**Overflowing – GIMEL – *Parshat Bo***

Early in the career of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch he and his wife lived in great poverty. There were times when they had nothing to eat for days. During one such period, they were so hungry that his wife’s body could no longer produce milk for their infant. At first, the baby cried from hunger, but eventually, the baby became too weak even to cry.

The Maggid never complained about anything, but simply accepted life as it happened. But this one time, as he sat with his wife and the baby who was too weak to cry, he let out a sigh of despair. Immediately, a Voice came to him and declared that for this little complaint, he would be denied life in *Olam Haba,* the World to Come.

The Maggid smiled to himself and prayed, “*Barukh Hashem!* Now that the future has been done away with, I can begin to serve God fully *lishmah,* for its own sake, in the present.”

The Thirteenth Path is third Hebrew letter, ג *gimel*. *Gimel* means “camel,” which hints at the inner meaning of the Path: just as the camel carries its nourishment in its hump as it traverses the desert, so too there is a vast and inexhaustible abundance within that we carry with us as we traverse the “desert” of life; we only need to know how to access it.

This inner abundance is fundamentally different from our ordinary, dualistic desires and needs for outer abundance. In the outer sense, in the flow of life through time, there is always an oscillation between abundance and lack. Take a deep breath and you feel complete; a few moments later you feel need, and you must take another breath. But *inner* abundance is different, because it is inherent in the consciousness that perceives *both* outer abundance *and* outer lack in time; inner abundance is the abundance with no opposite. Consciousness is, by nature, vast, spacious, whole, and complete.

And yet, even though the abundance inherent in consciousness is always there at the root of our being, our *experience* of it comes and goes, just as all experiences come and go. It is like the ocean – always there, but we need to take the action of going to the beach and immersing ourselves in it. That act of immersion is meditation.

Meditation, at its root, is sustained Presence – the bringing of consciousness into intimate connection with the fulness of experience as it appears in the present. As we intentionally connect with whatever is present, disengaging from the stream of thinking, that quality of wholeness inherent in consciousness becomes visible to itself. With sustained practice, consciousness becomes more and more reflected in the three levels of experience – sensory (*Nefesh*), emotion/feeling/mood (*Ruakh*), and thought/mind (*Neshamah*) – renewing our sense of wellbeing at all levels.

But, meditation is not the only way to bring forth a connection with one’s inner abundance; we can also approach it from the opposite angle, the angle of action. When we behave *as if* that abundance is there, by living from love and giving generously to others, the giving itself can bring forth an awareness of our inner wellspring.

כִּֽי־יִהְיֶה֩ בְךָ֨ אֶבְי֜וֹן מֵאַחַ֤ד אַחֶ֙יךָ֙ בְּאַחַ֣ד שְׁעָרֶ֔יךָ בְּאַ֨רְצְךָ֔ אֲשֶׁר־יְהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֶ֖יךָ נֹתֵ֣ן לָ֑ךְ לֹ֧א תְאַמֵּ֣ץ אֶת־לְבָבְךָ֗ וְלֹ֤א תִקְפֹּץ֙ אֶת־יָ֣דְךָ֔ מֵאָחִ֖יךָ הָאֶבְיֽוֹן׃

*If there is a needy person among you, from one of your brethren in any of your settlements in your land that the Hashem your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and do not shut your hand to your needy brethren.*

כִּֽי־פָתֹ֧חַ תִּפְתַּ֛ח אֶת־יָדְךָ֖ ל֑וֹ וְהַעֲבֵט֙ תַּעֲבִיטֶ֔נּוּ דֵּ֚י מַחְסֹר֔וֹ אֲשֶׁ֥ר יֶחְסַ֖ר לֽוֹ׃

*Rather, open your hand to them and willingly lend them enough for whatever they need.*

* *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) 15:7

These verses encompass two different *mitzvot –* the *mitzvah* of giving to those in need (*tzedakah*), as well as the *mitzvah* of lending to those in need. The situation determines which is appropriate; if one is in an emergency for basic needs, *tzedakah* is more appropriate. But if their need is an investment to start a business and help themselves, lending is better. It is also worth noting that it is forbidden to charge interest when lending. While the precise rules about this are complex, the basic idea is simple – giving of oneself to uplift fellow beings.

וְהַעֲבֵט֙ תַּעֲבִיטֶ֔נּוּ דֵּ֚י – *V’ha’aveit ta’aviteinu dei – willingly lend enough…*

In the social sphere, the word *dei,* “enough,” means that our giving must be aimed at actually being helpful to the recipient. But on the inner level, the hint here is that through the act of giving “enough” to others, we can become aware of our own inner “enough-ness” – that is, the recognition that we are, in essence, complete and whole; this is awakening to the *gimel* quality of our deepest being.

And in this recognition, we can let go of the psychological urge to “look” toward something or someone to make ourselves complete, to fill the lack we often feel on the external level of time and form. We can “let go” of it because it will have done its job; in fact, it is impossible to fully recognize our inner wholeness without first feeling the pain incompleteness.

לֹֽא־רָא֞וּ אִ֣ישׁ אֶת־אָחִ֗יו וְלֹא־קָ֛מוּ אִ֥ישׁ מִתַּחְתָּ֖יו שְׁלֹ֣שֶׁת יָמִ֑ים וּֽלְכָל־בְּנֵ֧י יִשְׂרָאֵ֛ל הָ֥יָה א֖וֹר בְּמוֹשְׁבֹתָֽם׃

*No one could not see their brethren and no person could arise from their place for three days; but for all the Children of Israel, there was light in their dwellings…*

* *Shemot* (Exodus) 10:23, *Parshat Bo*

This passage, describing the plague of darkness inflicted on Egypt in the Exodus story, juxtaposes dark and light, representing the states of incompleteness and wholeness. When we are stuck in the *hoshekh,* the “darkness,” we are in Egypt, *Mitzrayim,* the narrow place; that is, identification with limitedness:

שְׁלֹ֣שֶׁת יָמִ֑ים …וְלֹא־קָ֛מוּ …לֹֽא־רָא֞וּ –*They could neither see nor rise, three days…*

*Ra’u,* “seeing,” is perceiving goodness in life. *Kamu,* “rising,” is feeling *motivated* to live, feeling that there is something to live for. *Shloshet yamim,* “three days,” represents those three levels of being that make up our sense of separate self: physical/sensory awareness (*Nefesh*), emotion/feeling/mood (*Ruakh*), and thought/mind (*Neshamah*). All of this makes up ego, the sense of being a separate someone. Ego is “darkness” in the sense that it obscures our essence; it covers up the inner vastness that we are.

וּֽלְכָל־בְּנֵ֧י יִשְׂרָאֵ֛ל הָ֥יָה א֖וֹר בְּמוֹשְׁבֹתָֽם – *and for all the Children of Israel, there was light in their dwellings…*

On the other hand, all three levels exist only because of our essence; this is the “light” of awareness itself. The hint here in juxtaposing the “light” and the “darkness” is that they need each other; it is through our *awareness of* the darkness – meaning, our Presence with our experience as it arises in the three levels – that our awareness can come to recognize itself, that we can come to know our essence as the light. This is hinted in the opening line of the *parshah:*

וַיֹּ֤אמֶר יְהוָה֙ אֶל־מֹשֶׁ֔ה בֹּ֖א אֶל־פַּרְעֹ֑ה כִּֽי־אֲנִ֞י הִכְבַּ֤דְתִּי אֶת־לִבּוֹ֙

*The Divine said to Moses, “Come to Pharaoh – for I have hardened his heart…*

* *Shemot* (Exodus) 10:1, *Parshat Bo*

The “hardened heart” is the ego’s resistance to present experience; it is the ossified sense of self as a being-in-need with its sense of incompleteness. It is emotional pain.

But *Hashem* says, בֹּא *Bo!*

Come to this moment as it is, bring the light of awareness to the truth of this moment; this is the path to Exodus, the path to the freedom of knowing our inner vastness, the *gimel* within…

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

[**The Driver – Parshat Bo**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/the-driver-parshat-bo)
1/27/2020 [0 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/the-driver-parshat-bo#comments)

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...

[**The Inner Child – Parshat Bo**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-inner-child-parshat-bo)
1/11/2019 [0 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-inner-child-parshat-bo#comments)

 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)
​1/14/2016  [5 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-sweet-roll-parshat-bo%22%20%5Cl%20%22comments)

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)1/23/2015   [1 Comment](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/ignoring-ignorance-parshat-bo#comments)

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.