

Parasha Meditation Bo

Shemot 10:1-13:16

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Eradicating our Deepest Fears

Introduction:

“Come to Pharaoh” – to a Chamber within a Chamber to Confront Your Deepest Fears

This week’s parasha opens with Hashem sending Moshe to face Pharaoh, whose heart Hashem has hardened. Hashem said to Moshe: “Come to Pharaoh...!”¹ The Hebrew בֹּא אֶל פַּרְעֹה – “*Bo el Pharaoh*” is usually translated “Go to Pharaoh,” But “Bo” means “come,” not “go.” The Zohar explains why Hashem tells Moshe “Come” rather than “go” to Pharaoh. *Rabbi Shimeon said: Now it is time to reveal secrets that are bound above and below. Why does it say, “Come to Pharaoh”? It should have said, “Go to Pharaoh...” But G*d brought Moses into a chamber within a chamber, to the supernal and mighty serpent from which many levels evolve, which Moses feared to approach himself...²*

The Spiritual Block of Fear

What exactly did Moshe fear and how does Hashem’s prompting him to “come to Pharaoh” relieve this fear?

Fear is one of the main spiritual blocks in most people’s lives. In my EmunaHealing introductory class, I address the Three Primal Fears and how to overcome them. We all suffer from various fears both known and especially unknown. Fear is the underlying emotion that affects our unconscious choices and ambitions in so many ways; it even affects our physical health. What makes our fears so detrimental is that they are invisible, and we aren’t always able to define them. In order to alleviate our fears we need to uncover their root, so that we will learn to face our worst fears.

Entering into the Core Essence of Pharaoh’s Evil with Hashem at His Side

Moshe had already visited Pharaoh many times before Hashem told him in our parasha, “Come to Pharaoh.” What made Moshe more afraid of Pharaoh this particular time?

Until now Moshe had dealt with Pharaoh’s various exterior layers without confronting his actual essence. Now at the verge of the seventh plague Moshe was terrified when told to enter into the core essence of Pharaoh’s evil, the “great serpent.”³ Therefore Hashem responded, “Come to Pharaoh,” – “Come with me – you don’t go alone. I come with you and help you eradicate evil at its core.

¹ Shemot 10:1.

² Zohar, part II, 34a

³ Yechezkiel 29:3.



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Come with Me! – You are not Alone with Your Fear

Loneliness is the root of fear. I have often thought how irrational it is that I feel more afraid when alone than in the company of another person. The object of my fears, such as fear of death, illness, terrorism or accidents won't be escaped by the fact that I'm not alone. Yet, it is the feeling of being alone and isolated in our suffering that causes fear. Fear emanates from the feeling that no one can understand us, even if someone does empathize with us; they are not with us all the way, because they are not one with us. Rabbi Nachman relates Pharaoh to the void of original *tzimzum*, facing this void, we feel we are on our own – isolated in a desolate universe, disconnected from any source of sustenance.⁴ Even the holy Moshe, was gripped by terror, when challenged to encounter and purge the root essence of evil. G*d, therefore assured him by saying “Come to Pharaoh” – “Come with Me,” I go with you. As Rabbi Simon Jacobson writes, “this is the powerful message that each of us must take from *Parashat Bo* – “Come with Me.”⁵ No matter how lonely we may feel, especially in our loss and pain, we are never alone. The only answer to the invisible power of fear – the fear of being alone – is to recognize that you are not alone. You are never alone.”

Meditation:

Sit comfortable in your chair or on a cushion on the floor with your back straight. Close your eyes. Take several deep breaths and try to get in touch with your body.

1. As you breathe and relax become aware of any possible tensions throughout your body.
2. Visualize the letters of the word בּו/“bo” – come. On the in-breath visualize the Hebrew letter בּ/*beit*. On the outbreath visualize the Hebrew letter א/alef.
3. As you inhale feel as if you are going deeper into yourself. While exhaling imagine attaching yourself to the alef – the Oneness of the word – Hashem. Rather than going in the order of the “alef beit,” you are going backwards from the “beit” to the “alef.”
4. The world is created with the letters of the alef beit.⁶ Imagine going backwards in your creation to a more primal part of your being.
5. Now think of a difficulty that you are facing in your life. It may be a reoccurring kind of difficulty, a goal that you have been unable to meet, although you have made resolutions to reach it over and over.
6. Allow your breath to take you wherever it takes you, and ask Hashem in your mind's voice “Which fear is blocking me from reaching X goal?” or “Which fear is blocking me from overcoming X?” Just be still without trying to visualize or breathing in any particular way, open yourself up to receive Hashem's answer for you. Keep breathing naturally until the fear that is

⁴ *Likutei Moharan, Mahadura Kama, Siman 64.*

⁵ The Autonomy of Fear, <http://www.meaningfullife.com/personal/emotions/The_Anatomy_of_Fear.php>.

⁶ *Sefer Yetzira*, Chapter 2.

blocking you from achieving your goal surfaces in your mind's eye. If you feel blank, just keep repeating the question over and over until you receive some kind of answer.

7. When you have discovered the underlying fear preventing you from success in a certain area, make a positive affirmation in your mind's voice. "I chose to allow Hashem's light to eradicate the fear of X!"

8. Try to get in touch with where in your body this fear is located. Breathe into that body-part.

9. Become aware of the shape and color of your fear. Perhaps it's a big black hole, or a dark bulging mass. Imagine Hashem's light entering you from above your head, and try to visualize taking this light and entering it into the place of your fear, as you breathe slowly and relaxed.

10. Keep infusing your fear with Hashem's light, and visualize the black mass of your fear slowly evaporating, as you assure yourself, that you are not alone in your fear. Hashem is right there with you supporting you and helping you overcome even your worst fears.

11. Continue this visualization until the black mass of your fear has totally disappeared. Then slowly tap your hands and your feet on the floor and the table, before opening your eyes and return to regular awakened state, relieved and with a lighter feeling.

Notes:

This meditation is composed to help overcome our deepest fear through heightening the awareness that we are never alone. Developing compassion and empathy for others is another way of overcoming loneliness – the source of our existential fears. The Plague of the Darkness mentioned in this week's parasha teaches us a lesson about love and compassion. During the three days of darkness, people were unable to see their friend, and even unable to move from their place. "One could not see another, and was unable to stand up from his place for three days..."⁷ The verse hints at the consequence of living without unity. The ability to see our fellow and the ability to be able to move from our place are connected. When we are insensitive to other people's suffering, it is as if we choose not to see our friend. By ignoring the pain and despair of our friend we create the deepest emotional darkness.

Rabbi Moshe Leib Sassover used to tell his chassidim that he learned what it means to love a fellow Jew from two Russian peasants. Once he came to an inn, where two thoroughly drunk Russian peasants were sitting at a table, draining the last drops from a bottle of strong Ukrainian vodka. One of them, in a slurred drunken drawl yelled to his friend, "Igor! Do you love me?" Igor, somewhat surprised by the question answered, "Of course Ivan, of course I love you!" "No no," insisted Ivan, "Do you really love me, really?!" Igor, now feeling a bit cornered assured him, "What do you think? I don't love you? Of course I love you. You're my best friend Ivan!" "Oh yes, yes?" countered Ivan. "If you really loved me... then why don't you know what hurts me and the pain I have in my heart?" Let us step out of the loneliness of our own fear by trying to feel the pain of our friend.

⁷ Shemot 10:23.

About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work.

For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

If you are interested in:

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact info@berotbatayin.org or in Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha, please contact her at director@berotbatayin.org

or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>

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At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, we weave together Torah studies with creative spiritual expression, connecting with the Land of Israel, and healthy, organic lifestyles. In the heart of the Judean Hills, with its serene beauty, our students experience an approach to Judaism that bridges mind, body and soul. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin is designed as a micro-community within the Village of Bat Ayin where women of all ages and backgrounds engage in intense Torah learning as part of an integrated, participatory approach to Torah living.

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