. Reuven came back to the pit, and Yosef was gone. Reuven tore his clothes, and asked his brothers what they had done. And, now, how was he to face his father?

Rashi asks, where was Reuven at the time of the sale? Why did he disappear when his brothers sat down for lunch? Because Reuven went to do his fasting, sackcloth and ashes, for his hasty act of moving his father's bed next to his mother, Leah's, so many years earlier.

But Reuven! You could have saved us all from 210 years of slavery in Egypt, if you would have just stayed there at the pit and watched over your brother! If you would not have been busy doing Teshuva, but instead, had kept your eyes on your brother in the pit, you could have gotten forgiveness for your mistake from your father, just by being responsible and saving your brother Yosef's life!!

How many times do we not notice our "brother in the pit", because we are too busy with our own lofty levels of spirituality? How many times in life could we have just said the right thing, or just done the right thing, if we would have not been so busy with our own selves??!!

This reminds me of a sad story. Chaim had been a faithful Jew and was in the hospital, breathing his last. The family called their rabbi and asked him to be with them. As the rabbi stood next to the bed, old Chaim's condition appeared to deteriorate, and he motioned frantically for something to write on. The rabbi lovingly handed him a pen and a piece of paper, and Chaim used his last bit of energy to scribble a note before he died. The rabbi thought it best not to look at the note at that time, so he placed it in his jacket pocket.

At the funeral, as he was finishing his eulogy, he realized that he was wearing the same jacket that he had been wearing when Chaim died. He said, to himself and the crowd, "You know, Chaim handed me a note just before he died. I haven't looked at it, but knowing Chaim, I'm sure there's a word of inspiration there for us all." He opened the note, and read, "Hey, you're standing on my oxygen tube!"

How many times do we not realize that because we are so busy with our own growth, or with our "status", that we are stepping on the emotional oxygen tubes of our loved ones?

THE THREE DRIVES OF MAN

Over the last few years, psychology has discovered and revealed what the Torah has been teaching about human behavior for thousands of years. First, psychology taught that material desires were the main motivation for a person's actions. Later, an equally powerful drive, that of the ego, was recognized. Finally, the conclusion was reached that the most powerful drive was the search for meaning in life.

The Torah's view of self-help consistently looks at the person's psyche on three levels, called גר"ן. Or נשמה רוח נפש. A person has within him three voices, three drives, three angles through which he perceives the world and life. The Neshama is the Soul that searches for meaning; the Ruach is the Ego that searches for honor and social recognition, but also for self-esteem, and the Nefesh is the material drive, and the drive for existence. In his book Real Power, Dr. David Lieberman puts it this way: every action that a person does is motivated by the desire to feel good (Nefesh), to look good (Ruach), or to be good (Neshama). This three-pronged approach is the basis for the most effective treatments, as it works on all three motivational levels. (This is the concept behind R Yitzhak Fanger's latest book, FHT. The famous books on how to change, SWITCH, and Change Anything.)

For example, I used to think that there are only two main reasons why yeshiva boys don't do well in Yeshiva. Either there is a learning problem, a lack of learning skills, which results in a lack in connection to learning Torah, or a social problem, lack of social skills, which prevents the boy from connecting to the rest of the yeshiva environment. Either the bachur feels that he is a failure, or he does not feel part of the chevra. But those reasons address only the two levels, the Neshama and the Ruach. There is a much greater problem that drives yeshiva boys out of yeshiva. And that is the Nefesh. The material drive. Something so powerful that it can cause the greatest yeshiva boys to sleep through Shacharit and go days without learning.

We find three different expressions referring to how G-d strengthened the heart of Pharaoh. ויחזק לב. ואני אקשה את לב פרעה. וכבד את לבו. Why does the Torah use these specific three כבד, קישוי, חזוק, קישוי? Don't they all mean the same thing?

The answer is that each one of the three is referring to one of the three levels of the person's psyche mentioned earlier. G-d first made Pharaoh's soul, his wisdom, strong. G-d gave Pharaoh wisdom, but Pharaoh used it in the wrong way, trying to "outsmart" G-d, trying to imitate G-d's miraculous conducting of the world by using his knowledge of witchcraft. Then, G-d strengthened Pharaoh's ego, his Ruach. And then, G-d made Pharaoh's heart, the part of his Nefesh, the materialistic part of Pharaoh's heart, heavy.

The place in the body that connects with the Neshama is the Moach, the mind. The place in the body that connects with the Ruach is the Lev, the heart. The part of the body that relates to the Nefesh is the Kaved, the liver. (Hence, when a person is using all of his drives in descending order, beginning with the mind, the initials of the words Moach, Lev, and Kaved, form the word Melech, or king. That is how a person feels when he uses the correct order - like a king. But when a person allows his drives to work backwards, giving precedence to his Nefesh, he becomes Kaved, Lev and Moach, or Klum, which, in Hebrew, means nothing. That is how a person feels: like a nothing.)

בא אל־פְּרַעֲהוֹ כִּי־אָנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת־לְבוֹ *Come to Pharaoh, because I have made his heart heavy.* "Moshe, the reason why Pharaoh is not going to come running after you now is because I have made his heart heavy. So, the only way you can communicate with him is by you going to him." Listen closely to the words. When G-d wanted to make Pharaoh complacent, not scared even of the Plague of the Firstborn, He strengthened Pharaoh's Kaved. Or more precisely, G-d made Pharaoh's heart into a Kaved. אני הכבדתי את לבו. What does that mean, that G-d made Pharaoh's heart into a liver? Liver is



the only meat that does not soften when cooked: the more heat applied to liver, the harder it gets. Pharaoh lost his heart, he lost his ego, and no matter how foolish he was looking in this game "versus" G-d, he was just in the mode that nothing could move him. He was in the mode of Kaved. The materialistic mode.

The Kotzker Rav draws attention to one word from Rashi and brings to light an amazing concept. The Torah says that at the Plague of the Firstborn, at midnight, when G-d smote all Egyptian firstborn, ריקם פרעה לילה. *Pharaoh got up at night*, and Rashi says, ממטחו, "from his bed". The Kotzker asks, what is Rashi adding here? Of course Pharaoh got up from his bed!!! Where else would he be sleeping? The answer is, said the Kotzker, that it is possible for one who becomes Kaved, even if he has been warned and he knows that G-d is going to kill his favorite son that night, to ignore the warning and go to bed. Pharaoh, with all the warnings about the inevitable, was able to just go to sleep! In his bed!

You see, that is what happens when a person lets his Nefesh, his Kaved, take over. It is not about being materialistic in an immoral way. It is about rejecting all responsibility. *I don't have to answer to anyone. Except for myself.* Once a person enters

his own world, without recognizing anything outside of himself, G-d is forgotten, his wife is forgotten, his children are forgotten. *There is nothing else in life but me.* So why should he get up before eleven Shabbat morning, Friday morning, or Bein Hazmanim in the morning? The main motive of life, for many, is freedom. Freedom from responsibilities, as if freedom from responsibility is success. This is the third powerful drive for yeshiva boys to lose their connection to learning and fall out of yeshiva.

But this is a huge mistake. Studies have proven, over and over again, that people who come up with great inventions, great artists, great thinkers, do not become great from staying home, from thinking alone, free from people and responsibilities. To release their creative juices, they get out there, meet with people, learn the world, learn what people are dealing with. We grow from responsibilities and relationships, and we shrivel from solitude. And in order for you to have relationships, you need to get out of your bubble. You need to be there for others, feel for others. In order for you to grow in learning, you need to have a study partner, or a Rabbi. You can't grow alone.

Torah self-help is simple. It is a healthy balance of Neshama, Ruach, and Nefesh.

Does learning or reading cause you fatigue?
Do you wish you could triple your learning speed, and cover 3 books in the time it presently takes you to finish one?
Is your time in the Beit Midrash important to you?
Do you wish you could remember your learning better?
Do you wish you could improve your listening in class, and improve your listening in conversations?
Does your mind wander too often while praying?
Do you hate tests?
Do you wish you were more focused while reading a book or sefer, especially Gemarra and text books?

If you said YES to any of these questions, or if someone you care for can be helped with any of these,

Rabbi Farhi can help!!

CALL NOW!!



052-7679186



RABBIYOSEFFARHI@GMAIL.COM



YOSEFFARHI.COM

To support this publication, or receive it by e-mail, please email me at rabbiyoseffarhi@gmail.com.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SONNY AND IRENE GINDI A"H



CHECK OUT NEW WEBSITE YOSEFFARHI.COM FOR MORE MOTIVATIONAL CONTENT