

Opening Scripture Reading/Prayer:

Exodus 31:12-17

The Sabbath

¹² And the Lord said to Moses, ¹³ “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. . . .’ ¹⁶ Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. ¹⁷ It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”

Isaiah 58:13-14

¹³ “If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath,
from doing your pleasure on my holy day,
and call the Sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the Lord honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;
¹⁴ then you shall take delight in the Lord,
and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Brandon’s Teaching:

Opening “Name of God” I want us to keep in mind as we go through this teaching today, as we start the a New Book of the Bible, Exodus:

YHVH Sabaoth.

YHVH is God’s personal name.

By pairing **YHVH** with the Hebrew word **Sabaoth**, we get a title that is often translated as **LORD of Hosts or LORD of Armies**

“He who forms the mountains, who creates the wind, and who reveals His thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth— YHVH Elohim Sabaoth is His name.” Amos 4:13

God has many titles and names depending on how He reveals and expresses Himself.

Here we will focus on one of the most encompassing of all the names of God – **YHVH Sabaoth**.

YHVH is God’s personal name.

By pairing **YHVH** with the Hebrew word **Sabaoth**, we get a title that is often translated as **LORD of Hosts or LORD of Armies**. But those titles are so limiting in contrast to the true significance of this name.

What is Sabaoth?

Sabaoth is the feminine form of the Hebrew word **tsaba**, which means army, war or warfare.

Yet, **tsaba** is often used in the Hebrew Scriptures not to refer to a military army but a “**vast array**” or “**host**” of resources available to the infinite God of the Universe.

The first time we see the word **tsaba** is in the completion of Creation.

“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts [seba’am].” (*Genesis 2:1*)

Here and in other Scriptures, **the masculine form of tsaba** refers to **the entire universe and all of God’s perfect creation on earth**. He made it. He is Lord over all of it: lightning and wind, sun and moon, man and woman, animals and plants. Everything!

Now, imagine the result when we combine **tsaba** with the personal name of God, **YHVH**—we get a name that gives us a glimpse into how marvellously Almighty and all powerful He truly is.

Let’s look at God’s majesty through His name and title: **YHVH Sabaoth**.

The God of Infinite Resources

“Restore us, O YHVH Elohim Sabaoth (O LORD God Sabaoth)! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!” (*Psalms 80:19*)

The name YHVH Sabaoth is used 235 times in the Bible.

We first see it in a desperate prayer by a barren woman opening her heart before God and begging for a child. **She pleads with YHVH Sabaoth out of anguish and great anxiety, calling upon a God of greatness and supreme power.**

Hannah prays, “O LORD of hosts [YHVH Sabaoth], if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, ...for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.” (*1 Samuel 1:11, 16*)

Hannah is facing one of those monumental obstacles in life that is beyond her power to overcome. She is filled with unspeakable despair, which threatens to overcome her.

This story of Hannah’s prayer is all the more meaningful when we consider the surrounding cultures of her time.

Gentile peoples throughout the Middle East had specific gods, or names of gods, for specific requests: a fertility god for pregnancy, a war god for military conquests, or a god of harvest for agricultural needs, for example.

Whether or not Hannah knew of these gods, she calls out to the One True God as **YHVH Sabaoth** for her fertility request.

Hannah does not need an army or a military victory.

She needs the Comforter who soothes her tormented soul.

She needs a God who defends her and will remove her shame in the community because she is barren. At that time, not having children was a sign of being cursed or a sinner.

She needs the Creator who established the universe and brings life into being.

She needs an enormous Savior for a predicament humanly insurmountable.

She found all of this in YHVH Sabaoth at the birth of her son Samuel.

There Is Power in the Name and Authority of YHVH Sabaoth

While YHVH Sabaoth can be seen as an intimate God who is with us in the details of our human experience (like Hannah in her plight of barrenness), **He is also a warrior God who commands armies on behalf of His People.**

Imagine someone trying to fight against God! Yet, someone did—Goliath of the Philistine army.

“I defy the armies [maarakah] of Israel,” said Goliath with weapons in hand, ready for tsaba (warfare).

David responds, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but **I come against you in the name of the LORD of Hosts—YHVH Sabaoth—the God of the armies [maarakah] of Israel, whom you have defied.**” (*1 Samuel 17:10, 45*)

While Goliath openly defies the greatness of Israel’s armies, David reminds him that **he is coming in the name of the God of Israel’s armies**; and in doing so, the will of God to defeat the giant Goliath is accomplished.

Holiness in the Presence of YHVH Sabaoth

In the face of such greatness is holiness, unlike any king or military commander on earth can ever expect to possess.

Moses appointed Joshua to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River and possess the Promised Land. Just before taking Jericho, a man appeared to him.

Joshua asks this man, “Are you for us or for our enemies?”

He replies with his sword drawn that he is “commander [sar] of the **army [tsaba]** of the Lord.” (*Joshua 5:13–14*)

This man is clearly the chief leader of a military unit of power under the authority of YHVH.

And with such greatness, he commands Joshua, “Take off your sandals, **for the place where you are standing is holy.**” (*Joshua 5:15*)

Holiness envelops God’s presence. In Heaven, for instance, the seraphim who surround our King on His throne are consumed with His holiness, proclaiming,

“**Holy, holy, holy is YHVH Sabaoth**; the whole earth is full of His glory.” (*Isaiah 6:3*)

We are to keep His holiness at the forefront of our thoughts.

Too often, we judge how good or holy we are based on the “bad behavior” of those around us.

When we take our eyes off of YHVH Sabaoth, we forget that **He is sitting on His throne in Heaven as the true standard bearer**, and we are to live our lives according to what He considers to be good behavior.

As we look at the holiness of YHVH Sabaoth, we cannot help but be consumed with the reality of how much we fall short of His standards.

Like Isaiah, we might cry out, “**Woe to me!** ... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and **my eyes have seen the King, YHVH Sabaoth.**” (*Isaiah 6:5*)

When YHVH sees a heart sincerely humbled before Him, seeking to return to His standards, He removes our guilt and commissions us to move forward in His service.

In Isaiah’s case, one of the seraphim (angels) touched his lips with a live hot coal and said, “Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

Then the Lord said, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

Isaiah responded, “**Here am I. Send me!**” (*Isaiah 6:6–8*)

The Master of the Universe is still looking for humbled people who will answer the call to do His Kingdom work according to Kingdom principles that are assigned by YHVH Sabaoth Himself.

“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above.” (*James 1:17*)

How do we respond to His call?

Like Hannah, we are to pray. He will answer according to His will.

Like David, we are to call upon His authority against enemies of His Kingdom.

Like Joshua, we are to acknowledge and show respect for His holiness.

And like Isaiah, we are to go into our workplaces, communities, and families as humbled, forgiven ambassadors of YHVH Sabaoth, spreading the Good News of the Kingdom of God—first to the Jew and then the Gentile.

Opening Correction:

Following Last Week’s Message, it was Graciously brought to my attention that I spoke three glaring errors in my message, not necessarily Theologically, but rather contextually to the story telling, which, admittedly I on occasion do speak off the cuff, not following my own notes, and on occasion, or at least in this occasion, spoke in error on three separate stories, which I want to correct, humbly before you:

1. It was not Jacob who sleep with a “Prostitute”, aka his own daughter-in-law, but rather Judah, which I can only explain that sometimes my minds processes Linearly, which within the story of Joseph, this story of Judah and his daughter-in-law is told just following the selling of Joseph into slavery and just before the story of Potiphar’s house. The Point I was trying to make was that we cannot avoid the consequences of our decisions, but we can choose how we walk through our consequences, which for Jacob it was in despair, instead of leaning on his Lord, which had similar implications in the story of Judah, but was not a correct telling of the story.
2. In the telling of Jacob’s request to be buried with his Fathers in Hebron, I stepped back in time and retold the story of Abraham’s purchase of the first piece of Land in Egypt for his wife Sarah, but I meant, the first purchase of Land in the Promise Land, Cannon/Israel. Obviously Jacob was in Egypt at the time and he was asking to be brought back to the Promise of God, his inheritance, Hebron, the resting place of his family, Hebron.
3. Lastly, in the telling of Jacob’s final blessing over each one of his children, we highlighted the blessing and curse of Dan, which I explained was birthed out of his sin in the slaughter of the men of Shechem, as a result of the Prince of Shechem raping their sister Dinah. The problem with that explanation was that the two brothers who acted on this violence to the people of Shechem were Shemon and Levi, and not Dan. My mind wants to always include Dan in this story, but the actual connection to Dan and the connection to the Anti-christ comes out of these Biblical narratives, and not my own:

The Blessing of Dan by Jacob

Before Jacob, Dan’s father died, he gave a blessing to each of his sons. This is the blessing given to Dan:

“Dan will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan will be a snake by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider tumbles backward.

“I look for your deliverance, Lord.”

Genesis 49:16-18

Notice several things about this blessing. First, Jacob prophesied that Dan would judge Israel. This part of the blessing was fulfilled by Samson who judged Israel for twenty years. We find this judgement and confirmation that he led Israel in Judges 15:16, 20 as well as Judges 16:31. **Second, he claimed that Dan would become idolatrous and would become like the serpent in the Garden of Eden in that he would not be faithful to God.** When the Israelites finally entered the Promised Land, the tribe of Dan was seventh in line to select their territory (Joshua 19:40-51). However, they were not able to occupy their selected territory due to a lack of faith and later moved north (Judges 18:1-31). As they moved north, the Danites stole **Micah's** idols and Micah's priest agreed to be the priest for the the tribe.

An Israelite whose familiar story is preserved in the 17th and 18th chapters of Judges. Micah is evidently a devout believers in Jehovah, and yet so completely ignorant is he of the law of Jehovah that the mode which he adopts of honoring him is to make a molten and graven image, teraphim or images of domestic gods, and to set up an unauthorized priesthood, first in his own family, (Judges 17:5) and then in the person of a Levite not of the priestly line. ver. (Judges 17:12) A body of 600 Danites break in upon and steal his idols from him.

<https://biblehub.com/topical/m/micah.htm>

“Then the five men who had spied out the land of Laish said to their fellow Danites, “Do you know that one of these houses has an ephod, some household gods and an image overlaid with silver? Now you know what to do.” So they turned in there and went to the house of the young Levite at Micah’s place and greeted him. The six hundred Danites, armed for battle, stood at the entrance of the gate. The five men who had spied out the land went inside and took the idol, the ephod and the household gods while the priest and the six hundred armed men stood at the entrance of the gate.

When the five men went into Micah’s house and took the idol, the ephod and the household gods, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?”

They answered him, “Be quiet! Don’t say a word. Come with us, and be our father and priest. Isn’t it better that you serve a tribe and clan in Israel as priest rather than just one man’s household?”

Judges 18:14-19

Jacob’s prophecy, again, proves true as we see in Judges 18:30:

“There the Danites set up for themselves the idol, and Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests for the tribe of Dan until the time of the captivity of the land.” – Judges 18:30

The Danites continued this idolatry until the Assyrian Empire took them captive in 722 B.C.

“After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.” One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people came to worship the one at Bethel and went as far as Dan to worship the other.” – 1 Kings 12:28-30

And

“However, he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit—the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan.” – 2 Kings 10:29

Why is The Tribe of Dan Absent From Revelations?

In the book of Revelation, when the Messiah tells the apostle John that he will choose 144,000 special servants from the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 7:1-8), and chooses 12,000 out of each tribe, it is interesting to note that he chooses double from the Tribe of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh’s portion). We may find at least some of the answer in the book of Judges. We know that they attacked Laish and turned to idolatry. Throughout the centuries, they continued to engage in idolatry and were slow to repent of their sins. So, the tribe is missing from the list of tribes in Revelation 7:4-8 and will not be part of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses in the tribulation period. An interesting note, however, is that they appear again in Ezekiel 48:1-2, 32.

“These are the tribes, listed by name: At the northern frontier, Dan will have one portion; it will follow the Hethlon road to Lebo Hamath; Hazar Enan and the northern border of Damascus next to Hamath will be part of its border from the east side to the west side.

Asher will have one portion; it will border the territory of Dan from east to west.”

Ezekiel 48:1-2

And again:

“On the east side, which is 4,500 cubits long, will be three gates: the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin and the gate of Dan.”

Ezekiel 48:32

These scriptures do show that the tribe of Dan will have land designated for them during the millennial kingdom. They will continue to reject God in the tribulation but they will turn to God at the end of the millennial kingdom because our God will draw them to Christ.

Interesting Facts about the Tribe of Dan:

- Their tribe symbols are the scales and serpent/snake (from Jacob’s blessing)
- **Descendants of the tribe of Dan are said to be found in modern day Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Northern England and Denmark as well as the United States.** – (*the region where the Anti-christ is to come from*)

https://www.womanofnoblecharacter.com/the-tribe-of-dan/#The_Blessing_ofDan_by_Jacob

It is from these Biblical accounts that we can see the connection of Dan and the End-time narrative of the Unveiling of the Anti-christ:

Jeremiah 8:15-17

"We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror. "The snorting of their horses is heard from Dan; at the sound of the neighing of their stallions the whole land quakes. They come and devour the land and all that fills it, the city and those who dwell in it. For behold, I am sending among you serpents, adders that cannot be charmed, and they shall bite you." declares the LORD."

Zechariah 11:15-17

"Then the LORD said to me, "Take once more the equipment of a **foolish shepherd**. For behold, I am raising up in the land a **shepherd who does not care for those being destroyed, or seek the young or heal the maimed or nourish the healthy, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs.** 'Woe to my worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! **May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! Let his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded!**"

Note: God here gives a picture of *who* the Anti-Christ will come from, "a foolish shepherd . . . tearing off even their hoofs . . . who deserts the flock," the tribe of Dan, a shepherd of the people of God, from the curse spoken of Dan from his father Israel/Jacob. In addition, God gives us a picture of the *physical attributes* of the Anti-Christ, "his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded."

A *secondary*, as some might debate, is a Spiritual picture of the attributes of the Anti-christ, and not physical, explaining that "Let his arm be wholly withered" actually speaks of his physical authority being corrupt, and the explanation of "his right eye utterly blinded" actually speaking of his ideology and teaching being corrupt. Although I believe the secondary is absolutely true, we have to seriously consider the physical attributes of the Anti-christ in light of the Biblical prophecies of the Messiah's own physical attributes, as well as, is a man who will unite the world in peace following the worst war that our world has ever seen, with the possibility that he may in fact be an actual survivor of.

i.e. **Isaiah 53:2-5**, "For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;

**he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.**

³He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as **one from whom men hide their faces**
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

⁴Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet **we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.**

⁵But he was **pierced** for our transgressions;
he was **crushed** for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with **his wounds** we are healed."

Conclusion:

With that now being said and corrected, I humbly appreciate any and all feedback in questions regarding the validity or error of any of my messaging, so that together we might humbly walk God's message out to the best of our full potential and Spirit-filled ability to proclaim the fulness of God's Good News to all mankind, while at the same time being willing to admit our errors, correct them, and continue to move humbly in boldly proclaiming God's Word as our Ultimate Truth. It is my desire to together walk through God's Word with you, that we might effectively and fruitfully create a space for God to dwell in and through our lives, families, communities, nation, and world, desiring that none perish, with God being their Ultimate Teacher, Pastor, and Leader.

Opening Story:

This past Sunday, January 3, 2021, the United States Congress, just prior to their Leadership Vote, had an Opening Prayer for the Session, led by . . .

(3 Jan 2021) A Democrat member of Congress concluded his opening prayer for the 117th Congress with the phrase "Amen and Awomen" on Sunday. The opening prayer was led by Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, also a pastor at St. James United Methodist Church of Kansas City, Missouri.

Breitbart.com

In addition, just last month there was a preemptive launch of a New division of the United Methodist denomination in response to "gender expressions and sexual identity" in our culture today:

New progressive Methodist denomination formed before possible UMC schism over LGBT issues

A group of theologically progressive United Methodists and others have formed a new denomination in advance of an expected schism within the United Methodist Church over LGBT issues.

Known as the Liberation Methodist Connexion (LMX), the creation of the new group was announced Sunday during an online worship service.

“We are a grassroots denomination of former, current, and non-Methodist faith leaders working on the unfolding of the kin-dom of God,” [they explain on their website](#).

The Kin-dom Come: At the recent 2011 National Seminar held in Birmingham, Alabama, in August, the featured Bible study teacher was Dr. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. She is one of the leading advocates of *mujerista* theology, an offshoot of feminist theology that emphasizes the liberation of Latina women under male-dominated power structures and injustice. Central to the concepts of *mujerista* theology is what Dr. Isasi-Diaz calls “the kin-dom of God.” She replaces the biblical references of “the kingdom of God” with this new phrase, explaining that she rejects the word kingdom for two reasons. “First, it is obviously a sexist word that presumes that God is male. Second, the concept of kingdom in our world today is both hierarchal and elitist.” She prefers the word “kin-dom” because it “makes it clear that when the fullness of God becomes a day-to-day reality in the world at large, we will all be sisters and brothers—kin to each other.”

Redefining key biblical terms is a common practice of feminist theologians. Dr. Isasi-Diaz rejects the biblical meaning of “repentance” as a turning away from sin towards holiness. She explained that “it is not a matter of regret, guilt, and shame...because to demand admission of guilt and repentance before forgiveness may well throw us into a cycle of death and violence.” She said that “the Christ” had two goals: “radical inclusivity and upsetting hierarchies.” She is thankful that feminism “carried out the social gospel Great Commission and helped revert power to the community.”

<https://goodnewsmag.org/2011/09/ty-kin-dom-come/>

“We intentionally invite the full participation of all who are living out their God-given identities and expressions.”

Those they welcome include all “gender expressions and sexual identity,” “religious or non-religious backgrounds,” “races and ethnicities,” “size,” and “monogamous and non-monogamous (having a sexual relationship with only one partner at a time).”

“We are journeying toward a new way of being followers of Christ that refute the imbalance of powers, principalities, and privileges that has plagued Methodism: colonialism, white supremacy, economic injustices, patriarchy, sexism, clericalism, ableism, ageism, transphobia, and heteronormativity,” stated the LMX.

“We trust God’s presence and our collaborative labors will guide us toward a new, more liberative way of answering our calling and being in connexion together.”

Regarding theology, LMX said their “theology is not written in stone,” but did maintain that “God remains infinitely gracious, creative, merciful, and engaged with creation, healing and redeeming the world.”

The Rev. Althea Spencer-Miller, one of the organizers of the new group, [told UM News](#) that they felt this was the appropriate time to form LMX.

“The timeline of the Holy Spirit is driving our decision to launch the LMX at this moment, and we are following her call,” Spencer-Miller said.

Mark Tooley, a United Methodist and president of the theologically conservative Institute on Religion and Democracy, predicted that LMX will not become a major force.

“LMX will live out theological pluralism to its more logical conclusions, minimizing if not altogether dismissing theological doctrine in favor of political activism and identity politics,” [wrote Tooley in a blog post on Wednesday](#).

“No doubt LMX will start very small and will remain a small niche movement. Most radicals will stay within United Methodism, or whatever it is ultimately called, shifting what’s left of the old denominational structures ever leftward.”

Over the past several years, the United Methodist Church has experienced increasingly polarizing debate over its biblical stance on homosexuality.

The UMC Book of Discipline says homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching” and defines marriage as being between one man and one woman.

Many expect the UMC to schism over the issue at the 2021 General Conference, which was originally scheduled to take place this year, but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://www.christianpost.com/news/new-libera-methodist-denomination-formed-before-umc-schism.html>

Scripture to Wrestle with this Week:

John 18:33-38

My Kingdom Is Not of This World

³³ So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” ³⁴ Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” ³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?” ³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” ³⁷ Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” ³⁸ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?”

Our Resolve:

Matthew 6:33

Do Not Be Anxious

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

³³ **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**

³⁴ **Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.**

Week 13 - SHEMOT (Names)

Exodus 1:1–6:1; Isaiah 27:6–28:13, 29:22–23; Jeremiah 1:1–2:3; Romans 12:1–21

“God has a Greater Plan for even our Failures”

“These are the *names* [ve’eleh shemot] of the sons of Israel who went to Egypt with Jacob, each with his family.” Exodus 1:1

In last week’s Torah Reading, the first of the five books of Moses, Genesis, ended with the deaths of Jacob and Joseph.

This week, we begin the second book of the Torah, Exodus, called **Shemot** in Hebrew, which means **Names**.

This Reading describes the suffering of the Israelites under bondage to the Egyptians, the birth of Moses and his miraculous salvation from out of the Nile River. It also describes his calling to deliver Israel and his encounter with Pharaoh.

Exodus 1:1-6:1

Exodus 1:1-5

Israel Increases Greatly in Egypt

¹ These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: ² Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, ³ Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, ⁴ Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. ⁵ **All the descendants of Jacob were SEVENTY persons; Joseph was already in Egypt.**

THE DESCENDANTS OF JACOB NUMBERED SEVENTY IN ALL; JOSEPH WAS ALREADY IN EGYPT (1:5)

GENESIS 46:27: ALL THE SOULS OF THE HOUSE OF JACOB WHO CAME INTO EGYPT WERE SEVENTY

But if you count them, you find only sixty-nine; the seventieth is Jocheved the daughter of Levi, who was born between the boundary walls as they entered Egypt.

(Talmud, Bava Batra 123a)

⁵⁹ The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt (And she bore to Amram Aaron and Moses and Miriam their sister).” Numbers 26:59

Jochebed name *meaning* and declaration: “**glory of Jehovah**” or “Jehovah glory”, the first person in Scripture to have a name compounded with Jehovah . . . the announcement of Jehovah, as the name of God, was not made for the first time in history.

According to traditional rabbinic biblical chronology, Moses was 80 years old when the Exodus occurred, the Israelites had been in Egypt for 210 years in total, and thus in combination with the rabbinical claim that Jochebed was born on the border of Egypt, as her parents had entered it, this would require Jochebed to have been 130 years old when she gave birth to Moses.

Exodus 1:6-7

⁶ Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. ⁷ **But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.**

To counter the growing strength of the Israelites, **the Egyptians forced them into bitter labor, building store cities for Pharaoh and working the fields.**

Exodus 1:8-21

Pharaoh Oppresses Israel

⁸ Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹ And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. ¹⁰ Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” ¹¹ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. ¹³ So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves ¹⁴ and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.

¹⁵ Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah,

¹⁶ “When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, **if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.**”

¹⁷ **But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.**

¹⁸ So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this, and let the male children live?” ¹⁹ The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.” ²⁰ So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. ²¹ And **because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.**

When they continued to multiply, Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all newborn males. **But at least two, Shifrah and Puah, did not. God, therefore, supernaturally protected their lives, even blessing them with families and multiplying the Israelites even more.**

Exodus 1:22-2:2

²² Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “**Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile,** but you shall let every daughter live.”

EVERY SON THAT IS BORN YOU SHALL CAST INTO THE RIVER, AND EVERY DAUGHTER YOU SHALL MAKE LIVE (1:22)

In our own day, the Pharaoh-instituted practice of drowning children in the Nile is still with us: there are still parents whose highest consideration in choosing a school for their children is how it will further their child’s economic prospects when the time will come for him or her to enter the job market.

The people of Israel survived the Egyptian galut because there were Jewish mothers who refused to comply with Pharaoh’s decree to submerge their children in his river. If we are to survive the present galut, we, too, must resist the dictates of the current Pharaohs. We must set the spiritual and moral development of our children rather than their future “earning power” and “careers” as the aim of their education. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

The Birth of Moses

2 Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. ² The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months.

THERE WENT A MAN OF THE HOUSE OF LEVI, AND TOOK TO WIFE A DAUGHTER OF LEVI (2:1)

Why is she called “a daughter of Levi”? She was one hundred and thirty years old! Because the signs of maidenhood were reborn in her. (*Talmud, Sotah 12a*)

Exodus 2:3-5

³ When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. ⁴ And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. ⁵ Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it.

[PHARAOH’S DAUGHTER] SAW THE BOX AMONG THE RUSHES, AND SHE SENT HER MAID (“AMMATAH”) TO FETCH IT (2:5)

Another interpretation of this verse renders the Hebrew word ammatah as “her arm” rather than “her maid.” Ammatah also means “arm lengths.” This is to teach us that “her arm was extended for many arm-lengths” (to enable her to reach the basket).

If Moses’ basket lay beyond her reach, why did Pharaoh’s daughter extend her arm? Could she possibly have anticipated the miracle that her hand would be “extended for many arm-lengths”?

There is a profound lesson here for each and every one of us. Often, we are confronted with a situation that is beyond our capacity to rectify. Someone or something is crying out for our help, but there is nothing we can do: by all natural criteria, the matter is simply beyond our reach. So we resign ourselves to inactivity, reasoning that the little we can do won't change matters anyway.

But Pharaoh's daughter heard a child's cry and extended her arm. An unbridgeable distance lay between her and the basket containing the weeping infant, making her action seem utterly pointless. But because she did the maximum of which she was capable, she achieved the impossible. Because she extended her arm, G-d extended its reach, enabling her to save a life and raise the greatest human being ever to walk the face of the earth. (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe*)

Exodus 2:6-9

⁶ When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, “This is one of the Hebrews' children.” ⁷ Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, “Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?” ⁸ And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, “Go.” So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹ And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him.

The Levite parents of Moses had such great faith that, in order to save their son, they defied Pharaoh's order and hid him for the first few months of his life.

But babies grow and, eventually, he could no longer be hidden, so they put him in a basket and set him afloat on the Nile among the reeds.

Even in this desperate circumstance, the protective hand of God was on this boy of destiny. Pharaoh's daughter spotted the basket. When she saw the Hebrew baby inside, she had pity on him and took him as her own.

Instead of drowning in the Nile or dying at the hands of the Egyptians as the other newborn boys did, Moses was raised in Pharaoh's palace as a prince of Egypt.

This dramatic account of the infant Moses **parallels the life of the infant Jesus**, who was sentenced to death by the order of King Herod, among all the other Jewish male infants in Bethlehem.

“Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.” Matthew 2:16

Just as Moses was saved by his mother, so was Jesus saved by the obedience and faith of his earthly father, Joseph, who was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt.

The Flight to Egypt

¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

Herod Kills the Children

¹⁶ Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. ¹⁷ Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:

¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.” Matthew 2:13–18

What irony that the very place of danger (EGYPT) and death for the Hebrew babies in the days of Moses became a place of refuge for Jesus when He was but a baby!

And just as Moses was a Prophet of God, so was Jesus prophesied to be the Ultimate Prophet of God, himself, the Redeemer of Man-Kind.

A New Prophet like Moses

¹⁵ “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers - **it is to him you shall listen** - ¹⁶ just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’ ¹⁷ And the Lord said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. ¹⁸ **I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.** ¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it (with collateral idea of avenging) of him.” Deuteronomy 18:15-19

Joshua type of Yashua to Come

Exodus 2:10

¹⁰ When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him **Moses**, “Because,” she said, “I drew him out of the water.”

Because Pharaoh’s daughter drew the baby from the Nile, she called him **Moshe** from the word **moshech**, meaning pull or draw. And a picture of what God was prophetically going to do for the Israelites by “**DELIVERING**” them out of Egypt, with the **FULL SUPPORT** of Egypt.

Exodus 2:11-15

Moses Flees to Midian

¹¹ One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. ¹² He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³ When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, “Why do you strike your companion?” ¹⁴ He answered, “Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid, and thought, “Surely the thing is known.” ¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

Even as a young man, Moses felt the calling to deliver his people, but he stepped ahead of God’s timing.

In the process of defending this Israelite slave, Moses killed the Egyptian and fled to Midian to escape Pharaoh’s death decree over him. **Exodus 2:15**

Again in Midian, Moses expressed his calling as a deliverer by saving the daughters of the Priest of Midian who had come to the well where he sat.

Exodus 2:16-22

¹⁶ Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷ The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock. ¹⁸ When they came home to their father Reuel, he said, “How is it that you have come home so soon today?” ¹⁹ They said, “An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock.” ²⁰ He said to his daughters, “Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.” ²¹ And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. ²² She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, “I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.”

Moses spent the next 40 years shepherding sheep in the land of Midian, a period of time that God used to prepare him to shepherd His people Israel out of Egypt.

Exodus 2:23-3:6

God Hears Israel's Groaning

²³ During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of **Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help**. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.

²⁴ And God ¹**HEARD** their groaning, and God ²**REMEMBERED** his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ God ⁴**SAW** the people of Israel—and God ⁵**KNEW** (like a familiar friend).

Also, Read Exodus 3:7-14

“God has a Greater Plan for even our Failures”

- **Oppressive circumstances cannot prevent God from carrying out His purposes and fulfilling His promises.**

We might suffer under some sort of bondage or pain for what seems like a very long time, but we can rest assured that God hears our cries.

He remembers the covenant we have with Him through our Messiah Jesus, which provides a way out of our spiritual bondage and into our inheritance — if only we accept it.

- Though God is true to His promises, **we still need to keep crying out to Him for deliverance** and waiting in faith and hopeful expectation to move on our behalf in our spiritual and our earthly afflictions.

God is not deaf, nor aloof to our suffering. His arm is not too short to save: “*The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; He delivers them from all their troubles.*” **Psalm 34:17**

The Burning Bush

3 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.² And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.³ And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.”⁴ When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”⁵ Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”⁶ And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

The Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses from out of the flame of a bush that burned but was not consumed. This real and yet symbolic imagery spoke to the fact that God was in His peoples affliction, the thorn bush, and although the bush was burning, afflicted, God’s people would not be consumed by their affliction.

“Just as the thorn bush is burning and is not consumed, so the Egyptians will not be able to destroy Israel.”

Illustration: this is where the Blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh becomes relevant, when Israel faces affliction:

Genesis 41:50-52

⁵⁰ Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore them to him. ⁵¹ Joseph called the name of the firstborn **Manasseh**. “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.” ⁵² The name of the second he called **Ephraim**. “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Genesis 48:14-16, 20

¹⁴ But Israel crossed his hands and put his right hand on the head of the younger boy Ephraim. Then he put his left hand on Manasseh, even though Manasseh was the firstborn. ¹⁵ And Israel blessed Joseph and said,

“My ancestors, Abraham and Isaac, worshiped our God,
and that God has led me all my life.

¹⁶ **He was the Angel who saved me from all my troubles.**

And I pray that he will bless these boys.

Now they will have my name

and the name of our ancestors, Abraham and Isaac.

I pray that they will grow to become great families and nations on earth.”

²⁰ So Israel blessed them that day. He said,

**“The Israelites will use your names
whenever they bless someone.**

They will say,

“May God MAKE YOU like Ephraim and Manasseh.””

Why do we bless our sons to “be like Ephraim and Manasseh”?

Jacob . . . blessed his two grandsons and added the following words: “With you, Israel will bless, saying, ‘May G-d make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh.’” This is why we bless our sons with the words: “May G-d make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.”

Perhaps one might say that the highlight of their character is their remarkable upbringing. They were born and raised in Egypt, in a profoundly secular society, a place where the people were not of high character. Yet they remained faithful to the morals and ideals that were espoused by their grandfather Jacob, as they were transmitted through their father Joseph. To be great amongst great people is also a challenge, but to maintain a high level of spirituality and character amongst a society that is devoid of morals and ethics is the real test. This is why Jacob chose these two boys to be his own. They were able to prove true strength of character. How does one know if a fish is healthy? If it can swim upstream; against the tide of society.

This is what we wish for our children, too. We would love to forever protect them in our loving, nurturing environment. However, that is usually not a possibility – nor should it be. There will be times in their lives when the beliefs and morals that we raised them with will be challenged by their peers, society or the environment. “Be like Manasseh and Ephraim,” we bless/tell them. Have the strength to be able to withstand the pressures of society and do the right thing.

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/520258/jewish/Why-do-we-bless-our-sons-to-be-like-Ephraim-and-Manasseh.htm#footnote1a520258

From the midst of this burning bush at the foot of Mount Sinai, God told Moses he had heard the cries of His People and was sending Moses to go back to Pharaoh in His name and His power on His behalf.

By this point, this prince of Egypt had been so humbled by his lengthy wilderness experience that he seemed to lack confidence when it came to his role as a leader of a nation.

First, Moses asked for the name of the One sending him. God answered with His name, **Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh**, widely translated as **I am that I am**, the Hebrew grammatical form is *actually in the future tense*.

Therefore, God’s name is *more accurately translated* as **I will be what I will be**.

**** The message to Moses is perhaps that God can look after the details of the future. He will be to us whoever and whatever He chooses to be: father, friend, comforter, counselor, or even disciplinarian. We can trust in God’s infinite wisdom to be who we need in our lives at each moment in time. ****

At Sinai, Moses beheld the heart of the simple man of God.

“Man is a tree of field.” (Deuteronomy 20:19):

¹⁹ “When you besiege a city for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you?”

But the field has many types of trees. The Talmud compares the righteous Torah scholars to fruit trees, which bestow beauty, fragrance and nourishment upon the world. The fruit trees also burn — they burn with the ecstasy of their Torah study, with the fervor of their prayer, with the warmth of their good deeds. But theirs is a fire that burns and burns out, a fire that is sated by the words of Torah and prayer and the fulfillment of the divine will.

But the thorn bush burns with a fire that is never satisfied. The simple **Jew**^{*}, who cannot fathom the depths of Torah, who can barely articulate his prayers, who has little understanding of the significance of a mitzvah — his is a thirst never quenched. His heart burns with a yearning for G-d he can never hope to still, with a love he can never hope to consummate.

When Moses . . . beheld the heart of flame that smolders within the thorn bush, he was humbled by the sight. “I must turn aside to see this great sight,” he said: I must move from where I am and strive to awaken in myself the insatiable fire of the simple Jew.

(Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)

^{*}Meaning of Jew: Anyone who rejects idolatry is called a Jew. One who acknowledges G-d's existence and submits to His authority--to the extent that he is willing to sacrifice his life for the sanctification of His name--he is called a Jew.

Exodus 3:7-14

⁷ Then the Lord said, “**I have surely ¹SEEN the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have ²HEARD their cry because of their taskmasters. I ³KNOW their sufferings, ⁸ and I have ⁴COME DOWN TO DELIVER THEM OUT of the hand of the Egyptians and to ⁵BRING THEM UP OUT of that land to a good and broad land.** a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

⁹ And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” ¹¹ But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

¹² He said, “But I will be with you, and **THIS SHALL BE THE “SIGN” FOR YOU, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.**”

¹³ Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “**I am who I am.**” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘**I am has sent me to you.**’”

G-d said to Moses: *You want to know My name? I am called by My deeds.* I might be called E-I Sha-dai, or Tzevakot, or Elokim, or HaVaYaH. When I judge My creatures, I am called Elokim. When I wage war on the wicked, I am called Tzevakot. When I tolerate the sins of man, I am called E-I Sha- dai. When I have compassion on My world, I am called Ha-Va-Ya-H...”

(Midrash Rabbah)

AND ELOKIM (G-D) SPOKE TO MOSES AND HE SAID TO HIM, I AM HAVAYAH!” (6:2)

“That **“Havayah”** is greater than (any) Elokim,” Exodus 18:11 (and Ex. 6:2) . . . All the miracles performed by G-d in Egypt which defied all known laws of nature, were invoked by this **In – ef – fa – ble** (too great or extreme to be expressed or described in words) **Four-lettered Name of God**. All other attributes (i.e. names) of G-d are derived from the **Ineffable Name, “Havayah”** (One Name to Rule The All), which symbolized G-d as a composite of the Hebrew words from “He **was**, He **is**, He **will be**”, the One who created the world and Who is eternal. The name “Elokim”, on the other had, symbolizes nature (i.e. the laws of nature).

It is here that we learn the name that God uses to demonstrate His Redemption, **“Havayah”** (the Ineffable (too great or extreme to be expressed or described in words) Four-lettered Name of G-d – “Now that’s a Four-Letter Word worth using!”).

Pharaoh had no difficulty in accepting G-d in His attribute as Elokim . . . but when the Torah writes, “**And Havayah hardened Pharaoh’s heart**”, the meaning is that it was the use of that name that made Pharaoh’s heart become obstinate. This the reason that Moses never used a different name for G-d when confronting Pharaoh.

Pharaoh duped himself . . .

In this we realize that G-d never interfered with Pharaoh's decision-making process at all. Pharaoh duped himself. The case of his obstinacy was the meaning “T”, as in “**I am Havayah**” (6:2 and Ex. 4:22). When G-d said to Moses, “*I shall make the heart of Pharaoh obstinate*” (7:3), the **implied meaning** is: “*My revelation to him that I am Havayah, will harden his heart*” . . . **Pharaoh, therefore, limited his acknowledgement of the origin of G-d's claim, “I am”, to Elokim, thereby excluding Havayah.**

Exodus 3:15-4:10

¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “*Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, (I AM THE TRIUNE GOD, “FATHER (FATHER OF MANY NATIONS), SON (JOY OF MY SALVATION), AND COMFORTER (ONE WHO WRESTLES WITH GOD AND MAN AND PREVAILS)” has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.*” ¹⁶ Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, “The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt,¹⁷ and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.” ¹⁸ And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, “The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.” ¹⁹ But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. ²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. ²¹ And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, ²² but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.”

Moses Given Powerful Signs

⁴ Then Moses answered, “But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, ‘The Lord did not appear to you.’” ² The Lord said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, “A staff.” ³ And he said, “Throw it on the ground.” So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. ⁴ But the Lord said to Moses, “Put out your hand and catch it by the tail”—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—⁵ “that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.” ⁶ Again, the Lord said to him, “Put your hand inside your cloak.” And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous^{l1} like snow. ⁷ Then God said, “Put your hand back inside your cloak.” So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. ⁸ “If they will not believe you,” God said, “or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. ⁹ If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.”

¹⁰ But Moses said to the Lord, “Oh, my Lord, **I am not eloquent**, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.”

Moses was afflicted with a speech impairment so that no one should think that his success in transmitting the Torah to the world was due to his oratory skills. Rather, it derived solely from the fact that “the divine presence spoke from his throat.”

(Derashot HaRan)

Exodus 4:11-23

¹¹ **Then the Lord said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?”**

¹² Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” ¹³ But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” ¹⁴ Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. ¹⁵ You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do.” ¹⁶ He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. ¹⁷ And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs.”

Moses Returns to Egypt

¹⁸ Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, “Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” ¹⁹ And the Lord said to Moses in Midian, “**Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.**” ²⁰ So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

²¹ And the Lord said to Moses, “**When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.**” ²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son, ²³ and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.”

Even with this assurance, Moses still feels unqualified for the task, especially since he is slow in speech. He begs God to send someone else; therefore, He allowed Aaron, Moses' brother, to accompany him and act as his spokesperson.

When they reached Pharaoh, the message to be delivered to him would be: “Thus says the Lord, ‘Israel is My firstborn son, and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve Me.”’” **Exodus 4:22–23**

Exodus 4:24-

²⁴ At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. ²⁵ Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!” ²⁶ So he let him alone. It was then that she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” because of the circumcision.

²⁷ The Lord said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.” So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. ²⁸ And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him to speak, and all the signs that he had commanded him to do. ²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. ³⁰ Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹ And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.

Making Bricks Without Straw

5 Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’” ² But Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.” ³ Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.” ⁴ But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens.” ⁵ And Pharaoh said, “Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!” ⁶ The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, ⁷ “You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves.” ⁸ But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, ‘Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.’” ⁹ Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words.”

¹⁰ So the taskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the people, “Thus says Pharaoh, ‘I will not give you straw. ¹¹ Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least.’” ¹² So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. ¹³ The taskmasters were urgent, saying, “Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw.” ¹⁴ And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, “Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday, as in the past?”

¹⁵ Then the foremen of the people of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, “Why do you treat your servants like this? ¹⁶ No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, ‘Make bricks!’ And behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people.” ¹⁷ But he said, “You are idle, you are idle; that is why you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.’” ¹⁸ Go now and work. No straw will be given you, but you must still deliver the same number of bricks.” ¹⁹ The foremen of the people of Israel saw that they were in trouble when they said,

“You shall by no means reduce your number of bricks, your daily task each day.” ²⁰ They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; ²¹ and they said to them, “The Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

²² Then Moses turned to the Lord and said, “O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me? ²³ For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and you have not delivered your people at all.”

“God has a Greater Plan for even our Failures”

- Though Moses entered Egypt and delivered God's message to Pharaoh, **nothing changed immediately.**

Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrews go and intensified their affliction.

- Moses might have felt like he failed God, but **God has a greater plan for even our failures**, and they end in glorifying His name.

The people turned on Moses and Aaron in their bitterness. Moses responded by turning to the Lord. With raw honesty, Moses asked why He had not delivered His people as He promised.

“Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all.” Exodus 5:22–23

Exodus 6:1

God Promises Deliverance

¹ But the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”

“God has a Greater Plan for even our Failures”

- We might also feel this way when it seems we are doing what God has asked us to do, and things get worse, not better.

How did God respond to Moses? “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.’” Exodus 6:1

Sometimes, when God is preparing to do something great and mighty in our lives, the situation can worsen for a time. As we move toward our destiny, pharaoh represents those who oppress us — even Satan, the spiritual enemy of our souls, who resists our freedom with all his might.

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12

- In such circumstances, we should not give up our faith, for in due time we will see God’s mighty hand and outstretched arm deliver us in His perfect way and time.

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Romans 12:12

Conclusion:

“Give thanks to God for He is good – His love endures forever,”

Psalm 136:1

Because his loving kindness can only be seen in an expanse of time, in eternity you actually see his loving kindness. Peering through the key hold of the present, our vision is just too limited. But over time, in expanse, in eternity, in context of the whole, only with the eyes of expanse/eternity can we see his loving kindness.

You may be lost in slavery . . . and . . . lost the idea of freedom . . . wait . . . You are going to need a lot of time to finally see how things unfold, you just need time in your life, you do not always get your answer immediately, you need the expanse of time, in eternity, in the context of the whole.

The Book of Genesis ends off with the people of God in Egypt . . . fleeing the Promise Land . . . all of God’s people lost in the exile, far away from the promise of the Land of Israel on their way to slavery. Abraham started the journey with the promise to inherit the Land and build a Kingdom, but the Book Ends with the people of God fleeing the Promise Land in hunger and settling down in Egypt . . . why . . . this is so key . . . it is one of the most beautiful ideas and themes you see throughout the whole Bible . . . constantly, the Bible is taking us away from the End-Zone and the Victory Dance . . . no, that is not the way we live . . . they are always taking us away from the goal of the story . . . the world is always so focused on results, the bottom-line, on the end-zone . . . and the Scripture is like a counter pressure, teaching us, guiding us away from the goal, away from the final destination . . . it’s like the destination and promise that Abraham is given is something beyond his life time, beyond his children’s life time . . . the destination is definitionally beyond them . . . so what do we focus on? . . . we focus on LIFE, choose LIFE that you may live, because every day is a gift, everyday is an entire creation . . . the Journey of LIFE is where value is, the Journey of life is where happiness can be found, meaning is happening right now . . . do not just wait for the top of the mountain, there is a much longer journey to get there than a little celebration at the top of the mountain . . . achieving our goal is in God’s hands anyway . . . but it is on the way to achieving the goal that life happens . . . and the quality of our life is determined entirely on the days towards that goal . . . and the Book of Genesis Ends before the Finish Line, making it to the Promise Land ends off in Egypt . . . because crossing the Finish Line is not the point . . . the Scriptures is guiding us to focus on how we live our lives on our way to the destination . . . and that is the theme across all the stories of the Bible . . . in fact, the end of the whole Torah is Moses and the children of Israel are at the End-Zone, at the One Yard-Line, overlooking into the Land of Israel, and they never go in . . . the whole Torah . . . the Covenant of the Land of Israel . . . and Finally fulfilling Abraham’s Vision . . . and the Torah Ends . . . Joshua never fully conquers the Land . . . David is called to build the temple, but he never builds the temple . . . none of our Hero’s cross the Finish Line, because LIFE is not about the moment you reach the top of the mountain . . . that moment will come and go . . . most of our lives are spent on our Journey towards the destination, that is where LIFE happens, that is where the living Torah comes to life, and that is where the Torah is telling us to live.

It’s like on one hand we have the story of Esau selling his birth right for the present, and so obviously, do not sell your future for the fleeting moment of now, but at the same time, do not sell your life now for some hope of the future that one day . . . when one arrives at the destination . . . I will be happy . . . O, one day . . . when I arrive at the destination . . . then I can really live life . . . no, every day is a gift, live it up, breath it in, every day towards are target . . . living, focused, and aligned toward the ultimate good is a GIFT. – Jeremy Gimpel

Next Week’s Reading:

Week 14 - VA’ERA (And I Appeared)

Exodus 6:2–9:35; Ezekiel 28:25–29:21, Revelation 15:1–16:20

“a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”

“Now if you obey me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.” (Exodus 19:4–6)

In obeying God, they would have been teaching the nations by example how to be holy just as they themselves were holy, and bringing the world into the knowledge of the One True God.

They would have been a light to the nations.

That is what they as the **Chosen** People were **chosen** to do.

By the way, **living holy lives in the presence of God and bringing the world into the knowledge of God is what we are expected to do as Believers** in the One God of Israel and His Messiah Yeshua (Jesus).

That is the overall mission of a priest in His royal kingdom.

Romans 12

A Living Sacrifice

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

As a result of accepting His sacrifice, Rabbi Shaul (the Apostle Paul) tells us that everything we think, everything we do is now to be in accord with God’s “good, pleasing, and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)

Paul says that in this way, we are “**living sacrifices**,” in which we continuously offer up to the Lord acts of love and mercy. That is what He has always preferred, anyway:

“For I **desire mercy**, not sacrifice, **and acknowledgment of God** rather than burnt offerings.” (Hosea 6:6)

And that is our privilege as royal priests to perform.

(2 Chronicles 19:6–11)

Jehoshaphat tried to foster repentance (turning back to God) for the people and the nation, so they would once again experience God’s provision and blessing. **And He used the priests as one means to accomplish this goal.**

Why should priests be judges?

The priests were responsible to act on behalf of God; and through their diligent study of the Holy Scriptures, they were expected to acquire wisdom from the Lord. This made them good candidates to administer justice knowledgeably and wisely.

Scripture provides guidelines for these judges: They were to love the law, hear cases large and small, show no partiality between rich and poor, take no bribes, and fear no man but fear God and judge on His behalf. (Deuteronomy 1:16–17, 16:19–20; 2 Chronicles 19:6–7; Psalm 119:163–165)

Likewise, as Believers we are to diligently study God’s principles of righteousness and justice so that we can settle disputes among ourselves according to those principles whenever possible.

Moreover, Paul warned Believers against taking each other to the pagan court of the land, saying, “Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother takes another to court — and this in front of unbelievers!” (1 Corinthians 6:5)

The world is watching how we settle our disputes as Believers.

It is a great privilege to be a judge.

Priests Teach Scripture

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

In Israel, priests not only studied God's Word, they taught it by reading and interpreting Scripture for the people. **This is how the people would know what it means to be a nation of priests to the world.**

As Believers in Yeshua (Jesus) who is King of the Universe, it is our privilege as His priests to be holy, to teach the Word of God, and judge sin. But most of all, when we spend time in the presence of God and receive His love, then we are able to pour out that love to others.

For the past 2,000 years, the Jewish People have looked to their Rabbis for guidance in many of the tasks that the priesthood were supposed to perform.

Here are just a few:

- Instead of animal sacrifices, Rabbis offer prayers as service of the heart, which becomes a form of living sacrifice on behalf of their congregation.
- They act as judges in disputes.
- They teach the Word of God, but often spend more teaching time on the writings of the Jewish sages over the many centuries, writings which form a tradition that often takes precedence over written Scripture. This, perhaps, makes them good judges in their community, since much of the Talmud (Jewish commentaries) is case law and dispute resolutions.

God Fearing Leaders often fulfill these roles, too, studying commentaries, settling disputes, interceding through prayer, and teaching the Word of God.

Unfortunately, too many of us as Believers sit in the shadow of our *pastors and teachers*, absorbing these priestly functions without realizing that we are growing in wisdom and maturity under their leadership for a purpose.