



*Parasha Va'era
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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2012

NEW CONGREGATION IN PARIS

The next day of worship in our new Jewish Adventist congregation in Paris will be on February 3, 2012. I am happy to give here a picture of the pastor of will lead this new congregation, of course he is seconded by a very good team. which is very happy to participate in this new project.



NEWS FROM CAMPINAS, BRAZIL

We are happy to share with our readers this news from the Beth Bnei Tzion Campinas. Our congregation has

been really busy the last month. In December 18, we promoted a special lunch for children in a project held by some church member at Hortolândia. These children are very poor and some have only the food that is offered by project volunteers. All the Kehila has helped, buying and preparing foods. The director for the project Abdel da Silva Neves told us that it is a good way to show the love of Messiah.



We had our very good and happy Chanukah time. The last Shabbat of Chanukah was very special we had a hatsga The last Sabbath was very special. We had a hatsaga (child dedication) of Rivka, daughter of R. and F. ben Ashul. Rav Reinaldo Siqueira was in charge of this service.



OVERVIEW

VA'ERA EXODUS 6: 2 - 9:35

G-d tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt. However, the Jewish People do not listen. G-d commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People.

Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh's magicians copy the sign, emboldening Pharaoh to refuse the request.

G-d punishes the Egyptians and sends plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy these miracles on a smaller scale, again encouraging Pharaoh to be obstinate.

After the plague of lice, Pharaoh's magicians concede that only G-d could be performing these miracles.

Only the Egyptians, and not the Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail.

However, despite Moshe's offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses.

EXILE IS NOT ALWAYS PUNISHMENT

When we are full of prejudices we always have a negative view of the Jewish history. Our paradigm is very simple: Israel is faithful, he is rewarded, he is not faithful he is punished. That is why for many people if Israel is in exile it is because it deserves it. That that is not always the case. The Egyptian exile did not come as a result of anything which the people did wrong. It was not a punishment for some sin or bad behavior. It was predicted many years earlier to Abraham. G-d told Abraham that his children will be enslaved in a foreign land for 400 years! **"Then the L-RD said to him, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.'"** (Gen 15:13.)

ISRAEL, A SUFFERING SERVANT

No other nation has experienced such suffering, persecution and execution as the people of Israel. Yet, through it all, he survived as a people with a unique identity. No other nation spent more years in exile than in their own homeland, yet, no matter where they were, they kept G-d's laws for over four thousand years. No other nation found its culture and religious system under such attack as did the people of Israel. We not only survived, but we have flourished, and we back in our homeland.

The birth of our nation in Egyptian Exile for 210 years gave us the ability to come through all adverse situations and grow even stronger because of them.

That is also a lesson from the burning bush, our sages say that with the burning bush G-d showed Moshe that, just as the bush was on fire, yet was not consumed, so too, the people of Israel, no matter what circumstances they will have to endure throughout the generations, they would never become destroyed.

Rabbi Zalmen Morozov says that "Over three thousand years passed and indeed, we are one of the greatest miracles of all times. Against all odds and after all the years of exile and suffering, we are strong and vibrant."

G-D WAS THE LIBERATOR

Rabbi Ozer Alport asks a question: If G-d wanted the Jews to be freed from their bondage in Egypt, why did He harden Pharaoh's heart (7:3) so that he would refuse to free the Jewish people instead of causing him to agree to allow the Jews to leave so that they could receive their freedom and the Torah that much sooner?

He gives this answer from Rabbi Chaim Friedlander which is interesting: There was a danger that if Pharaoh willingly freed the Jews, they would feel gratitude toward him and view him as the one who was responsible for their independence. G-d wanted to make it absolutely clear that their freedom came solely from Him and they were indebted to nobody else, and in order to do so, He hardened Pharaoh's heart until the plagues made it clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was G-d who was liberating them and not Pharaoh"

THE FOUR STAGES OF REDEMPTION

The Torah States, “I am G-d, and I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; and I will save you from their service; and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great judgments. And I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be a G-d to you...” (Exodus 6:6-7) This passage uses four separate expressions of redemption. Everyone who is familiar with the *haggada shel pessach* (the text read during the Seder of Passover) will recognize in this text the four verbs which support the four cups of wine we have to drink on that evening:

- I will take you out
- I will save you
- I will redeem you
- And I will take you to Me for a people

Any one of these expressions alone would have sufficed to convey G-d’s promise to redeem the Jewish people! But according to the Jewish tradition, all these four expressions are necessary to give the full picture of liberation of the Jewish people.

The commentator Netivot Shalom explains that these four expression represent four stages of redemptions (Pesachim 10:1, Yerushalmi).

The first stage of redemption was for the Jews to be taken out from the darkness and impurity of their surrounding culture.

The second stage was to be saved from the Egyptian servitude and its subjugation.

The third stage was to redeem them from this subjugation

The fourth and final stage was to take the Jews as His people, to renew the everlasting covenant with them.

PROGRESSION OF THE PLAGUES

It is interesting to notice that Rabbi Abba Wagensberg reminds us what Ibn Ezra said about the progression of the plagues. He said that the plagues progressed from the bottom up.

- The first two plagues, blood and frogs, involved water, which flows to the lowest places on earth.
- The next two plagues, lice and wild beasts, took place on the land - one step higher than water.
- The following plagues, livestock epidemic and boils, were caused by airborne disease - one step higher than land.

- The plagues of hail and locusts involved clouds (the locusts formed a cloud of their own!), representing the highest reaches of the atmosphere.

- The plague of darkness took place on a level even beyond that, in the celestial realm.

- And the death of the firstborn affected people’s very souls, coming from beyond the furthest galaxies.

PHARAOH DID NOT WANT TO FREE ISRAEL

When Moses spoke to Pharaoh he said **Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the desert.** (Ex 7:16)

It was clear that Pharaoh expected the people of Israel to return. Rashi deducted this from this verse “It was told to the king of Egypt that they had fled.” (Exodus 14:5). He knew that Israel left, he agree on that, but Rashi said that Pharaoh sent spies to accompany the Hebrews and see what they would do at the end of three days. The spies returned and reported that the children of Israel had no intention of coming back to slavery. Upon hearing this, the attitude of Pharaoh and went with his army to bring back Israel to slavery.

LET MY PEOPLE GO TO WORSHIP ME

The Torah states that when Moses came to speak again to Pharaoh, he said to him **“The L-rd, the G-d of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the desert. But until now you have not listened.”** (Ex 7:16). What kind of worship? It is clear that it was to celebrate the Shabbat. because when Moses spoke to the first time to Pharaoh he said **“This is what the L-rd, the G-d of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.’”** (Ex 5:1). The Message was to go to celebrate a festival and to worship. The Shabbat is the first feast of the L-rd “These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the L-rd. . . . “There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. (Lev 23:1-3)

COUNTING THE MITSVOT

The story is told of Moshe who returns from synagogue one night and asks his wife Sadie what is for dinner. Sadie replies, "Chicken. But to tell you the truth, it smells kind of funny." Moshe says, "You know, the rabbi announced that there is a poor man who needs food. I'll take him the chicken; you make something else!"

The next day, Moshe is late from synagogue and Sadie wants to know "Why?". Moshe tells her, "Remember the poor man who needed food to whom I gave the chicken?" He got sick so I went to fulfill the mitzvah of bikur cholim (visiting the sick).

The third day, Moshe was REALLY late. When Sadie asks for the reason, Moshe says, "Well, you remember the poor man to whom we gave the chicken and who got sick? Unfortunately, he died and I took care of his funeral. It's really sad - but look at that - we got three mitzvahs from one stinking chicken!"

When you do a mitzvah of kindness make sure it is a true mitzvah of kindness that is good for the other person and what the other person wants!

G-D'S FOOTSTEPS

G-d says, "And I will walk among you, and I will be your G-d and you shall be My people." This is indeed a special blessing to recognize that G-d walks among us at all times.

The following tale explains it beautifully and is worthwhile giving some thought when we go through difficult periods in life, which we all go through one time or another.

A person, who through his lifetime experienced difficult periods, returned his soul to its maker. In heaven he was shown a replay of his entire life. He was shown all the steps he took throughout his life; where he went and what he did. To his amazement he saw four footsteps, instead of only two.

"But I have only two feet? Why do I see four footsteps?" he asked the angel.

"Two are yours and the other two are G-d's. He walked with you wherever you went!" replied the angel.

"But why, as I watch the difficult times in my life and the difficult steps I went through, I see only two footsteps? Where was G-d then?"

The angel looked at him and smiled, "You're mistaken. The two footsteps you see during your difficult journeys through life are not yours! They are G-d's footsteps! During those times G-d carried you!"

Sources: These comments of the parasha are based on comments published by Rabbi Zalmen Pakouz, Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, Rabbi Ozer Alport, Rabbi Ari Kahn, Rabbi Noson Weisz, and Rabbi Avigdor Bonchek, from Aish HaTorah (Aish.com). By Rabbi Naftali Reich, Rabbi Berel Wein and Rabbi Yochanan Zweig, Rabbi Yissocher Frand from Torah.org (Project Genenis). By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair from Ohr Somayach, by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky.

HAFTARAH

Ezekiel 28:25 - 29:21

In the book of Shemot, Exodus the people of Israel are scattered in Egypt... **The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labor. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them. (Exodus 1:13-14).** Egypt became in the Biblical tradition the type of G-d's people oppressors.

HAFTARAH: Ezekiel establishes a strong parallel between the people who oppresses Israel and Egypt and is invited to prophecy against the Pharaoh of Egypt: **"Mortal, set your face against Pharaoh king**

EDITOR

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of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt; speak, and say, Thus says the L-rd G-d: I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt.” (Ezekiel 29:2-3)

Therefore, thus says the L-rd G-d: “I will bring a sword upon you, and will cut off from you human being and animal; and the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste. Then they shall know that I am the L-rd. Because you said, “The Nile is mine, and I made it.” (Ezekiel 29:8-9)

PARASHA: Moshe announces to Pharaoh that the country will be cursed by plagues: **The Egyptians shall know that I am the L-rd, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out from among them.”** (Exodus 7:5)

HAFTARAH: Ezekiel make a link with the 40 years of Israel in the wilderness: **I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation... No human foot shall pass through it, and no animal foot shall pass through it; it shall be uninhabited forty years. I will make the land of Egypt a desolation among desolated countries; and her cities shall be a desolation forty years among cities that are laid waste. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries.** (Ezekiel 29:10-12)

However there is a hope, there is a future even for Egypt or any nation who oppressed Israel if they repent: **Further, thus says the L-rd G-d: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered.”** (Ezekiel 29:13)

BRIT HACHADASHA

Revelation 16

Anyone who has read the Brit Hachadasha cannot avoid to think about the last plagues described in Revelation 16 when we read the ten plagues of Egypt. There are many similarities between the people of G-d in the time of Moses and the people of G-d at the end of time. G-d’s people in the time of Moses were in exile in Egypt. G-d’s people at the end of time are in exile also, because our homeland is in heaven, our homeland is not in this world of sin, led by the adversary. That is why according to the Bible the world where we are living and its religious system is called Babylon, the religious confusion.

G-d gave a special message to be preached at the end of time, this message is given in **Revelation 14: 6-12**, in

this text G-d said to us **“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.”** (Rev 14:8) and this message is completed by a call given in chapter 18 **“Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues”** (Rev 18:4).

We are in Babylon, we are spiritually enslaved in Babylon exactly as the people of Israel were living as slaves in Egypt and we are invited to **“come out”** from Babylon, we are invited to **“come out”** from this slavery and to join the contemporary people of G-d.

It will be the only way to avoid the last plagues as the Jewish people avoided the plagues in Egypt. I met from time to time people who are afraid to live at the very end, when the plagues will be poured on the earth, because they don’t know if they will survive. I would like to say to everyone who is afraid, don’t be afraid, we have nothing to fear, the example of the Hebrews in Egypt is an example for us, when the ten plagues were poured on Egypt, not joined one of the people of Israel were touched, no one died, even among the Egyptian, everyone who had faith in G-d and Israel in the land Goshen were saved. That is why we can be sure that when the last seven plagues will be poured on the earth, no one from the people of G-d will be touched. The last plagues are:

1. ugly and painful sores on the land
2. The water of the sea turned into blood
3. The water of the rivers and springs of water became blood.
4. Power is given to the sun to scorch people with fire.
5. The throne of the beast, and his kingdom is plunged into darkness
6. The great river Euphrates, and its water is dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.
7. Flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake which announce the Second Coming of the Mashiach.

The protection of G-d will be complete over the people of G-d. **“Come out of Babylon, . . . so that you will not receive any of her plagues”** (Rev 18:4)