

FUCHSBERG JERUSALEM CENTER CONSERVATIVE YESHIVA

TORAH SPARKS

Parshat Bo

January 20, 2024 | 10 Shvat 5784

Torah: Exodus 10:1–13:16 **Triennial:** Exodus 11:4–12:28

Haftarah: Jeremiah 46:13–28

We believe that in times of great strife, words of Torah can provide stability and comfort in our lives.

We know that you join us in praying for the safety of our soldiers and citizens, and that together we mourn the terrible losses already suffered.

We stand together for a strong and secure Israel.

Stuck in Redemption

Bex Stern-Rosenblatt

Parashah

It's hard to read Exodus. It's hard to make sense of a God who is clearly intervening in history, acting out miracles, and yet is willing to let so much suffering happen. This one dreadful story, this experience of the worst suffering followed by the experience of the highest awakening, meeting God at Mount Sinai, is meant to be a one-time event. This is the suffering to end all suffering. This should be the final experience, the last time we have to live through something like this. For our children and children's children, it should be a story, a memory passed down and revered, but it should not be their lives. The drama,

the big signs that God displays, are to make it a better, bigger story. We are commanded, over and over again, to tell this story to our children. It's almost as if we are trying to cast some protection over them. If God makes the story dramatic enough, if we tell the story well enough, it will never have to happen again.

The problem, of course, is it does happen again. As we recite in our haggadah, not just in one time and in one generation, but in every time and in every generation they rise up against us to destroy us. And the Holy One, Blessed Be He, rescues us from their hand. The Exodus changes from a singular event, which formed us as a people and whose remembrance was meant to sustain us as a people, to the paradigm through which we understand all other events. In every generation since and in our own generation today we look out for Pharaoh. We experience terrible suffering. And we demand of ourselves and of God a way out, a way to survive.

The solution, of course, is that it does happen again. As a people, we do survive Pharaoh, not just in the Exodus generation, but in every generation. We continue. We live on, to suffer, to fight, to be redeemed again and again. Just as we begin to worry about how to turn the experiences of our parents and grandparents into stories that we can transmit to our children, history repeats. We live the Exodus not as a story told on Passover but as a lifeboat, as a promise that we will survive this moment too. The suffering that is detailed in the Exodus

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story becomes not excess or signs of God's absence, but the promise of God's eventual presence in our own lives.

We still wish for something better. It is not enough. In every generation, we pray that it will be different for our children. The haftarah this week happens hundreds of years after the Exodus. Once again, we are dealing with Egypt. Once again, Egypt is harshly punished, this time by the Babylonians. Once again, we are redeemed. This time, we dream of a better future, an end to the need of the Exodus story. We read, in Jeremiah 46:27, "And you, my servant Jacob, do not fear. Do not be afraid, Israel. Because I am here, delivering you from afar, returning your children from the land of their captivity. And Jacob will return and all will be still and peaceful. And no one will make him afraid."

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Co-Creating the Calendar

Rabbi Daniel Raphael Silverstein

Insights from Hassidut

Rabbi Daniel Silverstein teaches Hassidut at the CY and directs Applied Jewish Spirituality (www.appliedjewishspirituality.org). In these weekly videos, he shares Hassidic insights on the parashah or calendar.

Click below to watch the [video](#):



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Darkness

Ilana Kurshan

White Fire: Poetry on the Parashah

In homage to Natan Alterman's Shirei Makkot Mitzrayim and Goethe's Erlkonig

My oldest son sleeps soundly in pitch darkness.
I cannot see his legs, his form, his head
I know he's in this room somewhere beside me
I wade through blackness searching for his bed.

"My son!" I cry. The darkness, so thick, muffles
My voice. I cannot hear my feverish pitch
No sight. No sound. And all I feel is darkness.
In Egypt, day is night. And night's bewitched.

My son, my firstborn son, it's nearly springtime
But what's the equinox if night won't end?
It's been two days of darkness. I am blinded.
My world is a black curtain I can't rend.

I pray for dawn, for any trace of light
My son, could death be worse than endless night?

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The Talmud teaches that the Torah was given in black fire on white fire (Y. Shekalim 6:1). The black fire is the letters of the Torah scroll, and the white fire is the parchment background. In this column, consisting of a poem on each parashah, I will try to illuminate the white fire of Torah – the midrashim, stories, and interpretations that carve out the negative space of the letters and give them shape.