

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation
(Under same management for over 5785 years)

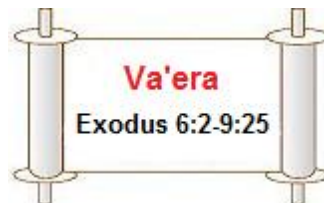
SHABBAT SERVICE

10:30 AM, Saturday, January 25th

12:30 PM, Oneg Shabbat, Interactive Torah Study



Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless;
who live by the Torah of Adonai.
Blessed are those who observe His instruction;
who seek Him with all their heart.



וַיִּדְבֹר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה:

Va y'daber Elohim el-Moshe va yomer elav ani Adonai.

And spoke God to Moses and He said unto him, I am the Lord

וַאֲנִי אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אֶל-יִצְחָק וְאֶל-יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שְׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נִדְעָתִי לָהֶם:

Va'era el-Avraham el-Yitschak v'el-Ya'akov b'El Shaddai

And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty

ushmi (YHVH) Adonai lo noda'ti lahem.

& (but by) my name, Lord, not I was not known to them.

("And God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the Lord; **and I appeared** to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I was not known to them.")

Haftarah -- Ezekiel 28:25-26

Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am against you Pharaoh, king of Egypt."
Thus says the Lord God: "When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and shall manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they will live in THEIR LAND, which I gave to My servant Jacob. And they will live in it securely. And they will build houses, plant vineyards, and live securely, when I execute judgments upon all who scorn them round about them.
Then they will know that I am the Lord their God."

Psalm -- 105: 23-27.

Israel also came into Egypt. Thus Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And He caused His people to be very fruitful and made them stronger than their adversaries. He turned their heart to hate His people; to deal craftily with His servants. He sent Moses His servant and Aaron whom He had chosen. They performed His wonderous acts among them, and miracles in the land of Ham.

B'rit Chadasha -- 2nd Thess. 2:9-10

"And then that lawless one will be revealed;
the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan,
with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all
the deception of wickedness for those who perish because
they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved."

Book	Key Idea	The Nation	The People	God's Character	God's Role	God's Command
Genesis	Beginnings	Chosen	Prepared	Powerful Sovereign	Creator	"Let there be!"
Exodus	Redemption	Delivered	Redeemed	Merciful	Deliverer	"Let my people go!"
Leviticus	Worship	Set Apart	Taught	Holy	Sanctifier	"Be holy!"
Numbers	Wandering	Directed	Tested	Just	Sustainer	"Go in!"
Deuteronomy	Renewed Covenant	Made Ready	Retaught	Loving Lord	Rewarder	"Obey!"

Exodus: A Picture of God's Redemption

Last week I said that the book of **Exodus** can be seen as **God's picture of redemption**. It was God's promise to establish Jacob's seed, Israel, as a great nation in a land promised to them (**Genesis 12:1-2**). However, due to the corrupting Canaanite

influence on His people, God removed His chosen people to Egypt to accomplish this. **God prepared the way** for them to enter Egypt by sending ahead Joseph and allowing him to gain power and favor with the Semitic Pharaoh in order to provide for them and to preserve them in Egypt (**Genesis 50:20-21**). In the Torah portion for last week, we saw how **God had prepared Moses** to lead His people as a nation out of Egypt and into their promised land. **God redeemed** His people from assimilation in Canaan and from slavery in Egypt. Now that they had become a great and populous nation, it was God's time for His people to return to their promised land.

Rebuke: It's All Your Fault, God!

As this week's parasha opens, God used harsh language with Moses as a rebuke for his outburst of complaint against God: "**Va y'daber Elohim**," "and spoke God." "**Elohim**" is usually considered to be the name of God that is associated with **power and strict judgment**. "**Y'daber**," "spoke," (telling off) is also considered much harsher language than "**va yomer**," "say/said" which follows in the same sentence. In the last parasha (**5:22-23**), **Moses responded to his perception of God's failed plan to deliver the people** by complaining to God that God had used Moses to bring harm, rather than deliverance to the people. Moses felt disheartened that God had not delivered the people, who blamed Moses for their **tsuris**, (troubles). **Moses, like all of us, could only see circumstances through human eyes.** Although God had given him God's "big picture," and he knew that God would deliver His people, **Moses was upset that things didn't go the way he had envisioned, and he blamed God!**

Discussion Questions: 1) Have we ever become upset because something did not go the way we had envisioned? What was the basic reason for our becoming upset? (Our failure to sublimate **our will** for **God's will**) 2) Have we ever cried out to God, questioning why He had allowed our circumstance? 3) How long were we upset before becoming reconciled to God's plan for us? 4) Later, have we been able to look back at the circumstance and realize how God allowed it for our good? 5) How can we overcome our fleshly desire to always be in control of our circumstances? (read Matthew 6:25-34, "I say to you, do not be anxious for your life.... But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." **Trusting in faith with God's choices for us will enable us to be content** within His will for us.

Yet in the same sentence that God began with rebuke for Moses's lack of trust, God softens His tone, saying ("**va yomer**,") to Moses (rather than telling him off) "I am the Lord," "**Adonai**" (the Hebrew substitute for **YHVH**, the **personal covenant-keeping, merciful name of God**). **Adonai freed His people from Egyptian bondage, led them out of Egypt to freedom in the land He promised by covenant to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** God told Moses that His people, as slaves in Egypt, had only experienced Him as **Elohim** (power and judgement), but would now begin to see Him as **Adonai** (**YHVH, His personal, covenant-keeping, merciful name**). **In English there is little difference between "spoke" and "said" and between "God" and "Lord."** But

the Hebrew language brings out a world of difference, which illustrates both the strict as well as the merciful nature of God. **Sometimes suffering is necessary to bring about redemption, as we saw with the life of Joseph.** Without the suffering of God's people in Egyptian bondage, would they have wanted to leave Egypt for a land physically unknown to them? **It is Jewish tradition that teaching is accomplished with both hands! With the left hand (the weaker hand), you push away. With the right hand (the stronger hand), you immediately draw the person near. Rebuke is followed with softness!**

Moses responds to God with a classic, Jewish "**kal va chomer**" argument (from the lesser to the greater), saying that if the people had not listened to him, why would Pharaoh listen to him? God ("**Adonai**") assures Moses that He would make Moses as God ("**Elohim**") to Pharaoh and speak through Aaron, his brother.



**"Let my people go....
that they may serve Me in the wilderness."**

God's demand to Pharaoh was that he **release His people from servitude, so that they could serve God instead.** God knew that Pharaoh would not allow His people to leave and gave Moses His plan for the deliverance of His people in **Genesis 7:1-5.** **The active part of redemption is service.** "**Avodah**," in Hebrew translates into English as "work," "wages," or "labor" but also can mean "**worship**;" devoting our time, abilities, and energies - **our labor** - to serve the Lord. As a manifestation of gratitude for the redemption God has already provided us, we actively seek to serve (worship) Him. In **Exodus 7:16**, God instructs Moses to confront Pharaoh and tell him to "Let My people go that they may serve Me in the wilderness." Pharaoh, who considered himself a god, already had the service of the Hebrews. Why should he allow them to leave him to serve another god? Even today, it is incomprehensible to a secular world that believers should expend their **time, abilities, finances, and energies** to serve God. **Today, as in the days of the Pharaoh, the secular world does not know God, nor are they willing to let God's people go. They have not experienced God's redemption and therefore have no personal relationship with Him.** The principle for us to understand is that **God created mankind for worship** (**avodah**), and therefore **we will worship something!** We will either devote our time, abilities, finances and energies in service to God or in service to the secular world.

Discussion Questions: 1) Where do you focus your time, abilities, and energies? 2) **Whom do you serve?**

Pharaoh's reply to God's demand was, "**Who is the Lord** that I should obey **His** voice to let Israel go? **I do not know the Lord**, and besides, **I will not let Israel go.**" Pharaoh's response should not surprise us, as it did not surprise Moses. In **Genesis 4:21**, God told Moses that He would harden the heart of Pharaoh, so that Pharaoh would not let the people go. **In this week's Parasha, Pharaoh will begin to learn about the Lord, the God of Israel. God will "speak" directly to Pharaoh and all the Egyptians in a way that will be quite meaningful to them! Soon they will all "know the Lord!"** God's plan for the redemption of His people includes giving Himself glory in the sight of both His people and the Egyptians. Although **both the Egyptians and Israel were given the opportunity to experience God's redemption** and serve Him, only Israel and a few others chose to do so. **Redemption has always involved active service, which costs us something. Therefore, only some choose to take the redemption that God offers! Isn't it still that way today too?**

Discussion Question: What **active service** shows worldly people that **you** have been redeemed by God?



Just what they needed...more snakes!

When Moses approached Pharaoh for the second time, he followed God's instructions to throw down **his staff**, which would then **become a snake**. Pharaoh was unconvinced that this supernatural sign from the Hebrew God was more powerful

than could be produced by the Egyptian gods. He called in his wise men and sorcerers, who were able to duplicate the sign, making more snakes. **Just what they needed...more snakes!** (**Human miracles apart from God never authenticate a person or his message.**) **Being in agreement with God is the only reliable authentication of a person or his message - 2nd Thess.2:9-10:** "And then that lawless one will be revealed....that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved." The fact that the snake of Moses ate the other snakes, only hardened Pharaoh's heart against God because **Pharaoh had already made a conscious choice against God.**

Discussion Question: Does it make sense that a child's heart would be more open to God because the child has not made a conscious choice against God?



As a person continuously chooses against God, he becomes less and less sensitive to God's call, until his heart is hardened against God! Isn't it true in our lives today that the first time we choose to disobey God in a particular matter and do something we know to be wrong, it causes us anguish? We wrestle with the decision because we know it is wrong. We are also keenly aware of the possible consequences of this sin in the lives of others and our possible punishment for the sin. However, if time after time, we choose to not obey that "still, small voice of God," we find that **with repetition, the sin becomes easier to commit.** Eventually, we hardly think about the ramifications to others or the punishment for ourselves. Our hearts gradually become "hardened" to the sin. **By his continued choices against God, Pharaoh hardened his own heart!** Today, with God's redemption in Messiah so close, we dare not harden our heart against Him!

A Plague on Your House!



Plagues were actually miracles of God! There were two other periods of history in which God chose to use miracles to accomplish His purposes, as we see He does in the book of Exodus; the time of Elijah and Elisha; the time of Messiah's life on earth. In Exodus, God used plagues to ultimately free Israel, while punishing Egypt. (**Gen.12:3**, "**And the one who curses you, I will curse.**")

The plagues showed the futility of worshipping Egyptian gods, as the God of Israel triumphed over them with each plague. **The plagues (miracles) showed God's power and proclaimed His name (Ex.9:16)**, so that **all the Egyptians knew that God is the Lord (Ex.10:2)**.

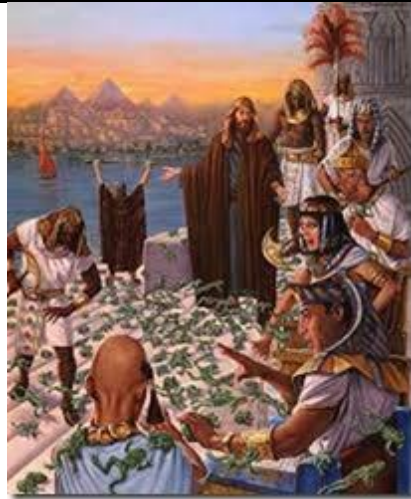
Some of the plagues were an intensification of natural phenomena. Some of the plagues were announced in advance. Many of the worst plagues only affected the Egyptians. Some feel the plagues continued in series for approximately 6 months, becoming more severe as they progressed to the final plague.

Let Them Drink Blood!



God's instruction to Moses was to wait for Pharaoh (thought to be an Egyptian god, himself) on the bank of the Nile, (another of the Egyptian gods) as Pharaoh came for his daily ritual presiding over the Egyptian Nile gods. The first plague God used to afflict Egypt began when Aaron raised his staff and struck the water from the Nile River. All of the flowing water throughout Egypt turned into blood, killing fish, and making it necessary for the people to dig wells for fresh water. The Egyptian sorcerers were also able to take fresh water and turn it into blood. **Just what they needed...more blood!** However, **they could not remove the blood from the water.** **Neither could the Egyptian god of the Nile nor the Nile fish gods prevent the pollution,** which continued for at least 7 days. Without flowing water, **all Egypt knew that the God of the Hebrews had prevailed over their gods!**

Bring on the Frogs!



Then, because Pharaoh still refused to allow God's people to leave, God told Moses to again have Aaron take his staff and strike the water in one of the irrigation canals of the Nile. **Frogs**, which normally inhabited the canals, came up from the canals and invaded the whole land of Egypt, even coming into the homes of the people. The Egyptian sorcerers were called and were also able to make more frogs. **Just what they needed...more frogs!** However, **they were not able to remove the frogs from the land.** The Pharaoh must have been impressed that **his sorcerers could only add to his misery** but could not relieve it; nor could the Egyptian goddess of birth (with the head of a frog). **All Egypt** knew that **the God of the Hebrews had prevailed** over their frog god, and **neither Pharaoh nor his sorcerers could remove the frogs!**

Pharaoh's Lie produces Lice!

Pharaoh called for Moses to come to him. Pharaoh agreed to allow the Hebrews to leave, if Moses would remove the frogs. Moses allowed Pharaoh to state the time that the frogs all over Egypt would die, except for those normally inhabiting the canals of the Nile, so that Pharaoh would know that it was God who removed the frogs. However, as soon as Pharaoh saw that the frogs began to die, **Pharaoh went back on his agreement** with Moses. **A principle for us today is to recognize that one cannot compromise with evil!** **One cannot negotiate in good faith with a**

tyrant! If we naively expect goodness from evil doers, then we are bound to be disappointed! **The biblical admonition is to eliminate the evil!** **What are the consequences of allowing evil to persist?**

Study Questions:

1) Did England attempt to compromise with Hitler? What were the consequences of the compromise?

2) Did former President Obama and later US Presidents attempt to compromise with evil by giving Iran a pathway toward a nuclear bomb?

3) After the barbaric attack of October 7,th 2023 on Israel by Iran sponsored Hamas, did other world countries as a compromise with evil call for a cease fire by Israel?

God's response to the deceit of Pharaoh was that the Lord told Moses to have Aaron use his staff to strike the dust of the earth, so that without warning all of Egypt was covered with lice (also translated as "gnats", "sand-fleas", and "mosquitoes") like dust on their bodies. **Fortunately for the Egyptians**, their sorcerers were unable to duplicate this plague, but they recognized it as "**the finger of God.**" The Egyptian god of the desert was unable to prevent this infestation, which must have greatly disturbed the Egyptian priests, who prided themselves on their ritual purity and personal hygiene. Yet **Pharaoh would not relent!**

Another life principle we see operating is that stubbornness (hard-heartedness) can become so deeply entrenched in a life, that it becomes the over-riding element in that person's life; like a grimy window, through which even the purest light appears dingy. **All Egypt** knew that **the God of the Hebrews had prevailed over their god of the desert** and neither Pharaoh nor his sorcerers could remove the gnats, which would have been all over their bodies and in their food and beds.



Swarms (A Mixture) of biting Flies & Insects

The fourth plague sent by God to infest the Egyptians was swarms of biting insects, which may have included biting flies. These were not simply individual, nuisance insects but were swarming insects all over the ground and throughout their homes; in their food; in their beds. Although the translation of the Hebrew word, "arov," is uncertain, "swarms" can be used of insects or flies. Certain Rabbinic commentaries even feel that these swarms were a mixture of wild animals. The Egyptian gods of insects (one with the head of a fly) could not spare the Egyptians from this infestation. However, **the Hebrews were spared, showing the Egyptians the power**

of God to bring this plague only upon them, while sparing God's people. In this instance, God decided to spare His people, but, as seen in earlier plagues, He does not always choose to do so. Perhaps God may have spared His people as instruction to all the Egyptians that God had the power that their gods did not have; to bring plagues upon them, while at the same time sparing those who believed in Him.

Pestilence (murrain) on Livestock in the Fields

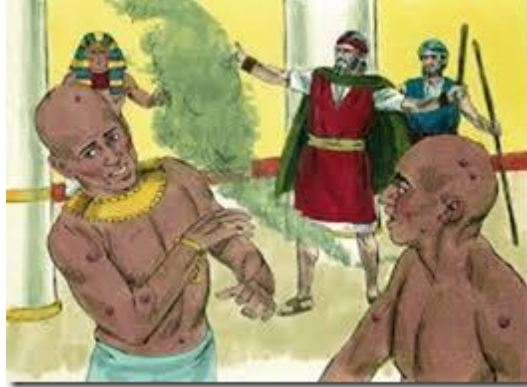


When Pharaoh saw that the insect swarms only affected his people, he summoned Moses and Aaron and again attempted a compromise. He would let them worship God but not leave Egypt. Moses insisted on full obedience to God's command to go a distance of three day's journey into the desert. Moses again illustrates for us today that we should never compromise with the ungodly! Pharaoh acquiesced and asked Moses to "make supplication for me," so that the swarms of flies and/or insects might be removed. But when the swarms of insects were removed, Pharaoh again refused to make good on his promise to let the Hebrews go.

God instructed Moses to again go to Pharaoh to let him know that if he did not allow God's people to leave by the next day, God would cause a pestilence (like an epidemic) to fall upon all Egyptian animals pasturing in the field. Again, God chose to spare the animals of His people. This would affect Egyptian food as well as

transportation and agriculture. There were Egyptian gods for each of their animals, including Hathor (who had a cow's head) who could not prevent this catastrophe. Again, **all Egypt** could see that **the gods of each of their animals was incapable of protecting their field animals against the God of the Hebrews.** Yet, even after the pestilence **destroyed all Egyptian animals in the fields but spared Hebrew animals, Pharaoh refused to give in.** Therefore, while Moses and Aaron were still in the presence of Pharaoh, God instructed them to take brick dust from kilns, where the Hebrew slaves had made bricks for Pharaoh, and throw it into the air.

Festering Boils on Man and Beast



The brick dust spread throughout Egypt settling on men and the animals left alive. It then festered into boils or blisters. The Egyptian sorcerers were also affected with boils and could not even try to duplicate God's miracle. (Besides, why would they even want to attempt to make more boils?) The Egyptian goddess of healing and the lion-headed goddess with the power over diseases could not prevent the misery caused by the boils. Yet, even as **Pharaoh, himself, was covered with boils, the Lord hardened his heart, so that he would not listen to Moses. For God to accomplish His plan to free His people by exalting Himself over Pharaoh and the rest of the Egyptian gods, Pharaoh would have to continue to refuse to let God's people go.** God's foretelling the future to Moses at the burning bush was, "But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under compulsion. So I will stretch out My hand, and strike Egypt with all My miracles, which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go" (Ex. 3:19-20).

Study Question: Can we recall from history times where God allowed calamities that drove people back to God?

How long did the peoples' "return to God" last?

Hail with Fire



God told Moses to confront Pharaoh in the morning (probably as he came out to the canal). Moses told Pharaoh that if God had wanted to simply kill him, He could have done so by now. But God wanted to proclaim His name and power in Egypt. Yet God having done so, Pharaoh still insisted on exalting himself over God's people (and therefore over God). Therefore the next day any man or animal not inside under shelter would have fiery hail rained upon them. **Like some politicians who only seek their own, personal power, Pharaoh's heart was already so hardened that he did not care about his peoples' fate.**

Recall Pharaoh's statement to Moses about letting Moses's people go: **"Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and besides, I will not let Israel go."** By now, **all Egypt knew the God of the Hebrews!!** Some of Pharaoh's servants heard this prediction from God and **took action.** They had "faith" in God's being able to cause them harm (**not the same as redemptive or worshipful faith**) from having observed God's past performance. Immediately, **they acted on their "faith"** by having their servants flee from the fields, putting their livestock under shelter. Other Egyptians paid no attention to God and took no action. **It seems that throughout history nothing ever changes!** Even today, **some** read about God-instructed morality from scripture, having seen the physical destruction caused by immorality (AIDS, abortion, incest, drugs, alcohol etc.) and exhibit their "faith" by **taking action** to obey Him in these things. They are **saved** from the consequences of immorality. **Others**, have no spiritual sensitivity at all, pay God no heed, and **suffer the consequences both physically and spiritually.**

God's prediction came to pass. **Except in Goshen, where God's people lived, all those out in the field were struck by hail mixed with fire,** which also struck trees and the early ripening plants. Pharaoh sent for Moses and said, "I have sinned this time; the Lord is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones." Sounds like a **confession of faith, doesn't it?** However, his actions show that he had ulterior motives for his "statement of faith." From this statement of Pharaoh, we learn that **mere words (even the "correct words") do not always indicate a change or heart!** Stated another way, **prescriptive words of faith do not necessarily produce saving faith.** **Only sin confession and atonement appropriation issued from a repentant, redemptive spirit that**

allows one to become reconciled to God can produce salvation! Only God knows the heart behind the words, and **He is the Righteous Judge of our hearts.** Pharaoh again sinned after the hail ceased, and again he hardened his heart towards God.

As we finish reading this Torah portion and get ready for our Sabbath service, **let us resolve to keep our hearts soft** as we listen for the “still, small voice of God;” **ready to seek and to obey Him; ready to repent when God's Ruach instructs us; ready to show our faith by our actions!**

PS: In times of turmoil and polarization, it may be wise that we should show our “faith in action” with calmness and prayerfulness, pursuing peace & unity!

SHABBAT SHALOM



עם ישראל חי

Announcements:

Romans from a Jewish Perspective, Mondays 7-8ish PM, sign up via text to me

1. UMJC Winter Leaders Conference, January 19-22, San Diego
- Young Adult Conference (18-35), May 23-26, Boca Raton, Florida
1. UMJC International Summer Conference, Boston, July 16-19

