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CONTINUITY

## **Bo – The Courage to Search**

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

*“So Moses stretched forth his hand toward the heavens, and there was thick darkness over the entire land of Egypt for three days.” (Exodus 10:22)*

*Choshech* (darkness), the ninth plague had descended upon Egypt. The plagues were not happenstance and random. Each plague had a purpose and message. What was the purpose in *choshech*?

Rashi explains:

*“... The Israelites searched [the Egyptians’ dwellings during the darkness] and saw their [own] belongings. When they were leaving [Egypt] and asked [for some of their things], and they [the Egyptians] said, “We have nothing,” he [the Israelite] would say to him, “I saw it in your house, and it is in such and such a place.”*

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, 1902-1994) makes a fascinating observation. Every stage of our salvation and emancipation was miraculous. From the plagues to the splitting of the sea. No part of this redemption was rooted in the natural order. Yet, the Jews had to “ask” the Egyptians for gold, silver and clothing. If God was already orchestrating supernatural salvation, why not just have the Egyptians give the wealth to the Jews? Furthermore, this wealth was back pay and reparations for 210 years of barbaric mistreatment. Why did the Jewish nation have to spend the days of *choshech* searching for the Egyptian wealth?

The Talmud states (Megillah 6b):

ואמר ר' יצחק אם יאמר לך אדם יגעתי ולא מצאתי אל תאמן לא יגעתי ומצאתי אל תאמן יגעתי ומצאתי תאמן  
*Rabbi Yitzhak said: If a person says to you: I have labored and not found success, do not believe him. Similarly, if he says to you: I have not labored but nevertheless I have found success, do not believe him. If, however, he says to you: I have labored, and I have found success, believe him.*

Where there is effort there is success. Where there is no effort there can be no enduring success. God was teaching us this all-important lesson. If you want the gold, silver and accomplishments of life you must be willing to search and work. Nothing meaningful will ever just show up at your doorstep.

The Jewish nation was about to take the final step in transitioning from a slave to a free nation. A slave is beholden to his master, a free man is responsible to himself. The slave lacks control over many elements of his existence, the free man must own the nature and direction of his life. Each of us desire things in life but all too often we don't want to put in the work. We want the successes, but we want to minimize the effort. To reap the true blessings of life, one must be willing to search out opportunities even in the darkness. To experience success in this world requires an incredible amount of effort. We have dreams, aspirations and goals but we must realize that no one else will make them happen for us. No one else will roll up their sleeves to make our dreams come true. Too often, we live with a sense of life entitlement. We think our parents owe us, our spouse owes us, our children owe us and of course, God owes us. The most empowering way to live is to rid oneself of this sense of entitlement. No one owes you anything. If we want something from life, we need to make it happen. We must search out the successes and be willing to work hard and exert ourselves. Navigate the darkness, follow your own light and IYH life success will follow.