

Torah Portion Bo
Exodus 10:1 – 13:16

The word “Bo” means Go in Hebrew, taken from the first words of the above scriptures.

In this portion we read about the 8th, 9th and 10th plagues, the Passover, the consecration of the firstborn, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Law of the Firstborn.

In Exodus 12:12, Yahweh states that He will execute judgment upon all the gods of Egypt. He did this with the 10 plagues that He brought upon them. Listed is a summary which explains this judgment:

1st plague – The water turned to blood. Here he showed Himself more powerful than their god Hapi, the god of the Nile.

2nd plague – Frogs. Here he showed Himself more powerful than their god Heket, the god of water and fertility.

3rd plague – Gnats brought forth from the dust of the earth. Here he defeated their god of the earth, Geb.

4th plague – Swarms of flies, thus defeating their god of flies or god of creation, Khepri.

5th plague – Death of Egyptian livestock, defeating their god Apis, who was a god of animals and depicted as a bull.

6th plague – Boils. Here he defeated their god Isis, who was their god of healing.

7th plague – Hail and Fire. Here He defeated their sky goddess, Nut.

8th plague – Locusts brought with the winds, defeating their god Set, god of storms and disorder.

9th plague – Three days of darkness. Here he defeated their sun god, Ra.

10th plague – Death of the firstborn. Here he defeated Pharaoh who declared himself a god of Egypt, the god Amon, son of Ra.

While most can understand how Yahweh showed Himself more powerful to all of the Egyptians by defeating their gods, I think there was also a lesson here for the children of Israel.

The children of Israel had themselves adopted the pagan culture and gods of the Egyptians. In order to bring them out and make Himself known to them as the only God, He had to show them that the gods of Egypt were false gods, and that He alone was God. They had to learn to fear and trust Him only and His divine deliverance and protection.

We find that Yahweh had declared in Exodus 11:7 that He would make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. By this “difference” Yahweh would show that He was in control and not just superficial circumstances.

Not only was this difference shown by the death of the firstborn of Egypt only, but also of surety beginning with the 4th plague through the 10th plague, only the Egyptians were affected but the land of

Goshen was spared. (Exodus 8:22, 9:4, 9:11, 9:26, 10:12) So, in this way Yahweh taught the children of Israel that He was Supreme and that they needed to reject Egypt and all that they had acquired while living there.

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