

The Treasures of the Torah

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,
46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
Matthew 13:45*

‘Ok Pharaoh, you’ve got ten plagues to make your mind up!’



Exodus - Va'era : ‘I Appeared’

21 th January 2023 - 21 Tevet 5783

Exodus 6:2 -9:35

Additional readings . Ezekiel 28:25 - 29:21, Luke 11:14:22

Shalom Talmidim.

This Parsha continues on from last week’s Parsha Shemot by revealing to us yet another name for YHVH.

Last week we learned that the the book of Exodus is also called ‘Shemot’, which means ‘Names’. Our opening verse in this week’s parsha tells us that God only revealed His name as ‘God Almighty’ or El Shaddai, to the patriarchs. El Shaddai, declared Himself to be the God of Israel. In this Parsha, He will reveal His name as YHVH to Moses. In some translations the word ‘Lord’ is used instead of the Tetragrammaton. The word ‘Tetragrammaton’, is Greek and means a word or a meaning reflected or spelled with four letters.

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YHVH/YHWH

However, the name and title of God, YHVH, gives us a literal and more dynamic rendition of what is being revealed. Further on in Exodus chapter 34, we will see how these attributes are revealed.

In the Jewish writing the term, 'Adonai' is used to express the Lordship of YHVH.

Our key events throughout this parsha include:

Moses and Aaron travel to Egypt.

Moses meets with Pharaoh and asks that the people be released.

Moses declares that unwillingness to obey YHVH's command will bring judgement upon Egypt.

The first seven plagues are revealed.

As the title 'I Appeared' suggests, this parsha will reveal not only YHVH's name but also His power, and establish Him as God over all the gods.

The revelation of the name YHVH compounds the previous name of El Shaddai and the revealed name, *Eyer Asher Eyer*, or YHVH together. Establishing the creator's name to the patriarchs, YHVH now tells us what is about to happen and thus establishes His prophetic name. The story of Shemot, or the book of Exodus, is a story about the people and YHVH working through them. Their names, as are His, are also revealed to us. In the time of Joseph, little Israel came into the land and now we about to see a nation leave.

YHVH begins by stating to Moses what He is going to do to Pharaoh, and how with an outstretched hand, He will drive His people out of the land of Egypt.

Before we progress it would do us well to deconstruct the image of what Egypt has become through story and perhaps a little myth.

The very name of Egypt was given by the Greeks. Ancient Egypt was called 'Kemet'. Kemet was a rich and fertile land watered by the Nile. Its soil was dark and thus the name means 'Black Land'.

The name 'Egypt' comes from **the** Greek Aegyptos which was the Greek pronunciation of the ancient Egyptian name 'Hwt-Ka-Ptah' ("Mansion of the Spirit of Ptah").

There is a popular theory that the rulers at the time of Joseph were the Hyksos - 'rulers of foreign lands'. This period is considered to be round 1630 -1523 BCE. Some scholars debate however, that this period is 200 years out as they debate that the exodus took place 480 years before the reign of Solomon (1446 BCE).

According to history the period ruled by the Hyksos, was not a powerful one. There was apparently much division within Egypt which eventually brought defeat to Hyksos rule. The Hyksos were semitic cousins of the Israelites and this may perhaps be the reason why Joseph may have, and of course by the hand of YHVH, been given favour and pre-eminence within society.

Egypt thus was not at the time, the dry arid land that we have come to visualise. The empire of Egypt was vast and not the geographical land mass we see today.

Scholars mark the history of Egypt with about 30-31 dynasties.

The empire established a system of labour among the Asiatics who became part of the empire. As in all societies there were skilled and unskilled groups of workers. The Egyptian

practice of forming the workforce broke the groups up into several streams which ranged from captives or criminals to chattel slaves and a conscripted force for government projects and bonded labourers who would sell themselves into service often because of debt. Another type of labour came from those who would choose to serve in the temple and as a reward they would fare well into the after life.

I find ancient Egyptian history fascinating. I trust these little insights help in painting some kind of picture of the period in which this Parsha takes place.

Perhaps you might like to do some of your own study on this.

As we move on into the Parsha, YHVH enforces His title as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and as the God of the Covenant given to Israel. YHVH tells Moses that He has heard the cries of His people who are now in bondage. Moses is told to tell the people that YHVH is going to bring them out of their slavery.

6:6 “Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. 7 I will take you as My own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. 8 And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord.’”

Verse 9 tells us of what deep anguish the people were in. They just could not believe a word Moses said.

At this point Moses is directed by YHVH to go to Pharaoh and tell him to let the Hebrews go.

Verse 14 brings into the narrative an interlude of the children of Israel and so the theme of ‘shemot’ or names continues. It is in this list of names that we finally see the name of Moses’ father mentioned. v20 Amram married his father’s sister Jochebed, who bore him Aaron and Moses. Amram lived 137 years.

Amram was a Levite. The visions or testament of Amram, were found among the dead sea scrolls in Qumran - scroll: 4Q543-549. They relate his life to his son’s. It has some fascinating content. Perhaps you might want to search it out.

After being told to take the message to Pharaoh, Moses retorts, 6:12 But Moses said to the Lord, “If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?”

In some translations the term ‘uncircumcised lips’, or ‘stammering lips’ is used. Moses thought of himself as incapable of rendering an articulate to Pharaoh.

Verses 9 and 12 show us that prevailing conditions can often hinder our faith in what YHVH wants us to do. We argue, just as Moses did that we are not right for the job at hand. Often in periods of great stress and tragedy, our faith in what God can do wanes and everything seems just impossible.

These conditions are what YHVH is going to address in this Parsha. YHVH will show through His power and grace that He will destroy the high places of worship, the spiritual principalities and the powers that come against the knowledge of God.

The plagues will destroy the infrastructure and the economy of this powerful Egyptian empire.

Friends, there is nothing that is hard for God to contend with. However, there is one area that disappoints Him and affects His heart deeply; it is when we distrust Him and have little faith. This was the original sin in the garden that separated man from Him. Distrust causes us to be removed from Him. His grace and love for us continues to be proved to people, His bride. Though this relationship falters throughout the ages, YHVH's love and covenant remains, and so we see that the outstretched hand of the Lord over the nation, protects His people, a people whom He will deliver from bondage and take into a wilderness journey. YHVH will in the coming days prove His might and settle His status as the God of Israel.

Further study into the plagues will reveal that the each judgement came against a particular Egyptian deity. The first three plagues — the water turned to blood, the frogs and the lice, were experienced by everyone, Hebrew and Egyptian alike. Plague number four, the flies, sees YHVH separate the people. The Hebrews are not affected by this or the remaining six plagues.

Why do you think the first three plagues affected the Hebrews as well?

The Egyptians had gods for everything and often responsibilities were shared. For example Khnum, Hapi, and Osiris were rulers over the Nile. Hapi and Heqt, were frog and fertility gods.

The judgements thus fell upon every sector of society and left no living thing untouched.

The goal of these judgements was to show YHVH supreme above all other gods. This would be a warning to other cultures and nations. YHVH's name would become renowned and people would come to tremble, knowing that He was the God of the Israelites.

Friends, we don't have enough excuses to put to God to justify why He should not choose us. Moses and Aaron were 80 and 83 years old respectively. Even old age is not a good enough excuse. YHVH had planned a journey for the people. It would not be easy for them, but they could make it a lot easier on themselves if they just heard and obeyed. Their immaturity and fundamentally their selfishness would prevent them from progressing at speed.

The Israelites camped forty-two times in forty years. Can you imagine how they must have felt having to decamp so many times. Just when you think all is well, it's time to move again. I wonder if any of the people actually considered the amount of times they'd have to do this.

Moving at this level would have brought its own points of stress. However, this nomadic life-style would have taught them, I hope, that nothing stands still when it's in God's hands. Overall it shows that the structures we build must remain ready for transport. Just as we travel through our time, the Israelites travelled through theirs and each generation must go through its own mobilisation. However, we learn that in order for God to build His pattern into us He must deconstruct that which we have built for ourselves.

There was a time in the dynasties of the Pharaohs that the great building works on the pyramids and burial temples of the kings would come to an end. There are a couple of theories that suggest that the constant raiding of the tombs by robbers gave rise to security problems and that as the land footprint for the pyramids became smaller the topography of the land was no longer suitable for building these huge structures. The further building of these great memorials to the god kings began to crumble.

Chapter 8 sees Pharaoh asking Moses to entreat the Lord to take the frogs away. Perhaps Pharaoh has relented and finally given in. Moses obliges but the agreement to let the people go is a ruse. What we find strange is that YHVH actually relented and stopped the plague. Pharaoh hardened his heart and did not let the people go.

Is this a game? Is Pharaoh the god king contesting God? Perhaps God is allowing this after all. I think so.

The next plague of lice infests the dust of the earth and every man and beast. The magicians cannot replicate this act and concede, saying that this is the finger of God.

As we move on, we see in chapter 8:20 how Moses warns Pharaoh of the 4th plague - the plague of flies. In this judgement, YHVH declares that He is now going to separate His people. The Hebrews will no longer be affected by what YHVH releases upon the land.

Friends, as we read this we see that YHVH draws upon His covenant to protect His people even though they are still yet to agree to covenant at all. We can see only mercy and grace at work here. As the people learn to establish their ways in accordance to the covenant, YHVH will become a disciplinarian to them, chastising them with His staff and rod. The people have a long way to go yet, but God is willing to show compassion and hold back anger.

The scriptures tell us that what happened to Israel and what God established in the wilderness is a foreshadow of things (Hebrews 8:3-5) to come and that what happened to them is a lesson for us.

1 Corinthians 10:16

10 For, brothers, I don't want you to miss the significance of what happened to our fathers. All of them were guided by the pillar of cloud, and they all passed through the sea, 2 and in connection with the cloud and with the sea they all immersed themselves into Moshe, 3 also they all ate the same food from the Spirit, 4 and they all drank the same drink from the Spirit — for they drank from a Spirit-sent Rock which followed them, and that Rock was the Messiah. 5 Yet with the majority of them God was not pleased, so their bodies were strewn across the desert.

6 Now these things took place as prefigurative historical events, warning us not to set our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Don't be idolaters, as some of them were — as the Tanakh puts it, "The people sat down to eat and drink, then got up to indulge in revelry." 8 And let us not engage in sexual immorality, as some of them did, with the consequence that 23,000 died in a single day. 9 And let us not put the Messiah to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by snakes. 10 And don't grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the Destroying Angel.

11 These things happened to them as prefigurative historical events, and they were written down as a warning to us who are living in the *acharit-hayamim* (*the times to come or last days*). 12 Therefore, let anyone who thinks he is standing up be careful not to fall! 13 No temptation has seized you beyond what people normally experience, and God can be trusted not to allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear. ***On the contrary, along with the temptation he will also provide the way out, so that you will be able to endure.***

Romans 11:1 I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel: 3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? 4 And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal." 5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. 6 And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

7 What then? What the people of Israel sought so earnestly they did not obtain. The elect among them did, but the others were hardened, 8 as it is written:

"God gave them a spirit of stupor,
eyes that could not see
and ears that could not hear,
to this very day."

9 And David says:

"May their table become a snare and a trap,
a stumbling block and a retribution for them.

10 May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see,
and their backs be bent forever."

Ingrafted Branches

11 Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. 12 But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!

We bound through the story of the exodus. In less than six chapters we hurry through the story of Moses. There seems to be no condensation of events between Moses the child in the rushes to the man standing by the burning bush. Almost 300 years pass from the time of Joseph's death and the birth of Moses. Many Pharaohs have come and gone. So it stands to reason that with internal conflict and wars the structure of Egyptian society would change.

Despite prospering in the early years, during Joseph's time, things would become very difficult indeed in the future.

Today there is a great debate on whether the Jews live in a Jewish sate or whether they live in a nation of Jews. Personally I would argue the latter. I see that we as believers reflect this concept in that we live in a world that is not ours. Though we are part of the world, we are not of the world. The Jewish people fundamentally live in a constructed nation founded upon a real vision. But the vision has failed because it was designed by man. Israel is a democracy and thus laws are based on human consensus, not on the overriding rule of God's law. In time Israel will be born again, perhaps even in a day as scripture tells us. One day, my friends, we will see the land and the people restored, but just as the people faced great change in the wilderness, a great change must transpire again. This truly will be a momentous occasion.

In verse 8:25 Moses is called to Pharaoh and once again Pharaoh plays a ruse. He will allow Moses and the people to offer their sacrifices only if YHVH gets rid of the flies. Once again YHVH relents. But Pharaoh hardens his heart and changes his mind.

Drawing to a close, YHVH brings a severe pestilence, killing all the livestock and bringing boils upon the people. Recently I watched a documentary on Gruinard Island which is off the coast of Scotland. The British government in 1942-43 held a germ warfare experiment, releasing anthrax spores onto the island and using sheep as live bait. Human beings if contaminated break out into terrible black boils. Anthrax is not a contagious disease but is only transmitted by inhalation or by getting spores into open cuts. So having recently contemplated this event, I concluded that disease in Exodus 9 seemed to match. To confirm my thoughts I came across an interesting find. On the CDC (Centre for Disease Control) website, the science believes that anthrax originated in Egypt around the time of Moses. How amazing is that!

So today the legacy of God's judgement upon the Egyptians seems to prevail. The breakout of the plague of pestilence and boils did not affect the Hebrews.

Friends, we have to understand that if the believers in Christ are grafted into the covenant, the promises of YHVH's protection and provision remain with us. During the time to come, during the next greater exodus of the people, we will experience similar occurrences. The times of Jacob's trouble will bring great distress upon the earth. We are not talking localised calamities. What will happen during the time of YHVH's judgements upon the wickedness of this world will be global. We must remain within the bounds of the covenant. By God's grace we will, if we pursue Him and draw close to Him.

Finally I want to end by drawing our attention to the name of YHVH. Let us look at this again in the pictographic form too.

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Yod		Arm and hand / work / deed
Hey		Lo! Behold! "The"
Vav		Nail / peg / add / "And"
Hey		Lo! Behold! "The"

YHVH

We have discovered that the name of YHVH is a prophetic name. YHVH is telling us in essence and quite profoundly 'what will be will be' or what He has destined will come to pass. It is compounded with the 'I Am' name He revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. This is prophecy. The name of YHVH is a sacred name and it is also a point of revelation to us. Every time we read the name we are seeing El Shaddai's attribute. It is as if we are in His very presence, just as Moses was at the burning bush and when he met with YHVH in the tent of meeting. We need to attribute this to our own responses to YHVH as we enter into His presence each time.

As we look to the cross we see His name, the revealed name of God in the form of our blessed saviour. This is prophecy fulfilled. The precious Lamb of God was crucified as the only acceptable atoning sacrifice, thus ratifying the redemption of sinful man, breaking the curse of death, God's judgement upon him.

In this sign upon the cross, we see that YHVH who is synonymous with His Covenant, secures His promise, the finished work through His outstretched arms, which are nailed to the cross for us to behold. This is an awesome and wondrous signature. We must not be ignorant of what YHVH is showing us. The story of the exodus is one of redemption and the revealed name of God. Shown to us in its pages, it tells us that what He has planned will be fulfilled.

Let us seal this study with these wonderful words of promise from Isaiah 55:10-12

10 "For as the rain and snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth,
Making it bear and sprout,
And providing seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

**11 So will My word be which goes out of My mouth;
It will not return to Me void (useless, without result),
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.**

**12 "For you will go out [from exile] with joy
And be led forth [by the Lord Himself] with peace;**
The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you,
And all the trees of the field will clap their hands. AMP.

Our Haftarah reading looks into Ezekiel 28: 25 - 29:21. It literally brings the judgement of of Egypt as proclaimed in Moses' time upon them again. Egypt's kingdom will be a humble one and it will never dominate another nation. Ezekiel prophesied around the latter half of the 6th century BCE. The Egyptian empire fell and the nation became part of the Roman Empire around 30BCE. Ezekiel prophesied the restoration and regathering of Israel. This is the will of God sealed by His glorious name.

In the latter days, YHVH is going to humble nations and all who seek to contest with Him just as Pharaoh did. It won't be easy for God's people but He will not give us more than we can bear. The time of the release of God's people from bondage will come and all of creation will rejoice in the work of the Lord.

From Shabbat to Shabbat, may the name of the Lord be praised.



24 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha.
[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]

25 Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.
[May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favour.]

26 Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom
May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.]

Until next time.

Shabbat Shalom

Grant Marshall: Co-founder Arrows of Ephrayim Ministries.

Glossary

Midrash: In Judaism, the Midrash is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (Aggadah) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (halakha), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (Tanakh)

Targum: Targum Onkelos (or Onqelos), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)

Targum Jonathan: Targum Jonathan), otherwise referred to as Targum Yonasan/Yonatan, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10- 220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

Talmud: The Talmud means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the Babylonian Talmud (Talmud Bavli), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;

2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided.

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.