

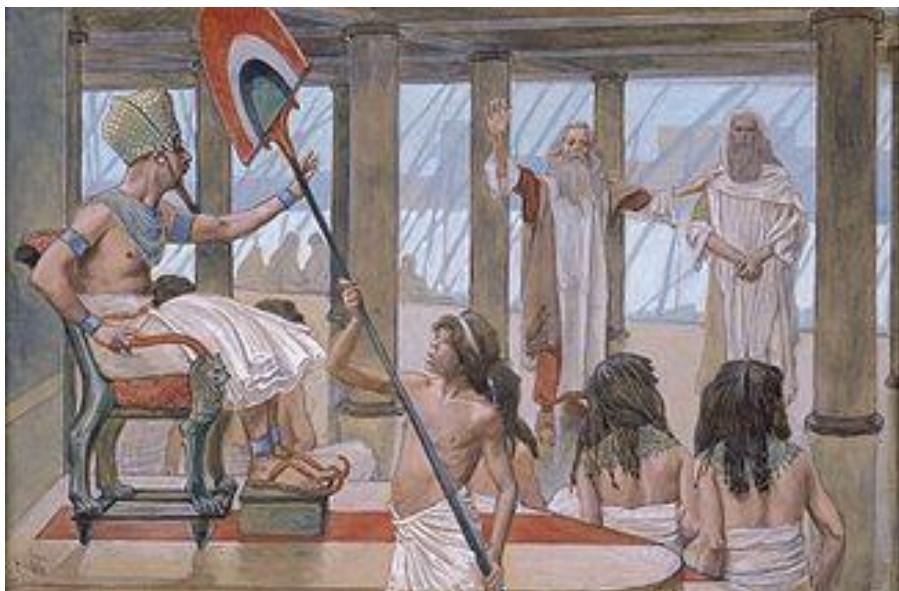
VA'ERA { וְאֵרֶא } (And I Appeared)

A Messianic Jewish Commentary
By Hannah Nesher www.voiceforisrael.net

Exodus 6:2-9:35; Ezekiel 28:25-29:21; Romans 9:14-33

“And I appeared (Va’era) to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov as *El Shaddai* { אל שדי } but by My name, YHVH { יהוה }, I did not make myself known to them.” (Exodus 6:2-3)

Where we left off in last week’s Torah portion, Moses and his brother, Aaron, had approached Pharaoh to demand the release of God’s people. Not only did the King of Egypt refuse, but he made it even worse for the Israelites by demanding that they find their own straw (whereas previously it had been provided for them); while still demanding them to produce the same quota of bricks. The children of Israel complained to Moses; whereby he went directly to God to find out ‘what gives’? God gave Moses His assurance that He would, once and for all, deal with Pharaoh and the Egyptians.



Moses Speaks to Pharaoh (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot

This week’s Scripture portion opens with God speaking to Moses (Moshe), revealing the importance of His holy name. God said, “**I am YHVH (יהוה)**” (Exodus 6:2-3). This sacred name uses four Hebrew letters: yud, hey, vav, hey { יהוה } in a format known as the Tetragrammaton. Since the original Hebrew text did not use vowels it is impossible for us to determine the exact pronunciation of this name. There has been much speculation and controversy over this issue; but we must not allow this to become a point of contention or division in the Body of Messiah.

Previously, we discussed the importance of knowing the authentic name of God. This name is used over six thousand times in the Bible! However, this knowledge (of God’s true name) has been largely lost to the mainstream Christian church due to the practice of

translating His name to a generic ‘*Lord*’ in most Bibles. Unfortunately, much of the power that exists in God’s name has been lost in the process as well.

Most Jewish people also do not use the real name of God out of reverence for His holiness and fear of transgressing the command forbidding the use of God’s name in vain (Exodus 20:7). Instead, the word ‘*Hashem*’, meaning ‘*The Name*’ is often substituted.

God’s Word promises that His people shall know His name. “**So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel...**” (Ezekiel 39:7) God is jealous for His Holy Name.¹ This week we will further explore the significance of the revelation of God’s name to Israel.

“I am Yehovah { יְהוָה } and I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov) as ‘El Shaddai’ { אֵל שַׁדַּי } but by My name, YHVH { יְהוָה }, I did not make myself known to them.” (Exodus 6:2-3)

Knowing God as Father

Although God had revealed himself to our forefathers in part, as ‘*El Shaddai*’, He had not yet revealed to them His personal name, as He proclaimed to Moses.

El Shaddai { אֵל שַׁדַּי } is an interesting name of God. It actually relates to the Hebrew word for a woman’s breast (שֶׁדֶן) and reveals the maternal quality of God’s character as nurturer, comforter, and sustainer of life-giving nourishment.²

When God created humankind in His image, He created us male and female; therefore God contains both feminine and masculine qualities and characteristics. “**God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**” (Genesis 1:27)

God had, up to this point, cared for and nurtured Israel as a *mother*. In order to bring forth new life, however, both a male and a female are required - both mother and father. When God brought His people out of Egypt, He was, in effect, birthing a new nation of holy people – a Royal Priesthood. Therefore, at this time, He revealed Himself to Moses and to the children of Israel as a *Father*.

He revealed to them His name of power – protector, provider, deliverer, and redeemer. I of course love my mother, but if I needed something done that was tough or difficult, or requiring physical strength, I would more likely call upon my father. Who do the kids call to get the stubborn lid off the jar? If possible, they usually call for Dad, Abba!

I remember after my youngest son’s circumcision that the time had come to change the bandages but they had become stuck to the wound. My friend, Jennifer, who had come to

¹ Ezekiel 39:25

² See article and audio recording of message on El Shaddai www.voiceforisrael.net

help me with the birth, tried to help me remove the bandages, but even after a soaking, they remained firmly stuck. Oye vey!

Every time we tried, the baby cried out in pain and our soft, maternal natures simply could not bear to cause him further suffering. So we had no other choice - the father had to be called in to do the dastardly deed - and he did. God also wants to father us – not as our earthly fathers have perhaps, in their imperfect humanity, failed or disappointed us in some ways - but as our perfect Heavenly Father who will never leave us or forsake us. He is good and all He does is for our ultimate good.



Avi's Brit Milah (Circumcision) in the Negev

It took a powerful and mighty God to overcome Pharaoh and deliver the children of Israel from Egypt; and for some situations in our lives; we need this powerful, strong, incredibly awesome God's intervention as well. He is called '**El Gibor**' (Mighty God).

God wants us to know Him as a Father and feel comfortable in crying out to Him, Abba! (Daddy). As covenant people of the God of Abraham, we can reclaim God's authentic name and its accompanying power as part of our Divine inheritance.

"Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know My hand and My might (G'vurati) and they shall know that My name is יהוה."
(Jeremiah 16:23)

The Covenant for the Land

God then re-affirmed the unconditional covenant He made to give the people of Israel the land in which we now live. **"And I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their wanderings."** (Exodus 6:4)

God's faithfulness to His people is bound up with this land. God is a faithful, covenant-keeping God who says, "**My Covenant I will not break.**" (Psalm 89:34)

As people belonging to the God of Abraham, we need to stand firm on Israel's right to this land. We must not see the current Middle East situation from a humanistic perspective, but from a Biblical one - through God's eyes! Israel is the apple of His eye.

To join hands with the enemies of Israel – to believe their lies and their false claims to the Land, constitutes treason against God.

At this time, the international community is exerting tremendous pressure upon Israel to create a Palestinian State within Israel's territory in what is being called the '*Two State Solution*'. It should be more accurately, perhaps, called the '*Final Solution*'; for if Israel was to allow this to happen within her borders it would surely mean her complete destruction.

We have already seen what happened when Israel, under the misguided leadership of the late Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, uprooted Jewish people from their homes in Gaza and gave this territory over to the so-called 'Palestinians'. It has turned the once beautiful and flourishing area into a hotbed of terrorism where instead of growing agricultural produce to feed the people, it is hatred for Israel and the Jews which now flourishes.



Pullout from Gaza photo: Israel Today Jan 8, 2016

Gaza is now being used as a beachhead from which to bombard the citizens of Israel with deadly missiles and rockets. Humanitarian aid sent to re-build homes is instead invested in the construction of 'terror tunnels' used to kidnap and murder innocent Jewish people.



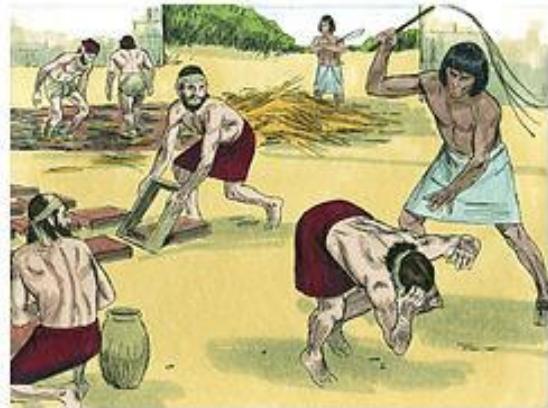
This is not, as many people mistakenly believe, a necessary negotiation between two parties who desire peace. The openly stated intention of Hamas and other Islamic groups is the complete and utter destruction of Israel and all Jews. If Judea and Samaria, the heartland of the state of Israel, was to be turned over to the Palestinians, as the leaders of almost every nation is now proposing (and may eventually try to force upon Israel) it would likely mean the beginning of the end – not only for Israel - but for every nation on earth!

God will take vengeance upon those nations who dare to try and divide up God's land (Joel 3:2). May the voices of God's people not be silent but be heard strongly in this hour for Zion's sake, proclaiming Israel's God-given right to this land. As the people of the God of Abraham we must be praying and interceding – and speaking up for the truth!

"For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch."
(Isaiah 62:1)

God Hears our Cries

In this week's parashah, after approximately four hundred years of hearing the groaning of the children of Israel who were being brutalized and suffering under slavery in Egypt, the Heavens were moved to compassion and God prepared to take action to deliver them: **"Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant."** (Exodus 6:5)



Egyptian Bondage (1984 illustration by Jim Padgett, courtesy of Distant Shores Media/Sweet Publishing)

This gives us a glimpse into the difference between our perception of time, and God's eternal perspective: "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday." (Psalm 90:4) Like the children of Israel, we may need to endure even long periods of suffering. We may even feel abandoned as we call to God day and night for relief and yet see no change in our circumstances.

Like the Psalmist, we may cry out, **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent."** (Psalm 22:1-2)

This is an important Messianic prophecy, as these were the very words that Yeshua cried out to His Father on the cross: **"Eli, Eli, Lamah sabachtani?"** (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?)

God is a merciful and compassionate Father; He sees our suffering and hears us cry out from our afflictions. Our God is neither blind nor deaf: **"For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from him; But when he cried to Him, He heard."** (Psalm 22:24)

Yeshua, God's son, is also filled with compassion for hurting people. When he looked upon the children of Israel, He saw them as a sheep without a shepherd, and He felt compassion for them. **"Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd."** (Matthew 9:36)

Freedom and Liberty

The African – American people, in their struggle to be set free from the cruel system of slavery under which they suffered could easily identify with the Israelite slaves and Moses. The Afro-American slaves also cried out to God for deliverance and sang songs of hoped-for freedom and liberation: “*Go down Moses, way down to Egypt’s land, tell o Pharaoh, let my people go!*”



Slaves Waiting for Sale: Richmond, Virginia. Painted upon the sketch of 1853

As anti-Israel sentiment grows in the nations of the earth, there are those who attempt to make an analogy between the plight of the ‘Palestinians’ and the Afro-Americans’ historical struggle for freedom. This analogy, however, is not only flawed but even offensive for the following reasons and more:³

1. Most of the Palestinian refugees were offered Israeli citizenship but refused it, preferring to await the anticipated ‘victory over the Jews’ that their leaders have been promising them while receiving assistance from humanitarian agencies. The Black people never had any kind of governmental relief agencies to help them and the slaves were never offered citizenship or given refugee status in America.
2. The Palestinian Authority receives approximately \$1 billion annually (mostly from the pockets of American and European taxpayers). These funds, which are intended to go towards relief of Palestinian suffering, instead go into weapons, supplies to build more terror tunnels and propaganda to spread hatred of Israel and the Jews among their population.
3. In the Middle East there are many nations such as Syria, Libya, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia who could take in their Palestinian brothers and sisters but they refuse to do so. Black slaves had no country to which they could escape.

³ <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/7-reasons-why-the-black-struggle-for-freedom-and-the-palestinian-crisis-are-absolutely-nothing-alike-by-a-black-man-whos-sick-and-tired-of-the-comparisons/>

4. While Palestinians engage in brutal acts of terror and violence against the people of Israel, the Black slaves had no means to offer up armed resistance. Neither would they consider using their own sons and daughters as human shields or encouraging them to blow themselves up as suicide bombers. Black people would have been lynched for any sign of rebellion or violence such as the rock throwing, explosives, and acid attacks on innocent Israeli civilians such as we have witnessed perpetrated by Palestinian terrorists.

5. In Israel, Arabs participate in the Knesset (legislature) as full members with a free voice, even if it is anti-Zionist, and Arab-Israeli citizens enjoy full and equal civil rights; whereas Afro-Americans were denied their civil rights and not allowed any kind of legislative involvement until after slavery was abolished.

For these reasons and many others, the plight of the Black people and the Palestinians can never be even logically compared. It is not Israel that is keeping the Palestinian people in bondage and suffering but their own leadership. Just as the people of Egypt suffered and even died because of the stubbornness and hardness of Pharaoh's heart, so too do the Palestinian people continue to suffer under the corrupt leadership of Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.

It is Already Done According to His Word

At this time, God made five redemptive promises to the children of Israel. (Exodus 6:6-7)

- 1) 'I will take you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians
- 2) I will rescue you from their bondage
- 3) I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments
- 4) I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God
- 5) I will bring you in unto the land concerning which I lifted up My hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for a heritage.

For each of these five redemptive acts, God used a different Hebrew word:

- **Hotzeiti** (הַצֵּאתִי), which means I have taken out,
- **Hitzalti** (הַצְלָתִי), which means I have rescued,
- **Ga'alti** (גָּאַלְתִּי), which means I have redeemed,
- **Lakachti** (לְקַחְתִּי), which means I have taken.
- ***Heveiti** (הַבָּאתִי) which means I have brought.

Each of these Hebrew verbs appears in the past tense, demonstrating that in God's eyes, it was already a '*done deal*'. When God speaks a Word, it will be done as He has commanded, despite what all the circumstances look like in the natural.

"For He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood firm." (Psalm 33:9)

The Fifth Cup

The last promise God made to Israel was to ‘bring’ **הַבָּאֶת** (heveiti) them back into their own land. “**And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning which I lifted up My hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for a heritage: I am יהוה.**” (Exodus 6:8)

For this reason, Jewish people (and many Gentiles who have been grafted in through the Messiah) outside the Land of Israel (in the Diaspora), celebrate the Passover ritual meal (called a ‘seder’) with four traditional cups of wine – one for each of these redemptive promises; however the Jewish people who are back in the Land add the fifth and final cup.

I experienced one of the greatest moments of my life when I drank the fifth cup at my first Passover Seder in the Land of Israel; because God had miraculously delivered me personally from the Land of my exile, and had brought me back into my Promised Land.



In a sense, we can all drink the four cups of wine to remember and celebrate God’s goodness and mercy in delivering each one of us from the Kingdom of darkness (representing Egypt) and transferring us into the Kingdom of Light. “**For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**” (Colossians 1:13-14)

One glorious day, He will bring us into our true home which is Heaven – and there we will drink the fifth cup together – at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Halleluyah!

Jesus (Yeshua), held up the cup of wine at his last Passover supper and said, “**I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.**” (Matthew 26:29).

When They Won’t Listen

Moses declared these promises to the Israelite slaves, but they were so downtrodden and grieved in spirit that they could not even listen to Moses’ words of hope. They were in no mood to listen because of the anguish in their hearts and the discouragement in their souls.

“**Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labor.**” (Exodus 6:9)

In Hebrew it is written that the people refused to listen because of a ‘*short spirit*’ and *hard work*. Often, those who need help the most will not listen to the good news of a coming deliverance.

I remember a family Passover several years ago, when the exhausting work involved in preparing the home and Passover seder meal according to the strict Rabbinic regulations overcame my precious Mother and she began to weep. She felt enslaved by the stress and couldn’t bear the heavy burdens of life any longer. She felt she would be chained to this cruel bondage until her death. We spoke to her about the deliverance and peace freely available through Yeshua who said,

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)



God did not ask us to take upon ourselves the heavy yoke of the oral law of the rabbis with all its man-made, legalistic requirements and regulations. The yoke of Torah, however, is not burdensome, but rather is light and easy. **“For loving God means obeying his commands. Moreover, his commands are not burdensome.”** (1John 5:3)

And yet my Mom was so discouraged that she could not listen. Have you ever labored extremely hard at something for a very long time, sweating blood and tears over this work, only to find that it was useless or in vain - fit only for tossing out in the trash?

Coming to Yeshua can be like this, having to admit that all our tiresome efforts to please God through strict obedience to even the most minute detail of the laws of men for all of our life has been in vain. He only asks that we trust in Him, and submit our will to His, allowing His Holy Spirit to conform us into His image.

It can be frustrating when we want to help someone and they won’t listen to words of hope because of their discouragement. However, even when people are not ready to listen, we must continue to speak and act as God commands us on their behalf, just as Moses did in the face of the people’s unbelief and discouragement.

There are people in the world, even today, whose bondage is so cruel and spirit so broken that they also cannot hear those who preach the good news of the gospel. They must see the signs and wonders before they will listen and believe.

Some are caught in a cruel, modern form of slavery known as '*human trafficking*' by which people are smuggled and traded illegally through abduction, fraud, coercion, abuse or deception for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor. Many of those caught in human trafficking are young children, teenagers (many of whom are runaways), and foreign immigrants. Let us cry out for their freedom, "Let my people go!"



It's me, it's me, it's me O Lord, standing in the need of prayer...

Sometimes it is not just '*that man or woman*' who can't listen to the good news – there are times when that one is '*me*'. Have you ever felt like this (or am I the only one)? You hear about these wonderful promises of God – that He has a good plan for our life, to give us a hope and a future – but the discouragement in our soul is so deep that we can't even listen to this good news.

There may be times when, even after receiving the wonderful promises of God into our hearts, our situation may seem to worsen rather than improve. The battle is on! We will either push through to freedom on the other side; or we may succumb to the attempts of the enemy to keep us in bondage.

We can take heart from this example in the Word of God. The enemy may try to discourage and dishearten us, but God will bring His plans and purposes to pass in our lives. There is no devil in hell that can thwart the will of God for us. God is bigger than our worst mistake and there is no pit too deep or too dark for Him to deliver us from.

It is often darkest just before the dawn. So let us not lose heart but continue to expect to see God fulfill His word in our lives. What was God's response, despite the people's discouragement and Moses' doubts? God answered with, "**Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh!**" Isn't that just like our God – He shows up (appears) right at the midnight hour.

In accordance with our covenant, we are promised that those who trust in Him will not be disappointed or put to shame. He knows those who are trusting in His mercy.

"The Lord יְהוָה is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; And He knows those who trust in Him." (Nahum 1:7)

When we find ourselves in situations where we need deliverance, the Lord will be there for us as a mighty Redeemer. We can trust in Him. May we wait with patience and faith for that moment when God says, "**NOW – see what I will do!**"

"Now I will arise and set him in the safety for which he yearns..." (Psalm 12:5)

The Inner Pharaoh

Just as Pharaoh said to Moses, “*I will not let you go!*” we each have an ‘inner Pharaoh’ who also boasts ‘*I will not let you go!*’ This ‘inner Pharaoh (our flesh) is so stubborn! Our best efforts to free ourselves may only lead to the situation getting worse and worse as we sink deeper and deeper into bondage.

It seems that when we ‘*work on*’ whatever it is that we are trying to overcome – a bad temper, an eating disorder, an addiction of any kind - often that inner Pharaoh kicks in and makes it even worse – at first!

But we need not despair. We have a Redeemer – a God who cares. When we think all hope is lost and are in deep anguish of spirit because of our bondage, then we will hear God say, ‘Now see what I will do to Pharaoh!’

We may have received a promise from God and have been waiting in faith for it to come to pass – perhaps for a very long time – maybe to see a relationship restored, a prodigal child come home, financial breakthrough, healing...whatever it is we so desperately need. Perhaps the more we pray about it, the worse the situation seems to get. But can we hear with ears of faith that still small voice that says to our heart, “NOW see what I will do!”? We must continue to exhort and encourage one another in these last days.

The Devil’s Most Prized Possession

There is a fable about the devil having a sale of his wares: rapiers of jealousy, daggers of fear and strangling nooses of hatred were all offered for sale, each carrying a high price tag. But standing alone on a purple pedestal was a worn and battered wedge. This was the devil’s most prized possession, for with it alone he could stay in business.

It was not for sale....it was the wedge of discouragement.

Why was discouragement so highly prized by the devil? It was because of its demoralizing, enfeebling effect. Hatred, fear or jealousy may lead an immature person to act impulsively, unwisely, to fight or to run away. But at least they act.

Discouragement, on the other hand, causes the person to sit down, pity themselves and do nothing. Like the person lying beside the pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight years doing nothing to help himself. Why? “*Because*”, he moaned, “*there is no one to help me get in the water.*”

Can we not clearly hear the pitiful voice? Thirty-eight years! That’s a long time to lie around doing nothing. But many people are like this man, staying in demoralizing, oppressive, painful situations, indulging in self pity, but taking no action to help themselves.

What is the answer to discouragement? The answer is intelligent action – we can ask, “*What could be my next inspired step?*”. Albert Einstein said to his son, “*Life is like riding a bicycle – in order to stay balanced, we must keep moving.*” God will help us, but we must take steps of faith. It is difficult to steer a parked car. We must beware discouragement and get rid of it before it gets rid of us!⁴

Helper of the Helpless

When it seemed like all hope was lost, God intervened to rescue His helpless and suffering people from slavery, bondage and oppression. “**But You have seen, You observe trouble and grief, to repay it by Your hand. The helpless commits himself to You.**” (Psalm 10:14).

Isn't it wonderful to know that even when we are helpless and seemingly at the mercy of forces of oppression which are much too strong and powerful for us, we have a mighty God who can and will intervene to save, rescue and deliver - if we will be patient and continue calling out to Him in faith.

In His mercy and faithfulness, He becomes our Redeemer (*go’el*). We were once helpless and suffering, enslaved to sin and the powers of darkness. We could not deliver ourselves, but God sent a Deliverer (just as He sent Moses) and this Deliverer is Yeshua Hamashiach (Jesus the Messiah). He ransomed us from the Kingdom of Darkness with the price of his own blood. How great is His love!

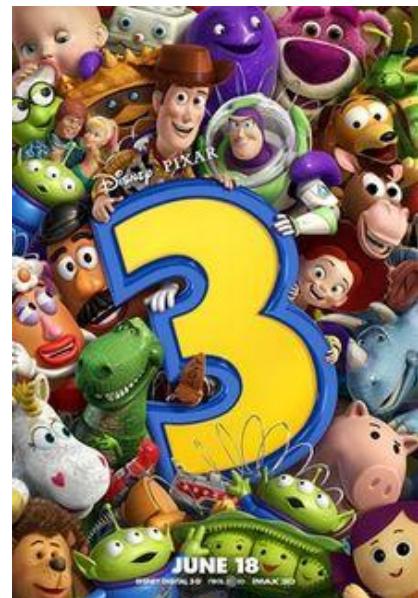
It seems that we sometimes mistakenly believe that we must be so good, so clean, so strong, so pure and holy in order to be accepted by God and worthy of His help. But this is not so; we only need to acknowledge our need of His grace.

Rescued from the Fiery Pit

There was one scene in a movie we saw in Israel called ‘Toy Story 3’ that really stood out in my mind. The characters were on a downward slide heading straight into a fiery pit.

They did everything they could to try and extricate themselves but finally they saw that it was useless to keep struggling, for nothing they did to help themselves would stop their downward descent into the fiery abyss. A look passed between them – a terrible look of helpless resignation – and then they silently joined hands waiting for their horrible but inevitable death.

Suddenly – of course you can guess what happens – a giant,



⁴ KBS presents 90 seconds with Bob Proctor: The Devil's Most Prized Possession

metal claw, like a *powerful arm* hanging from a crane descended, scooped them up and carried them off to safety.

Wow! What a rescue, what a relief for Woody, Buzz and - what is that cute little cowgirl's name? Never mind, the point is that all of humanity is on that slippery downward slope into the fiery pit of destruction called Hell – but for the grace of God demonstrated through Yeshua's sacrifice on the cross.

The book of Revelation tells us that anyone whose name is not written in the Lamb's book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire.⁵ Yeshua also warned, "**Whoever believes in the Son will have everlasting life but he who does not believe in the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him.**" (John 3:36) That's the bad news.

But the good news is this: "**God so loved the world that He sent His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.**" (John 3:16).

We cannot rescue ourselves; but if we will call upon the name of the Lord, He will save us – not on the basis of our own merit, but it is by grace we are saved.

The Arm of the Lord

The Lord has His own '*rescue arm*'. With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, He redeemed Israel and has redeemed us as well:

"I will redeem you with an outstretched arm (Zro'ah) and great judgments." (Exodus 6:6)



This arm is represented on the Passover Seder plate with the shank bone of a Lamb.

Several prophetic scriptures refer to the power of the '*arm of the Lord*': "**And My arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands will wait upon Me. And on My arm they will trust... Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord!...Are You not the arm that cut Rahab apart, and wounded the serpent?**" (Isaiah 51:5,9)

"The Lord has made bare His Holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the Salvation (Yeshua) of our God (Eloheinu)." (Isaiah 52:10)

Here is my favorite reference, directly linking the Arm of the Lord to His salvation (which we know to be Yeshua), and affirming the unity of one God: "**Then the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no**

⁵ Revelation 20:15

man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him. (Isaiah 59:15-16)

Yeshua is not some foreign god, but the very right *Arm of God*, sent to bring salvation to not only the Jews, but to all of mankind. Now that is something to sing about!

“Sing songs to Yehovah, a new song, for He has done marvelous things; His salvation (Yeshua) is with His right hand and his Holy arm.” (Psalm 98:1)

Speak to Pharaoh!

Moses, no longer the ‘*palace prince*’ but now the ‘*desert dweller*,’ had been humbled by life and could by this time only see his own inadequacies. Twice, he expressed his doubt that Pharaoh would listen to him. (Exodus 6:30)

God’s plans and purposes do not depend so much upon our abilities as upon our obedience. We must not be discouraged by our own perceived weaknesses. God knew beforehand that Pharaoh would not listen to Moses, and God hardened Pharaoh’s heart in order that He might reveal His power to deliver the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

God wants to display His power through us if we will cooperate and trust Him. Only when we come to the end of ourselves can God begin to work, so that the glory will go to Him – so that all will know that He is the Lord!

Let My People Go – That They May Serve Me....

As God had commanded them, Moses and his brother Aaron (Aharon) came to Pharaoh, demanding over and over again that he let God’s people go, in order that they may *serve Him in the wilderness*.

This whole account of God’s redemption of Israel from Egypt has a spiritual parallel. We are delivered through faith in Yeshua, the Passover Lamb, not simply to walk away and ‘*do our own thing*.’

What is the purpose of our freedom, purchased with the costly price of Yeshua’s own blood? It is the same as the purpose for which God wanted the children of Israel set free from Egypt – “so that they may serve Me.”

We are not set free from slavery to sin to do whatever we want with our lives, but in order to become a slave of righteousness – to serve the Living God. Since we have been bought with such a high price, our lives are not our own – we have been set free from our own personal ‘Egypt’ in order to serve God with our whole heart.

Signs and Wonders

God gave Moses and Aaron a special sign to show Pharaoh. In Hebrew the sign is called a ‘mofet’ מָפֵט, which means a ‘marvel’ or ‘wonder’. Aaron was to throw his stick down before Pharaoh and it would be transformed. In most English translations, we read that the stick became a serpent; but in the Hebrew, the word used is tannin תנין, which means a crocodile.⁶ However, Pharaoh, just as God foreknew, still refused to let the people go; therefore God sent His judgment upon Egypt in the form of the Ten Plagues.

“But Pharaoh will not hearken unto you, and I will lay My hand upon Egypt, and bring forth My hosts, My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt, by great judgments.”

(Exodus 7:4)

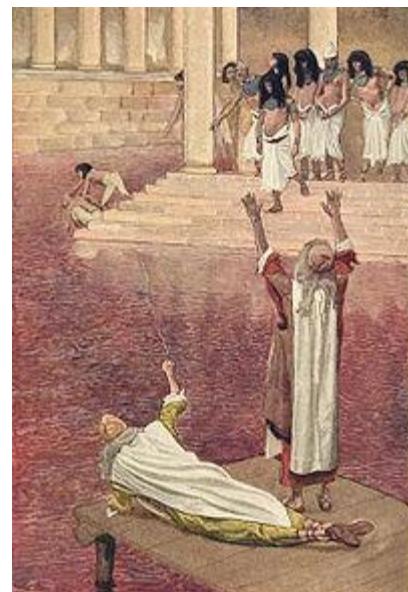


Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh (painting by Benjamin West)

God’s purpose in the plagues was twofold: to reveal Himself as Adonai to the Egyptians and to bring His people Israel out of Egypt. “**And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth My hand upon Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.**” (Exodus 7:5)

These Ten Plagues are remembered each year at the Passover Seder with the second cup of wine. One drop is removed from the cup for each of the plagues, while the leader recites the list in Hebrew. The idea behind this custom is that our cup (which represents joy) cannot be full while others are suffering.

In the first plague, the waters of the Nile were turned to blood, (dam) דם, making them foul and unfit for drinking. The fish died and the Nile stank. Imagine their horror! Unlike we have today, they didn’t have readily available water filters. They couldn’t just go to any grocery or convenience store to buy clean, pure, bottled water.



Water Is Changed into Blood (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

⁶ Exodus 7:9-10

With the second plague, frogs (tzfardeim) **צְפָרְדֵּעִים** covered the land of Egypt: “So the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into your house, into your bedroom, on your bed, into the houses of your servants, on your people, into your ovens, and into your kneading bowls. And the frogs shall come up on you, on your people, and on all your servants.” (Exodus 8:3-4)

We may notice here the partnership between God and man. God could have executed these judgments independently of man, but God chose to use Moses and Aaron as His instruments of judgment.



“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, ‘Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your hand with your rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up on the land of Egypt.’” (Exodus 8:5)

Acting upon specific commandments, Aaron stretched forth his hand with his rod in order to execute God’s judgments. Moses and Aaron were humble men with a mission. They did not become puffed up in their service to the Lord or take glory unto themselves. In fact, Moses was not even asking the Lord to use him when God appeared to him in the burning bush.

I don’t even think that Moses was out there for forty years in the desert singing, *‘I have a Destiny’...or ‘Lord, I want to be used by You.’* When God appeared to him, Moses did his best to try and squirm out of his calling. It is interesting that the man God chose to use was just leading a very ordinary, humble existence, as were most of those God chose to use in a mighty way. He uses the weak and the humble of this earth to accomplish His purposes, not the proud and mighty.⁷

In contrast to the humility demonstrated by Moses, Pharaoh showed his arrogance and pride. **“When Pharaoh saw there was respite, he hardened his heart...”** (Exodus 8:11) How often do we also behave in a similar manner, vowing to stop sinning as long as God brings discipline, and going right back to the same sin when God grants us respite or relief from the punishment?

Our resolve to live free of sin must endure beyond the time of our discipline, lest we require God to bring punishment of greater severity. Let us not tempt the Lord our God, who is a loving Father and disciplines those He loves.⁸

⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:27

⁸ Proverbs 3:12, Hebrews 12:6

God is dealing with many people these days even in the matter of appetites, because he wants a purified bride, not one defiled. If the Lord is asking us to give something up in our diet, even if it is our favorite, we need to keep our vow - to forsake this pleasure that leads to death, even beyond the time that he heals us from the sickness resulting from it.

The next plague was an infestation of lice (kinim) כִּנִּים which tormented man and beast. This time the magicians and sorcerers could not duplicate the plague, and therefore they said to Pharaoh, ‘**This is the finger of God (Elohim)**’; but Pharaoh’s heart was made so hardened that he would not listen to them. (Exodus 8:15)

The sorcerers were beginning to acknowledge the power of the Lord, but they still suffered due to the decisions of their leader. Innocent people will suffer in the nations whose leaders defy God. Believers need to pray for those in positions of authority, that their hearts will be soft towards the Lord.



Pharaoh had hardened his heart and would not listen to the voice of reason – one of the surest signs of pride. A humble man will receive correction willingly but a person with pride immediately becomes defensive and will not listen to others. This can be his downfall.

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:18)

Moses, who was called the most humble man on the face of the earth, had a completely different response when Jethro, Moses’ father in law, corrected him on his approach to settling disputes between the Israelites in the wilderness. Moses listened carefully and took heed to his good advice. Moses demonstrated a remarkably humble response: “*So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.*” (Exodus 18:24)

When Pharaoh still hardened his heart, God sent swarms of flies (arov) עָרוֹב which covered the land. God gave us a powerful testimony of His faithfulness when in the midst of plaguing Egypt, He still protected the people of Israel.



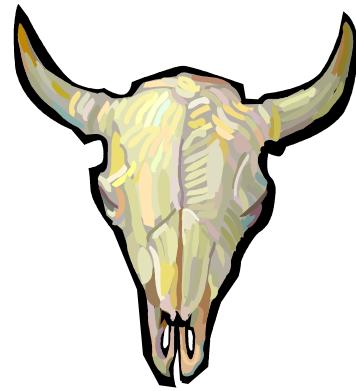
“**And I will set apart in that day the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there...And I will put a division between My people and thy people...**” (Exodus 8:18-19)

God clearly took possession of Israel as His people, and offered them protection in the midst of danger. Although God began by choosing the children of Israel as His special treasure upon the earth, He opened the way for anyone, Jew or Gentile, Israelite or Arab, to come under the shelter of God’s protective wings through the New Covenant, sealed in the blood of Yeshua the Messiah. He beckons to all people to come into this covenant.

The next plague was a devastating disease called (dever) בָּרֶר which killed all the domestic cattle of Egypt. Once again, the Lord distinguished between those under the canopy of His covering and those who were not.

“And all the cattle of Egypt died; but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.” (Exodus 9:6)

This shows us the importance of being in a covenantal relationship with the Almighty God. None of Egypt's best sorcerers and masters of the occult could save them from the hand of God's judgment.



Then God turned dust into painful boils (shkheen) שְׁחִין upon man and beast, even upon the magicians, who could not stand before Moses because of the boils (Exodus 9:9-11).

“Any who feared the Word of the Lord and took precautions was spared, but those who disregarded this warning from the prophet of God suffered.” (Exodus 9: 20-21)

Today, many prophets of God are warning people of a time of coming tribulation, but some are not heeding the Word of God. The enemy has been successful at deceiving the church into believing that they will be supernaturally raptured before any of this time of trouble, completely contrary to Yeshua's words. (Matthew 24)

This week's parashah ends with the seventh plague of hail (barad) בָּרֶד. God sent thunder, fire and a grievous hail which destroyed anything and everything that was in the field – man and beast and all vegetation. Only in Goshen, where the Israelites lived was there no hail.

“Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.” (Exodus 9:26)



The Seventh Plague (1823 painting by John Martin)

End Time Plagues

We know from the book of Revelation that many of these plagues will again strike all the inhabitants of the earth in the end times; and yet as covenant children of God, we need not fear. God will protect His people in the midst of this time of coming tribulation, just as he protected Israel during the plagues.

The Ten Plagues with which God judged Egypt foreshadows what is to come on a global scale in the final days. These plagues correlate closely with those that will be poured out upon the earth with each blast of the shofar (ram's horn) in the end times.

"The first angel sounded his shofar, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down on the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up....A third of the sea turned into blood." (Revelation 8:7-8)

Also as in Egypt, deep darkness will cover the earth: "The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night." (Revelation 8:12)

Hordes of locust will come down on the earth: "**And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth.**" (Revelations 9:3) In his vision, John described the seven last plagues on the earth: "I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God." (Revelation 15:1)

As God pours out the full bowl of His wrath upon the earth, loathsome sores will appear on all those who have taken the mark of the beast and worship his image. (Revelation 16:2) Then, just like in Egypt, the waters will be turned to blood. (Revelation 16:3-6)

Other plagues will also bombard the earth, such as darkness, scorching fire and destructive hail. "**And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.**" (Revelation 16:21)

Just as Pharaoh failed to repent due to the hardness of his heart, even after severe judgments, so do the people who are not destroyed in these end-time plagues fail to turn from their sins.

"The rest of mankind, those who were not killed by these plagues, even then did not turn from what they had made with their own hands...Nor did they turn from their murdering, their misuse of drugs in connection with the occult, their sexual immorality or their stealing." (Revelation 8:20-21)

May we be ever mindful that we are living in the end times; and while we remain safe in the security of our holy covenant with Elohim, let us diligently pray for mercy upon those who stubbornly continue to rebel against God.

False gods of the World vs. One True God

These plagues were not random natural disasters, but were God's judgment upon each of the false gods of Egypt. With each plague, God demonstrated His supreme power so that they would know that He, Yehovah, is the One True God. One of His names is '*El Elyon*' which means 'God Above All'.

The Egyptians worshipped many 'gods', but Elohim demonstrated His power over all of these with the Ten Plagues. Many people claim to believe in God, but which 'god' do they believe in? Is it Yehovah, the God of Israel, or is it Baal or some other false god?

The Muslims, who pray to their Jew-hating, Christian-despising god, while calling for the destruction of Israel, are not praying to the One True God! Pagans used to sacrifice their children in the fire to appease their gods. Even today, live infants are sacrificed in occult offerings to their god of darkness.

Someone from a foreign country once told me that their people were all praying for an abortion to take place. I asked, '*What kind of a god do you think they are praying to?*' This is why knowing the name, character and Word of God is so important. There are many false gods that are worshipped. Even the Nazis prayed to and worshipped a form of 'Jesus Christ' who was obviously not the Jewish Messiah.

We must be very certain of our obedience to God's first commandment: **I am Yehovah יְהוָה, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the abode of slavery. You are to have no other gods before me."** (Exodus 20:2-3)

Haftarat Va'era – The Re-gathering

God promised in this Haftarah to gather the house of Israel from where they have been scattered to dwell in their own land. God is bringing His people home today from all over the world.

"Thus says the Lord GOD: "When I have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and am hallowed in them in the sight of the Gentiles, then they will dwell in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob." (Ezekiel 28:25)

The most amazing thing about this prophetic word is that God is actually bringing it to pass in our very day! In our generation, God is bringing His people home from all over the world. From the North, the South the East and the West, God's people are returning to the Land of Israel from every direction.

God's will is to bring His people out of exile; but not all are willing to leave yet. At the present time, many Jewish people especially in Western nations seem content and comfortable to remain where they are, but with the instability of the global political and economic situation, this could quickly change.

Throughout history, the Jewish people have been the scapegoat of the world's problems. God will accomplish His will and His word is true. He will bring His people back to the land of Israel from all four corners of the earth, including the West, with or without their cooperation, even if this takes His outpoured hand of judgment.

There will come a day when all the children of Israel will dwell securely in the Land: "**And they will dwell safely there, build houses, and plant vineyards; yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God.**" (Ezekiel 28:26)

We have yet to see the destruction of the enemies of Israel; therefore this prophecy has not been fulfilled in its fullness. We are building houses and planting vineyards in the Land, but we do not yet live in safety and security as long as terrorists continue to scheme and conspire to shed the innocent blood of the children of Jacob. The people of Israel still need the help and support of God's faithful remnant in the nations!

However, as Bible Believers, we live by faith and not by sight⁹; we know that God's word is true and His promises will come to pass. He will execute judgment on those who try to claim the land of Israel as their own.

The link between the Sedrah (Torah portion) and haftarah is that once again, God gives a prophecy against the Pharaoh of Egypt: "**Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh, King of Egypt....**" (Ezekiel 29:3)

Today, Believers in every nation need to pray as never before for God's mercy upon their nations. God will even use the hardness of heart of the leaders of those nations that dare come against Israel to reveal His power. "**Adonai has made all of Himself. Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.**" (Proverbs 16:4)

It took ten terrible plagues to cause Pharaoh to let God's people go! Egypt was nearly destroyed in order to bring the children of Israel out of exile and back into their own land. We live in critical times, for Israel, and for all the nations, but God is our refuge and strength. Praise the Lord. Halleluyah!

"Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord (YHVH) says: 'I will now restore the fortunes of Jacob and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name.'" (Ezekiel 39:25)

In the end, God's judgments are always redemptive: "**And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord.**" (Ezekiel 29:6)

⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:7

New Testament portion: Breaking Down the Machitzah (Dividing Wall)

In reading this account of God's election of the children of Israel, and His destruction of Egypt through the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, some might accuse God of being unfair. To this charge, God has answered, '**I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will pity whom I pity**' (Romans 9:15).

God reminds us that he is the Potter, who has every right to use the clay as he sees fit. '**Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?" (Romans 9:21)** In these passages, God makes clear that right from the beginning, his mercy was not only for the Jewish people, but for all people:

"That is, to us, whom He called not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles? As indeed He says in Hosea, 'Those who were not my people I will call my people; her who was not loved I will call loved'; and in the very place where they were told, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called sons of the living God!" (Romans 9:24-26, Hosea 1:10, 2:23)

God never meant for the Jewish people to keep the knowledge of Elohim to themselves as if they were some sort of exclusive club. The election of Israel as a chosen people was never due to their superiority in any way as a people. On the contrary, it was due to God's mercy alone that he chose them to first reveal His name, His power, and His Torah. Their mission was to bring the Light to the Gentiles.

This is what the early Messianic Jews accomplished through Yeshua, the Light of the World, but Rabbinical Judaism of today generally discourages any from 'joining the club', preferring to remain separate from the Gentiles, not understanding their calling as world-wide evangelists.

Yeshua has broken down the machitzah, the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles, and this is what I love about Messianic Judaism – that people of every people group are (or at least should be) welcomed freely into the family of God through the blood of His son, Yeshua Hamashiach (Jesus the Messiah).

Closing Prayer: Thank You, יהוה, for revealing Yourself to us as Abba Father, El Gibor, Mighty God. Thank you that You are a covenant keeping God and we are Your children who take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Hear our cries O Lord; remember Your covenant with us. Deliver us with the mighty power of Your right hand and outstretched arm from all of our enemies and from the oppression of those who are too strong for us.

Thank you for taking us out with full possession of the silver and gold of our enemies. Thank you that even this day, You are taking action to lift us out from the burdens of the oppressor and to free us from the yoke of bondage – that we may serve You with joy and gladness all the days of our life. In Yeshua's name. Amen.

Va'era Study Questions

1. What is the meaning of 'El Shaddai'? How does it relate to the character of God?
2. What is the Hebrew name of God revealed to Moses? Why do you think it has been substituted with a more generic title in most Bibles?
3. What would you say (using Scripture) to a Christian who believes that the Palestinians have a right to a state within the borders of the state of Israel?
4. What were the five redemptive promises God made to the children of Israel?
5. Have you ever experienced a time when someone was too discouraged to listen to the good news you were trying to tell them about? What can we do to encourage people?
6. How is Yeshua revealed as the 'arm of God' in the prophets?
7. What were God's purposes in sending the Ten Plagues upon Egypt?
8. How does this relate to our current situation and the future regarding the nations ?
9. What were the first seven plagues (in English and Hebrew)?
10. How did God protect the Israelites during the plagues? Does this give us reassurance about our future or do you think we will be raptured out of the world first?

About the Author:

Hannah Nesher grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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