

## Parashat Bo / פרשת בא

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<http://www.matsati.com> | [matsati@matsati.com](mailto:matsati@matsati.com)

### Culture, Tradition, and Heritage.

#### This Weeks Reading List:

Torah: Exodus 10:1-13:16

Haftarah: Jeremiah 46:13-46:28

B'rit HaChadashah: Luke 22:7-30 1 Corinthians 11:20-34

### שמות 13:7-8

7 חַג לַיהוָה: מִצּוֹת יֹאכֵל אֶת שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים וְלֹא-יֵרָאֶה לְךָ חֶמֶץ  
8 וְלֹא-יֵרָאֶה לְךָ שָׂאֵר בְּכָל-גְּבֻלְךָ: וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא  
9 לֵאמֹר בְּעִבּוֹר זֶה עָשָׂה יְהוָה לִי בְצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם: וְהָיָה לְךָ  
לְאֵת עַל-יָדְךָ וּלְזִכְרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת יְהוָה בְּפִיךָ

#### *Shemot 13:8*

*13:8 vehigadta levinkha bayom hahu lemor baavur ze asa adonai li betseti mimitsrayim:*

#### *Exodus 13:8*

*13:8 And thou shalt show thy ben in that day, saying, This is because of what Hashem did for me when I came forth out of Mitzrayim. (OJB)*

This verse may or may not be very familiar to you; it is a verse that is quoted numerous times in the Haggadah of Pesach (Passover). Now the Haggadah is a liturgical book which is read during the Seder meal on the Jewish holiday of Pesach. The text guides the performance of the Seder meal as well as the prayers which celebrate and remember Pesach. The Haggadah retells the story of Shmot and provides commentary that lays down the history behind Pesach giving answers to the traditional questions asked by children at the beginning of the Seder meal. The Haggadah is the part of rabbinical literature that is not concerned with the legal issues of Torah rather it discusses the stories, parables, legends, and history of the Jewish people.

The person who recites “hasipur” (הַסִּפּוּר/the story) is called the Maggid (מַגִּיד) which is an itinerant preacher that is skilled as a narrator of stories. A person of more scholarly nature is called a “darshan” that usually occupied the official position of rabbi. The title

of “maggid mesharim” which means “a preacher of uprightness” dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There have been two distinct classes of leaders in Yisrael, the scholar and the rabbi, and the preacher or maggid. In Zechariah a popular prophet is sometimes called “the maggid” in Zechariah 9:12 which translates “maggid mishneh” to “the maggid repeats”

## זכריה 9:12

וּבְנֵי לְבָצָר וְזֶן אֲסִירֵי הַתְּקֵנָה גַּם־הֵי יוֹם מַגִּיד מִשְׁנֶה אָשִׁיב לְךָ:

### *Zecariah 9:12*

*9:12 shuvu levitsaron asirei hatikva gam-hayom magid mishneh ashiv lakh:*

The early maggidim based their preaching on questions addressed to them by the multitude. In the Pesach Seder the first collection of speeches usually begin with “yelammedenu rabbenu” meaning “let our master teach us” where an excellent example is found in the Pesach Haggadah which is introduced by four questions where the reciter or story teller is called “maggid.” The maggid retells the history and heritage Yisrael has in the powerful deliverance G-d provided so many centuries ago. The story of Pesach is so central that G-d has made the observance of Pesach an annual mitzvah.

The question I have is why G-d would make this into a mitzvah to be performed each year. The answer I believe is found in the establishment of heritage and culture.

## Why is your heritage and culture so significant?

The building of a culture and heritage is foundational for ensuring not only your family will continue to remember the Lord, but also future generations will remember the Love of G-d. The reason G-d makes the Pesach Seder a mitzvah is the very same reason we struggle today in relation to our desire to walk in holiness and righteousness before G-d but fail to do so because of tradition, culture, and heritage. Let me explain.

Breaking out of our culture and heritage that is rooted in tradition is very difficult. For some of us the Pesach Seder brings with it fond memories, for others it is brand new. Culture and heritage brings with it fond memories and emotions of well being thus making some things very difficult to resist. One example of this is the Christmas holiday.

### Christmas Holiday

Christmas finds its origins in pagan religions (<http://www.matsati.com/Christmas.pdf>) Christmas or Christ-Mass was a direct adoption of a heathen festival which was observed on December 24-25 in honor of the son of the Babylonian queen Astarte. The Chaldeans centuries earlier than Yeshua called this day “child day” or “Yule day.” The Christmas tree also has its origins in pagan worship. The Gentiles would bring into their homes a fir or pine tree during this period of the year. They would deck the tree with gold and silver ornaments. It is believed that bringing the tree into the home and dressing it up would protect the family from evil spirits. One legend has it that on the eve of Christmas the Yule log was cast into a tree from which divine gifts would appear, presents from the G-

ds to bless men in the New Year. This tree was common practice in the days of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a prophet of Yisrael who expressly warned Yisrael to forsake this heathen custom. G-d recognized this custom as a form of idolatry and it is found in the book of Jeremiah 10:1-9.

### **Jeremiah 10:1-9**

*10:1 Hear the word ADONAI speaks to you, house of Isra'el! 10:2 Here is what ADONAI says: "Don't learn the way of the Goyim, don't be frightened by astrological signs, even if the Goyim are afraid of them; 10:3 for the customs of the peoples are nothing. They cut down a tree in the forest; a craftsman works it with his axe; 10:4 they deck it with silver and gold. They fix it with hammer and nails, so that it won't move. 10:5 Like a scarecrow in a cucumber patch, it cannot speak. It has to be carried, because it cannot walk. Do not be afraid of it it can do nothing bad; likewise it is unable to do anything good!" 10:6 There is no one like you, ADONAI! You are great, and your name is great and mighty. 10:7 Who would not fear you, king of the nations? For it is your due! - since among all the wise of the nations and among all their royalty, there is no one like you. 10:8 One and all they are boorish and stupid; the teaching of their nothings is a piece of wood! 10:9 Silver is beaten into plates, then imported from Tarshish. Gold from Ufaz is worked by a craftsman and shaped by the hands of a goldsmith. They are clothed in blue and purple, all the work of skillful men. (CJB)*

### **Psalms 115:4-7**

*115:4 Their idols are mere silver and gold, made by human hands. 115:5 They have mouths, but they can't speak; they have eyes, but they can't see; 115:6 they have ears, but they can't hear; they have noses, but they can't smell; 115:7 they have hands, but they can't feel; they have feet, but they can't walk; with their throats they can't make a sound. (CJB)*

The point is the difficulty for some people to remove themselves from the pagan practice of Christmas is because of the fond feelings and emotions that it brings from years past celebrating the Christmas tradition. Our traditions, culture, heritage, education, nationality, all of these things can be a hindrance with respect to walking in holiness and righteousness before the Lord. A few examples can illustrate further from the book of John:

## **1:40-41 יוחנן**

40 וְהָעַתְּ הָיְתָה כַּשְׂעָה הָעֲשִׂירִית: וְאַחַד מִן־הַשָּׁנִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ  
41 מֵאֵת יוֹחָנָן וְהִלְכוּ אַחֲרָיו הָיָה אֶנְדְּרִי אֶחָד שָׁמְעוֹן פְּטְרוֹס: הוּא  
מָצָא אֶת־אֶחָיו אֶת־שָׁמְעוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מָצָאנוּ אֶת־הַמָּשִׁיחַ אֲשֶׁר  
42 בִּלְשׁוֹן יוֹן כְּרִיסְטוֹס: וַיְבִיֵּאֵהוּ אֶל־יֵשׁוּעַ וַיִּרְאֵהוּ יֵשׁוּעַ וַיֹּאמֶר

## יוחנן 1:43-47

וַיְהִי מִמָּחֳרָת וַיּוֹאֵל לְלֵכֶת הַגְּלִילָה וַיִּמְצֵא אֶת־פִּילְפּוֹס וַיֹּאמֶר  
43 אֵלָיו יֵשׁוּעַ לֵךְ אַחֲרָי: וּפִילְפּוֹס הָיָה מִבֵּית־צִידְנָה עִיר אַנְדְרִי  
44 וּפְטְרוֹס: וַיִּמְצֵא פִילְפּוֹס אֶת־נְתַנְאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מְצָאנוּ אֹתוֹ  
45 אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב עָלָיו מֹשֶׁה בַּתּוֹרָה וְהַנְּבִיאִים אֶת־יֵשׁוּעַ בְּדִוְסָף  
מִנְצֵרֶת: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו נְתַנְאֵל הֲכִי מִנְצֵרֶת יָבֵא טוֹב וַיֹּאמֶר  
46 אֵלָיו פִּילְפּוֹס בֵּא וּרְאֵה: וַיֵּרָא יֵשׁוּעַ אֶת־נְתַנְאֵל בָּא לְקִרְאָתוֹ  
47 וַיֹּאמֶר עָלָיו אוּלַם זֶה הוּא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר אֵינְכֶם רְמִיָּה: וַיֹּאמֶר  
48 אֵלָיו נְתַנְאֵל מֵאֵין יָדַעְתָּ אֹתִי וַיֵּעַן יֵשׁוּעַ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו טָרַם  
49 קָרָא לְךָ פִּילְפּוֹס בְּהַיּוֹתֶךָ תַּחַת הַתְּאֵנָה רְאִיתֶיךָ: וַיֵּעַן אֹתוֹ

### Examples in Scripture

- Andrew and Simon Peter (*John 1:40-41*)
  - The first thing Andrew does when he found the Messiah was to go to his brother Simon and say to him “we have found the Messiah.”
- Philip and Natan'el (*John 1:43-47*)
  - Philip found Natan'el and told him “we’ve found the one that Moshe wrote about in the Torah”

In this time in history, tradition, culture, education, and nationality, Yisrael was looking for their Messiah. The first thing Andrew and Philip did was to run and tell their brothers and friends that they have found the Messiah, the promised one of G-d. In both instances, Simon Peter and Nathan'el both followed to see the Messiah Yeshua. Interestingly however is Natan'el's response to Philip saying: “*John 1:46 vayomer elayv netaneel hakiy minezeret yabo tvob vayomer elayv piylipvos bo vreeh:*” which is translated to say “Natan'el said can anything good come from Natzeret (Nazareth)? ...” When Philip told Nathan'el that he had found the Messiah Natan'el come back with doubt, this an example of what is called a “religious mute button.”

### Every culture has its religious mute buttons.

- USA – pluralism, the USA has a love for its ideals of pluralism which is the beliefs that diversity is beneficial to society and that disparate functional or cultural groups of which society is composed including religious groups, professional organisms and ethnic minorities should be autonomous. The love of pluralism finds its problems when as believers in Yeshua we come proclaiming the “good news” that Yeshua has provided us a means for salvation and forgiveness before a Holy G-d. It is at this point when the religious mute button

goes on and nothing else is heard nor believed. Similar to Natan'el's response to Philip.

- **Europe** – has a similar problem in the sense which states “oh Christianity” we have tried that and done that and it doesn't work for us. Absolute truth has been replaced by truth which is relative on a person by person basis. As believers in Yeshua, bringing the message of an absolute savior and Messiah immediately turns on the religious mute button.
- **Middle East** – the two major religions found in the Middle East is Judaism and Islam. These people groups definitely understand the concept of monotheism and one G-d. However, begin to talk about Yeshua Hamoshiach and immediately the religious mute button goes on and we get a similar situation of doubt, rejection, and disbelief. In the middle east we find an interesting mingling of Yeshua with the USA meaning when Yeshua is mentioned it is immediately equated with the USA which is considered to be an evil country which cannot be trusted.

In each of these examples we find tradition, culture, education, ethnicity, and nationality plays a part in the interpretation of scripture, along with our walk and relationship with G-d. This is the reason why G-d made the Pesach Seder a mitzvah. The Pesach Seder has become a tradition, a culture, and heritage, all of which is more difficult to break once established because it brings with it emotions and feelings remembering what G-d has done for all of us. This week's parsha, Parashat Bo, shows us we need to begin to build a new spiritual heritage and culture that won't be quickly broken.

In conclusion, the world has its religious mute buttons but should that stop us from sharing our story? As a people of G-d we are to go peacefully and lovingly into the world presenting the life and faith of Yeshua along with the powerful and mighty work He has done in our lives. The story of Pesach shows us an expression of G-d's love and mighty deliverance in the midst of insurmountable odds. My life story and your life story are living examples of how Yeshua Hamoshiach has worked even in the midst of our failures and continue to actively work in our lives today. How G-d has touched your life could be what your neighbor needs to begin believing in the one true G-d so share your faith today. Let this year of 2008 be one of blessing. I have a suggestion, rather than asking G-d to bless you, ask G-d how you can bless others. The greatest blessing of all is that of sharing the good news, how our Lord Yeshua Hamoshiach is alive and working. Our Messiah was named for the very thing he was sent to do: “to save” his people from their sins. Yeshua died for us to ransom us for G-d, to reconcile us to G-d. What a joyous time it is to share our faith!

## Be Blessed in Yeshua our Messiah!

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**הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:**

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,  
“Yeshua” King Messiah for ever and ever