**[The Driver – Parshat Bo](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-driver-parshat-bo)**

The other day, I called a Lyft at the airport and I was picked up by an interesting fellow named Art. Art told me that he was much more than a mere Lyft driver, and that he liked to serve his customers by giving them special advice.

The first advice he gave me was about the fact that Phoenix will soon be forbidding Lyft and Uber from taking people to or from the airport, due to a dispute about the fees the companies would have to pay to the city. His advice was that I could take Lyft to the rental car buildings near the airport, and then take the shuttle the rest of the way.

The second advice he gave me had to do with the proper tequila to use for different purposes – one brand for shots, another for margaritas, another for mixing with lime and soda.

Finally, he told me about a recent tragic incident in which one of those new driverless cars hit and killed a pedestrian. He explained that a homeless woman walked out into the street from behind some bushes, and the car was not able to “see” the woman until it was too late. He explained that a human driver would have been able to see the woman through the bushes, but the car was unable to sense her through the foliage.

As we automate more and more of the world we inhabit, we must be ever aware of the dangers inherent in turning over control to machines. This is one of the great themes of our day, expressed in classics like the Terminator movies, the Matrix movies, The Borg of Star Trek, and many more. In a slightly more concealed way, it is also found in the many Zombie movies and television shows. Zombies are like mindless machines, simply carrying out their programming to eat anyone and everyone in their path.

Both cultural images – the rogue machines as well as the undead – are so powerful not only because we are automating more and more of our external world, but also because they point to our *inner* world as well: the world of impulses, desires, and passions.

Like most of our external automations, our desires are mostly useful. When we feel the impulse to breath, for example, we can generally trust that impulse. We don’t have to pay much attention to it; we can let it “take over” and dictate our next breath. However, when we swim under water, the impulse to breath can be deadly. In that case, we’ve got to *be aware* of the impulse and not succumb to it until we come up for air.

Similarly, the impulse to eat is crucial to our survival. But if you work in a bakery and you’re surrounded by cake all day long, you might have to watch your impulse to eat. The same goes for many other impulses we have.

The problem is not desire; desire serves our survival. The problem is *unconsciousness of desire,* of letting the desire take control, of becoming the victim of our desires. Just as it is with driverless cars: we shouldn’t lose our attentiveness completely; we still have to watch.

All of this is true for anyone in ordinary situations.

But for the aspirant who wants to become more conscious, attentiveness has a whole other dimension. It’s not merely for the sake of averting danger, it’s also for its own sake. Ordinarily, it is important to be aware of our breathing only if we are under water. But spiritually, it is beneficial to be aware of our breathing constantly, because it is through the deliberate cultivation of awareness that we come to know ourselves *as* awareness and thus become free. In fact, awareness of our impulse to breath or eat *is itself a kind of breathing and eating;* through awareness *of* our desires, awareness itself is deeply nourished.

There is a hint of this in the *parshah:*

וַיַּ֣עַל הָֽאַרְבֶּ֗ה עַ֚ל כָּל־אֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרַ֔יִם
*And the locusts came upon all the land of Egypt…*

וַיֹּ֜אכַל אֶת־כָּל־עֵ֣שֶׂב הָאָ֗רֶץ וְאֵת֙ כָּל־פְּרִ֣י הָעֵ֔ץ אֲשֶׁ֥ר הוֹתִ֖יר הַבָּרָ֑ד וְלֹא־נוֹתַ֨ר כָּל־יֶ֧רֶק בָּעֵ֛ץ וּבְעֵ֥שֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶ֖ה בְּכָל־אֶ֥רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם׃
*And they ate all the greenery of the land and all the fruits of the trees which the hail had left, so that nothing green was left of tree or grass of the field, in all the land of Egypt.*

These locusts are the embodiment of desire, consuming everything in their path. They are also insects, which are often considered to be disgusting by humans and generally unfit for eating:

כֹּ֚ל שֶׁ֣רֶץ הָע֔וֹף הַהֹלֵ֖ךְ עַל־אַרְבַּ֑ע שֶׁ֥קֶץ ה֖וּא לָכֶֽם׃
*All winged swarming things that walk on fours shall be an abomination for you.*
(Leviticus 11:21)

Insects are generally not kosher. And yet, when it comes to locusts, the taboo against eating insects no longer applies:

אֶת־הָֽאַרְבֶּ֣ה*…*אַ֤ךְ אֶת־זֶה֙ תֹּֽאכְל֔וּ מִכֹּל֙ שֶׁ֣רֶץ הָע֔וֹף הַהֹלֵ֖ךְ עַל־אַרְבַּ֑ע
*But this you shall eat from all winged swarming things that walk on fours… the locust!*
(Leviticus 11:22)

The locust, the symbol of desire and consumption, is good to consume! The hidden message here is that we must “eat” our “eating” – we must “feed” our consciousness by being present with our impulses and desires. How do we do that?

וַיֹּ֤אמֶר יְהוָה֙ אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֔ה בֹּ֖א אֶל־פַּרְעֹ֑ה כִּֽי־אֲנִ֞י הִכְבַּ֤דְתִּי אֶת־לִבּוֹ֙ וְאֶת־לֵ֣ב עֲבָדָ֔יו לְמַ֗עַן שִׁתִ֛י אֹתֹתַ֥י אֵ֖לֶּה בְּקִרְבּֽוֹ׃

*The Divine said to Moses, “Come to Pharaoh. For I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his courtiers, so that I may place My signs among them…*

*Bo el Paro –* “Come to Pharaoh” means that the Divine is *within* Pharaoh, beckoning us to “come” – meaning, to bring awareness to the feeling of the impulse in order to reclaim the consciousness trapped within it.

*Hikhbadti et libo – I have hardened his heart –* The “hardness” of our impulses is not merely for keeping us alive. Its deeper purpose is to give our consciousness something to wrestle with, so that it may be strengthened and thus awaken to its full potential. That is the greatest miracle – the miracle of coming to know what we truly are – alive, spacious and free – *so that I may place My signs among them...*

***More on Parshat Bo...***

[**The Inner Child – Parshat Bo**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-inner-child-parshat-bo)

I recently gave my thirteen-year-old son an electric guitar after he expressed a desire to play. He then surprised me by spending enormous chunks of time learning guitar from YouTube videos – The Eagles, Fleetwood Mac, Queen – the rock guitar classics. Some days he’s been sitting and practicing for nearly six hours at a time!

Now what to do you think would happen if I told him that he *has* to sit for six hours and practice guitar? Obviously, that wouldn’t work, and I might be arrested for child abuse. Maybe Mozart’s father could get away with that kind of thing, but I wouldn’t dare try. That kind of intensity *has* to come from an inner passion; you don’t sit and practice for six hours unless you *really want to.*

Passion is totally different from self-discipline, from making and sticking to commitments and obligations. And, passion is something we have as children; it’s not something we have to develop, like the adult qualities of being responsible, following through on plans and so on.

Obviously, adult qualities are also necessary. In fact, it is doubtful he would have been able to sit down and teach himself guitar like that had I not been requiring him to practice piano and drums from a very young age. I imposed an adult-based discipline structure on him, and that gave him a basic foundation of musical skill. That skill is useful for musical greatness, but not sufficient. For greatness you need to become passionately obsessed! And that kind of passion is a child-like quality; it doesn’t have to be developed or created, only uncovered and unleashed.

This is especially true with spirituality.

It is important, perhaps essential, to have a committed practice, to study the teachings regularly, to put spirituality on your to-do list and use your adult mind to make it a priority.

But if that’s *all* you’ve got, it won’t go deep. You may master texts and rituals and words, but all that will remain on the surface. You can use your adult mind to set aside times for prayer, but once you start praying, you’ve got to become like a child and cry out from the heart. You can use your adult mind to set aside times for meditation, but once you start meditating, you’ve got to be really curious like a child – *what is happening in this moment?* – rather than merely doing a technique.

וַיֹּ֣אמֶר משֶׁ֔ה בִּנְעָרֵ֥ינוּ וּבִזְקֵנֵ֖ינוּ נֵלֵ֑ךְ ... כִּ֥י חַג־יְהֹוָ֖ה לָֽנוּ

*Moses said, “With our children and our elders we will go… for it is a festival of the Divine for us…”*

In this week’s parshah, Pharaoh asks Moses who will be leaving Egypt, hoping that only the men will go. That’s what the ego whispers to us: *“It’s okay, you can do your spiritual practice – just put it on your agenda. Be adult about it.”*

But Moses says, *“No, we’re all going – our children and elders both must go celebrate the festival!”*

If we want our spiritual life to be true celebration of Being, and not be coopted by ego/Pharaoh, we’ve got to invoke the child within. Certainly, we need the *z’keinim* – the elders – as well, but once the adult mind has performed its function, once the adult mind has done its organizing and planning, give the adult a break and bring forth the child within. Only then can you really serve *b’khol levavkh’a* – with all your heart, with all your being…

[**The Sweet Roll- Parshat Bo**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-sweet-roll-parshat-bo)
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I remember a funny sketch from an old Electric Company episode. A man dressed in what looks like a navel uniform sits in a restaurant and orders from a waitress with puffy red hair and a classic blue waitress uniform:

“I’ll have a cup of coffee and a sweet roll,” says the man.

 “We are out of sweet rolls,” says the waitress.

“A glass of milk and a sweet roll.”

“We- are- out- of- sweet- rolls,” the waitress repeats a little bit more slowly.

“Ice tea and a sweet roll.”

*“We are out of sweet rolls!”*The redness of her hair starts migrating into her face, leaving her hair white.

“Orange juice and a sweet roll?”

She really leans in now- “WE ARE OUT OF SWEET ROLLS!!!”

“Okay, then, I’ll just have a sweet roll.”

“AAAAARRRRRGH!!!!” She screams and runs out the door.

How many times have you gotten some message over and over again in your life, but you didn’t listen? Or perhaps you couldn’t listen?

In this week’s reading, that’s what happens to Pharaoh. Moses and Aaron present plague after plague to Pharaoh in order to persuade him-

*"Shalakh ami!
     "Let my people go!"*

During each plague Pharaoh relents, but after each one subsides, he contracts into his old position- he just doesn’t get it. What does he think he’s accomplishing?

But that’s exactly what the ego does: it brings suffering upon itself over and over again, rather than learning the all-important lesson: *Let go!*

So why is it often so difficult to let go?

One common reason is the fear that if you were to *let go,* you’d be ignoring your real problems- that you’d become irresponsible and everything would fall apart.

Actually, the opposite is true.

When you lose your happiness and freedom because you’re struggling with your problems, you now have two problems- both the difficult situation *and*the inner tension and negativity generated by your struggling and worrying.

And with all that inner tension, how are you going to improve things?

But when you bring your awareness to your resistance and see it clearly for what it is, there’s a higher wisdom that can flow into your life. New possibilities can appear that were previously hidden.

That’s because your awareness is much bigger than “you” can see. Your ego/personality is “Pharaoh”- king of *Mitzrayim-*of narrowness, of limitedness, mindlessly repeating the same old patterns over and over again.

But your awareness is Divine- it’s Reality looking through your eyes- courageous, creative, present and free.

So next time you find yourself struggling, resisting or reacting with negativity, see if you can "catch yourself in the act." Be curious about it- see the pattern that's emerging. If you're feeling too much negativity to see clearly, try prayer. Ask the Divine to help you, to free you from the pattern. Just this simple act creates a new inner space in which your awareness can rise above whatever inner noise you're experiencing. Then, be alert for whatever answer comes, whatever new possibility reveals itself.

The Divine Presence is always with you- It is your own presence, beneath your mind, beneath your personality.

There's a story about a hasid named Mottel of Kashlin, a businessman who had extensive dealings in Warsaw and spoke Polish fluently. One day, Reb Yitzhak of Vorki called for him with a request.

The Polish government had issued a decree to burn all extant copies of the *Shulkhan Arukh, Hoshen  Mishpat-*The Code of Jewish Law that deals with civil and criminal matters. The goal was to force Jews to take their litigation to the Polish courts rather than the rabbinical courts. No books had been burned yet, and Reb Yitzhak wanted Mottel to approach a certain powerful Polish minister and convince him to retract the decree.

“But that minister has a raging temper!” Mottel protested. “He threatens to shoot anyone who comes with requests like that!”

The *tzaddik* replied, “When *Hashem* sent Moses to save his people, he didn’t tell him to *go*to Pharaoh. He said:

*'Bo el Paro-*
*“Come to Pharaoh…'*

"Moses was afraid, so *Hashem* reassured him that the Divine Presence would be going with him."

So Mottel set out to confront the minister, calm and unafraid. When he arrived, he spoke eloquently and convincingly. The powerful man was awestruck by the presence of the brave yet calm and joyful hasid who stood before him, and granted his request.

O *Hashem,* on this *Shabbos Bo,*the Sabbath to Come, may Your wisdom and transcendent bliss come into our lives through this gift of awareness with which you imbue us. May this awareness come to touch every manifestation of "Pharaoh" that You've given each of us to elevate and transform. May we not require any more of the plagues of violence and narrowness on our planet in order to evolve- Transformation now! *Moshiakh Akhshav!*

[**Ignoring Ignorance- Parshat Bo
​**​](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/ignoring-ignorance-parshat-bo)
Sometimes you might be fooled into thinking that spiritual freedom is a delusion, that in order to have it you would need to ignore your real problems. Actually, the opposite is true. When you lose your happiness and freedom because you are thinking about your problems, isn’t that the delusion? Is it not delusion to think that by making yourself miserable you are somehow addressing or improving your situation? In reality, you now have two problems- the difficult situation *and*the inner tension and negative energy generated by your thoughts.

In this week’s reading, *Parshat Bo,* Moses has been presenting plague after plague to Pharaoh, but Pharaoh just doesn’t get it. He doesn’t realize that his refusal to let the Israelites go free is bringing plagues upon himself. What does he think he is accomplishing? But that is exactly what the ego does: it brings suffering upon itself, rather than allowing liberation to happen.

The remedy is in the opening lines in which G-d says to Moses, *“Bo el Paro-* come to Pharaoh.” G-d doesn’t say, “go to Pharaoh” but “come to Pharaoh”, indicating that G-d is there with Pharaoh, telling Moses to “come”. In other words, the Divine is found in the suffering itself, not in trying to avoid it.

Bring your awareness *into*your suffering. Don’t look out into the future *from* your suffering, imagining that things will be better once you get what you want. The end of suffering and the beginning of liberation is the un-knotting of the Pharaoh, and that begins with bringing your attention *into* the Pharaoh, becoming conscious of the energetic knot of resistance within. Once that knot is broken, liberation is immediate; it is a leap. Don’t try to be too prepared. When it’s time to go, just go. Unleavened bread and all. There is only one chance, and that chance is now… and yet "now" never ends!

There is a hint of this in the word *"bo"*which means "come". It is composed of two letters- *bet*and *aleph.*The *bet*has the numerical value of two, and can mean "house". The *aleph*as the value of one, and among its many meanings are "chief" and "ox". In the movement of consciousness toward any contraction that is arising within your body, the contraction can release and the duality between consciousness and contraction of consciousness can shift into unity. Rather than there being suffering on one hand, and resistance to suffering on the other, there is just presence with Being as it is unfolding. To do this, you have to be like a *bayit-*a welcoming home for whatever arises within. Then, you can evolve into an *aluf-*a "chief" of self mastery, unified within, strong and rooted like an ox.

May this Shabbat see the un-knotting of all contracted separateness and may we *come*close to the Divine Presence in sweet intimacy for healing, peace and wisdom. Amein.