

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation
(Under same management for over 5779 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

January 12th – 10:30 AM -- Lolo Community "Synagogue"
12:30 PM Oneg Shabbat

"Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless; who live by the Torah of Adonai.
Blessed are those who observe His instruction; who seek Him with all their heart." Psalm 119



Pharaoh's Heart of Stone

"Bo!" "Come!" -- Exodus 10 - 13:16

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל־פַּרְעֹה כִּי־אֲנִי הַכְּבַדְתִּי אֶת־לִבּוֹ

Va-yomer Adonai el-Moshe **bo** el-Par'oh ki-
ani hich'**bad'ti** et-libo

"And said the Lord to Moses, 'enter! (go!) to Pharaoh because I
hardened heart-his and heart servants-his

"And then Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened
his heart and the heart of his servants,

וְאֶת־לִבְ עַבְדָּיו לְמַעַן שְׂתִי אֶתִּי אֶתִּי אֶלֶה בְּקִרְבּוֹ:

v'et-lev avadav l'ma'an shiti ototai eleh b'kirbo.

so that I may perform signs-My, these, in nearness-his...."

that I may perform these signs of mine among them,...."



The Superbowl of Egypt: God versus Pharaoh

In the Torah portion for last week, we observed the second encounter of Moses with Pharaoh, as God began to show Pharaoh who He was and the consequences for disobedience. We covered seven plagues of increasing severity. Each plague was a supernatural intensification of normally occurring phenomena. Frogs, hail, locusts, etc. normally occur periodically or seasonally. However, as consequences for disobedience for not releasing God's people, God supernaturally increased their number to show Pharaoh and the Egyptian people that He had power over them and their gods.

Moses and Aaron assembled the people and told them that God was going to release them from slavery, and the people believed. But when Pharaoh failed to release the people and instead made their plight worse, the people rebelled against Moses, acceding to circumstances instead of God's promises. After 400 years in slavery, it didn't take much opposition to reduce the excitement of the peoples' anticipated release to bitter disconsolation, when the "peace" didn't occur immediately, and their persecution increased.

When Pharaoh recognized that his gods, wise men, and sorcerers could not withstand God, he offered two compromises to Moses, which would have allowed the people a little freedom. But each time, when Moses did his part by asking God to remove the plague, Pharaoh perceived weakness and hardened his heart and reneged.

Our Torah portion this week begins with God's instruction to Moses in anticipation of the 8th plague. God reminded Moses that He had hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not accede to God's demands, thus allowing God to show the people His power over the Egyptians and their gods. They would be able to tell their grandchildren how God "made a mockery of the Egyptians," and they would know for certain that He is God.

Plague #8 Locusts



Locusts invaded all of Egypt, except for Goshen, and consumed all the late crops and vegetation not already devastated by the hail from the previous plague. Even Pharaoh's servants, who considered Pharaoh to be a god, spoke out to plead with Pharaoh to let God's people go. Last Shabbat we discussed the process of hardening one's heart; how repeated sinful behavior leads to a loss of sensitivity to sin, making each successive sinful act easier to commit. Stubbornly standing against the commandments of God becomes easier each time, even though God always provides consequences for sin. We saw that Pharaoh had reached a "point of no return." His repeated refusals had so hardened him towards obeying God that he was no longer capable of obedience. So when we see in scripture, "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart" (9:12; 10:20,27; 11:10), we understand that **Pharaoh had so hardened himself** with repeated disobedience to God that his heart was totally hardened against God. Without realizing that he was simply a marionette on a string being played by God for His purposes, Pharaoh puffed himself up with self-aggrandizing pride and declared the superiority of his chief god, Ra, the sun god, over God. In **Chapter 10**, verse 10 there is a play on words with the Hebrew word, "**Ra**," that translates into the English word "evil." ("**Vayomer alehem y'hi chen Adonai imachem ka'asher ashalach etchem ve'et-tapchem re'u ki ra'ah neged pen'ychem.**") Pharaoh admonished Moses that his chief god, **Ra**, is before them. A paraphrase of verses 10 and 11 could be the following: "May your God be with you, if I ever let you all go because my god, Ra, is 'before' or 'in front of' (superior to) your God." Unimpressed by such boastful behavior, God instructed Moses to bring on the locusts. The lesson for us today is that we need not be impressed by the boastful behavior of men in opposition to God's commandments. Neither must we take action against them, other than in prayer to God. We simply pray and watch for God to "bring on the locusts." There are always consequences for sin!

When there was no vegetation left in all the land (except Goshen, where God's people lived), Pharaoh recalled Moses and Aaron to again "confess his sin" and plead for God's intervention with the locusts. This was not Pharaoh's first "confession of sin" (9:27) and meant no more than the first "confession.". **God only respects our words, when the intentions of our hearts are in obedience to Him.** The words of confession from Pharaoh came from his hardened heart....and they defiled him in God's sight (**Matthew 15:18**). However, God did remove all the locusts from Egypt. God had brought upon Egypt more locusts than had ever before been seen or would ever again be seen (vs.14). Then He removed all of them (vs.19), so that in both cases everyone understood that only God could have accomplished this miracle.

Plague #9 Darkness



However, God was not yet finished with Pharaoh and his chief god, Ra, whom Pharaoh said would be going along in front of (or superior to) God. The ninth plague would come without warning and produce a darkness over which Ra could do nothing. This was not the normal darkness of night. This was a supernatural darkness that could be felt (vs. 21). There was no misunderstanding that this plague of darkness, which lasted for three days, came from God upon the Egyptians, while sparing the sons of Israel. Rather than obeying God, Pharaoh then offered up another compromise. The people could leave, but they had to leave behind their flocks. When Moses refused Pharaoh's compromise, Pharaoh made his final statement of disobedience in which he sealed his own death (vs.28)...and the death of his first-born son. Pharaoh told Moses and Aaron that he would never see their faces again. Moses agreed with Pharaoh that he and Aaron would never again return to Pharaoh to give him a chance to relent and let the Israelites go. Pharaoh had had his last chance.

Pharaoh had refused Moses' demand to let the people go for the last time. But it was Moses who has the last word. Just before Moses walked away from Pharaoh for the last time, Moses delivered a verbal "slap in the face." While still in the throne room, surrounded by the Egyptian gods, Moses declared to Pharaoh the last plague upon him and all Egyptians and their cattle. Just as Joseph had informed a Semitic Pharaoh what the God of the Hebrews was about to do to him and to all Egypt, Moses informed an anti-Semitic Pharaoh about the 10th and last plague upon him and all Egypt. He told Pharaoh that around midnight God was going to pass through Egypt, killing the first-born male of every household and the first-born of their cattle...."all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die from the first-born of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, even to the first-born of the slave girl, who is behind the millstones; all the first-born of the cattle as well" (11:5). Only the homes of the Israelites (with blood on their lintel and door posts would be spared, so that Pharaoh would know that God showed preference to His people over the Egyptians. Lastly, Moses told Pharaoh, who considered himself a god, that Pharaoh's servants, who bowed down to Pharaoh, would bow down to Moses, granting Moses' demand to leave Egypt with all the people and flocks. Moses gave Pharaoh no chance to repent and allow the people to leave. Pharaoh had passed his "point of no return." He had fully hardened his heart towards God. The consequences of disobedience would come.

The First Passover



Chapter 12 begins Moses' instructions to the people for Passover and Unleavened Bread. Up until now the people have been the beneficiaries of God's discrimination between them and the Egyptians. No action was required by them, while they were spared the effects of the last six most severe plagues. The tenth plague, however, would be the plague that would produce their redemption...from slavery to freedom...from subjection to Pharaoh to subjection to God. **In Scripture, redemption always comes at a price, and the price is always the same. Redemption requires a blood sacrifice.** Not too far in the future at Mt. Sinai, Moses will codify God's law, including the Levitical system of sacrificing animals. Here, God's instructions to the people for keeping Passover as a permanent ordinance are the following: On the 10th day of Abib (now called Nisan), take an unblemished yearling lamb and keep it separate for four days, until 14 Nisan. Then at evening, they are to kill the lamb and take some of its blood, which they will apply to the doorposts and lintels of their houses. They are to roast the lamb and eat all of it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Unleavened Bread would begin the next day and continue for 7 days. All leaven and leaven products must be removed from homes and not eaten..."for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day as a permanent ordinance" (12:17). Today, Passover and Unleavened Bread are combined into Passover and celebrated according to custom for 8 days. Moses also required that children be instructed about the Passover. "It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians but spared our homes" (12:27).

"I will pass over you"



"And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses, where you live; and **when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.**" Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance" (12:13,14). Since God had already demonstrated that He could discriminate between His people and Egyptians, why was it necessary to apply blood to their lintel and doorposts? Both as instruction for us that blood is required for atonement and for God to exhibit to us His grace for our active faith in obeying His

ordinance. For their redemption to occur and for God's people to be spared the effects of this last plague, God must see their obedience. God must see the blood. God's people must believe and obey Him in order to be spared. Their obedience was observable by their slaying a lamb and applying its blood to the door posts and lintels of their homes. So also today, our belief in the finished, sacrificial work of Messiah, Yeshua is observable through our action. If we truly love God, we will obey Him!!

[Please note that in Chapter 12, verse 48, a "stranger" could celebrate the Passover. Anyone could experience God's redemption for His people, by including himself under God's covenant of life...visibly through circumcision and by keeping God's law. The Hebrew word translated "stranger," "ger," actually means that a non-Jew, who willingly embraces God as a proselyte and joins himself to God's people, may celebrate Passover. These non-Jewish proselytes become God's people, having the same responsibilities under God's law as do Jews. "Torah achat yihyeh la'ezech v'lager hagar b'tochechem." "The same law (Torah) shall apply both for the native-born [Israelite] and for the proselyte who joins you." So you see that God's redemption has always been open to all men, who in faith and action choose to obey God and join themselves to Him. There have never been any "second-class citizens."]

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement"Leviticus 17:11



God uses the name of this Parsha, "Bo," "Come, enter in," to invite all of man-kind to come to Him in belief and repentance; to experience the redemption of His Passover, the atonement He has prepared for us. And this is God's invitation for you today! **God has prepared Messiah to atone for your sins that separate you from Him.** God asks both Jew and Gentile to "come, enter in" to His covenant. Just like some of the Egyptians, who joined themselves to God, each person (both Jew and Gentile) must make a choice to accept God on His terms and "Come, enter in!" Like Pharaoh, this may be your last chance! Don't harden your heart!!

Plague #10 Death of the First-born

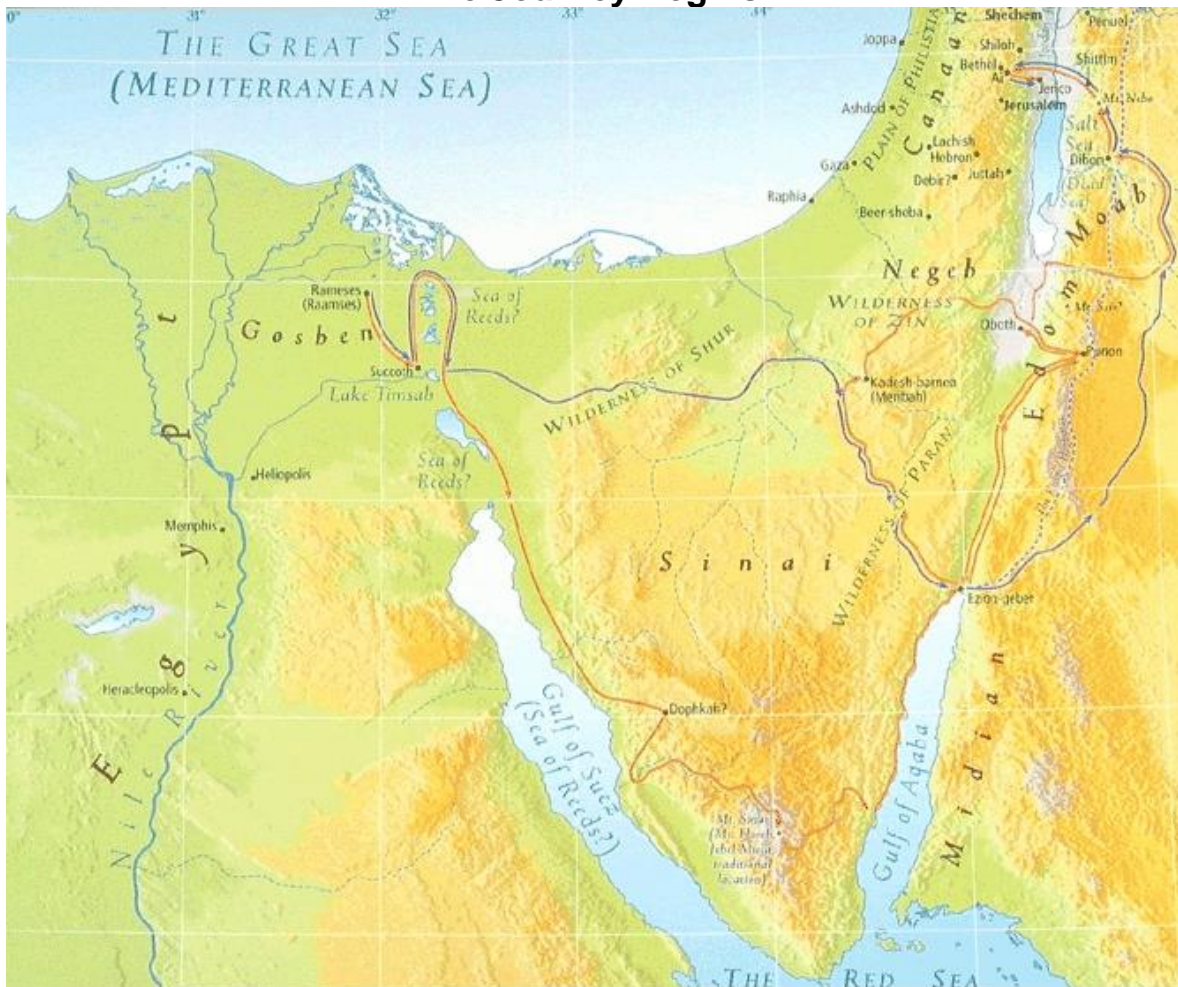


"One more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt; after that he will let you go from here."

And the Lord said to Moses, "When you go to return to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in your hand, but I will harden his heart, so that he shall not let the people go. And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus said the Lord, Israel is my son, my firstborn. And I say to you, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your son, your firstborn'" (Exodus 4:21-23). Before the plague, God instructed Moses to tell the people to ask from their Egyptian neighbors articles of silver and gold and clothing. "And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall come to pass, that, when you go, you shall not go empty, but every woman shall borrow from her neighbor, and from her who sojourns in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and garments, and you shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters, and you shall plunder the Egyptians" (Genesis 3:20-22). God gave them favor with the Egyptians, who willingly gave their valuables to the Israelites. Later, God's people would donate much of this material to build God's tabernacle in the wilderness.

While the Israelites remained in their homes, quietly eating the Passover meals, the Egyptians cried out in anguish, as one by one, the first-born males died. In the middle of the night Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron to tell them to take the people and flocks and leave Egypt. As God had said, the Egyptians, who bowed down to Pharaoh, also urged Moses to leave before more died than just their first-born. Some Egyptians and Semitic neighbors from the Nile delta region joined the Israelites as part of a mixed multitude.

The Journey Begins



The journey to return to their "promised land" began as they journeyed from Ramses to Succoth. There were 600,000 men along with their families, the mixed multitude, and all their flocks. Abruptly driven out of Egypt, they were only able to take with them unrisen dough, which they made into unleavened bread. After 430 years living in Egypt, mostly in Egyptian captivity, they were now free and on their way "home." The physical birth of the nation of Israel began as..."the Lord brought the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts" (12:51). Thus God fulfilled His promise to Abraham: "And He [God] said to Abram, 'Know for a certainty that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great wealth'" (Genesis 15:12-14).

God's first requirement for their freedom was their dedication of their first-born male child and the first-born of their animals to the Lord. This dedication would serve to remind the people that it was God to whom they owed their freedom from Egyptian bondage. God killed the first-born of the Egyptians in order to free them.

Next week we will see that suddenly going from slavery to freedom did not mean that the people fully trusted God or Moses. Indeed, one might think that being an eyewitness to God's miracles would be sufficient for the people to trust God. We will learn next week that this was not the case. The immediacy of circumstances took precedence in human nature over their previous experience in seeing God deliver them.

SHABBAT SHALOM