

Parasha Bo, Exodus 10:1-13:16

This Shabbat's portion is from the book of Exodus Chapter 10, verse 1 to chapter 13 verse 16 and is called Bo, meaning a command from God to "go" to Pharaoh and ask him to let the Israelites go free. Pharaoh refuses, and the Egyptians are punished with plagues of locusts, darkness and finally, the death of every firstborn son and every firstborn cattle. The Israelites are told to "borrow" gold and silver from their Egyptian neighbors. They have prepared unleavened bread and when Pharaoh finally allows them to leave, they take these things and hurriedly leave. God commands the Israelites to recall their liberation every year with a special commemoration ceremony, which is the Passover seder that we still hold to the present day. It goes into the rituals of the ceremony, including the removal of all leaven from our homes and only matzah is to be eaten. When our children ask us about this ceremony, we are to answer that "It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, because God passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when God killed the first born Egyptians, but saved our houses. The first and 7th day are to be set aside for a solemn gathering of the community and no work is to be done on them.

As we saw in the last few Torah portions, Pharaoh's heart was hardened against the Israelites and as much as Moses tried to convince the Pharaoh to free the Israelites, Pharaoh would not listen. He chose not to see the hardships and injustices that he was causing the Jews. He inflicted cruel labor and tried to kill

male Israelite child that was born. Human beings often harden their hearts against injustices in the world. It is easier to ignore them, rather than face the hunger and homelessness in this country and around the world. We are especially seeing a great need in our country as people have lost jobs and even worried about losing their homes because of the pandemic. We also see natural disasters occurring at an alarming rate, where people lose everything they own. When we have a roof over our heads and plenty of food to eat, it's often hard to understand the hardships others face. But it is part of our commandments to face them, to soften our hearts and to give generously to those who are in need.

Tonight we celebrate Social Action Shabbat and we are very fortunate to have someone with a lot of experience in this area to speak to us about how she has helped others and how you can help, too. Sandy Villa has spent her entire life caring for others. , and it is with my