



BO

This week, we will read Parshat Bo, which contains in it the final three plagues that struck Egypt, resulting in Phaaro's command to the Jews to "get out."

In the final plague of Makat Bechorot (the killing of the firstborn), we are told in the Chumash there was not a single Egyptian household that did not end up having someone die in it. Yet, in the Jewish households, the firstborn children were spared, as a result of the nation following the order to smear some blood from the first Pesach sacrifice on the doorpost. G-d then told Moshe to inform the Jews of the mitzvah of Pidyon HaBen, redemption of the firstborn.

However, when Moshe goes to tell this to the Jewish nation, he first makes a whole speech, reminding them about how they had been slaves, and what great miracles G-d had just performed. Only then does he say, "Oh, and by the way, there's a new mitzvah G-d wants you to do; your firstborn (both human and animal) must be redeemed."

What was the point of this whole introduction? G-d told Moshe exactly what he was supposed to say, why did he do extra? The answer given shows us the greatness of Moshe. He understood his people well. He knew that if he were to simply inform the Jews of this new Mitzvah, they would balk at it. "Every Firstborn?! That's demanding too much!" Therefore, he prefaced the commandment with a reminder of what G-d had just done on the Jews' behalf, so that their attitude would be one of realizing just how much they "owe" G-d.

Eventually, he knew that the nation would reach a level of being able to do something simply because Hashem said to do it. But at this point, Moshe was not going to risk giving them more than they could handle; and G-d apparently agreed with Moshe's approach. The proof? Moshe's 10-passuk introduction to the Mitzvah is recorded in the Torah.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Cohen