

Shavua Tov



A Rood Awakening! Torah Commentary
By Glenn McWilliams

Torah Portion: *Bo* **בּו** “Come”

God said to Moses, 'Go¹ to Pharaoh. I have made him and his advisors stubborn, so that I will be able to demonstrate these miraculous signs among them

Vayomer Adonay el-Moshe **bo el-Par'oh ki-ani hichbadeti et-libo ve'et-lev avadav lema'an shiti ototay eleh bekirbo**

Scripture for study: *Shemot (Exodus) 10:1 - 13:16*

Our portion this week continues the power struggle between Pharaoh, ruler of Egypt, and YHWH, Ruler of the Universe. While there can be no question as to who will win, there is much to be learned from the struggle itself. In last week's portion we watched as YHWH continued to reveal Himself both to the children of Israel and to the Egyptians. We witnessed the incredible stubbornness of Pharaoh who continually hardened his heart against the Elohim of Israel, while witnessing at the same time the equally incredible patience, mercy, and tenacity demonstrated by the Holy One who desires all men to know the truth. At the beginning of this struggle it appeared that Pharaoh was clearly in control. Pharaoh had the power to release the children of Israel or to keep them; to make their lives tolerable or insufferable.

The narrative begins we witness the children of Israel trembling at the mandates of Pharaoh, but after YHWH makes Himself known through powerful afflictions, we begin to see a shift in power. Here is a brief outline of the events leading up to this week's portion.

- A Pharaoh arises in Egypt that does not remember Joseph (Exodus 1:8)
- Taskmasters are set over the Israelites to afflict them (Exodus 1:11)
- The Israelites are placed into harsh bondage (Exodus 1:14)
- Pharaoh commands that infant Hebrew boys be killed (Exodus 1:15-22)
- Moses is born and saved by divine providence (Exodus 2:1-10)
- Moses kills an Egyptian and escapes Egypt (Exodus 2:11-15)
- Moses encounters YHWH in Midian (Exodus 3:1-4:19)
- Moses returns to Egypt to deliver the children of Israel (Exodus 4:18ff)

- Moses demands that Pharaoh release the children of Israel (Exodus 5:1)
- Pharaoh refuses and intensifies the harshness of Israel's bondage (Exodus 5:2-14)
- The children of Israel rebuke Moses and Aaron (Exodus 5:20-21)
- YHWH makes His intentions known to Moses and the children of Israel (Exodus 6:1-9)
- Moses goes again unto Pharaoh and demands release; Pharaoh refuses (Exodus 7:1-14)
- The Nile is turned to blood and Pharaoh still refuses (Exodus 7:17ff)
- Moses demands release for Israel (Exodus 8:1)
- Pharaoh refuses and receives a plague of frogs (Exodus 8:6-15)
- A plague of lice comes upon Egypt (Exodus 8:16-17)
- Moses demands release for Israel (Exodus 8:20)
- A plague of swarming things infects Egypt (Exodus 8:24)
- **Pharaoh offers a compromise (Exodus 8:25)**
- Moses refuses (Exodus 8:26)
- **Pharaoh offers a second compromise (Exodus 8:28)**
- Moses intercedes for Egypt (Exodus 8:27, 29)
- Pharaoh fails to keep his promise (Exodus 8:32)
- Moses demands release to serve YHWH (Exodus 9:1)
- YHWH afflicts the livestock of Egypt (Exodus 9:2-7a)
- Pharaoh still refuses to let Israel go (Exodus 9:7b)
- YHWH afflicts Egypt with boils and blains (Exodus 9:9-11)
- Moses demands the release of the Israelites (Exodus 9:13)
- YHWH smites Egypt with hail and fire (Exodus 9:18-26)
- Pharaoh confesses but does not repent (Exodus 9:27)
- Moses rebukes Pharaoh and demands release (Exodus 10:1-6)
- Pharaoh's servants turn against him (Exodus 10:7)
- **Pharaoh offers a third compromise (Exodus 10:11)**
- YHWH smites Egypt with a plague of locusts (Exodus 10:12-15)
- Pharaoh again confesses but fails to repent (Exodus 10:16-20)
- YHWH smites Egypt with darkness (Exodus 10:21-23)
- **Pharaoh offers a fourth compromise (Exodus 10:24)**
- Moses refuses (Exodus 10:25-26)
- The plague of the firstborn is announced (Exodus 11:1, 4-6)

Within this drama we begin to see the strength of Pharaoh and Egypt crumble as the faith, strength, and credibility of Moses increase. We can clearly see a great shifting of power from Pharaoh, ruler of Egypt, to YHWH, Ruler of the Universe. Even Pharaoh's servants give testimony to this swing of the pendulum of power.

There are numerous lessons to be learned from this struggle. First and foremost we should recognize that the earthly ruler, Pharaoh, never keeps his word, while the Ruler of the Universe always keeps His Word! This clearly tells us in whom we should put our trust and to whom we should look for hope.

"It is better to trust in YHWH than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in YHWH than to put confidence in princes." (Psalm 118:8-9)

"Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of Thy word." (Psalm 119:161)

"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the Elohim of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in YHWH his Elohim." (Psalm 146:3-5)

A second lesson we should understand from this conflict is that the children of Israel belong to YHWH ELOHIM. Nine times we hear YHWH declare, "Let MY people go..." While we know that the whole world and its contents belong to the Creator, we must also recognize that the children of Israel have been chosen for a unique purpose within the history of creation. This struggle over Israel is one where Pharaoh has clearly overstepped the boundaries of ownership.

"The earth is YHWH's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1)

"If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof." (Psalm 50:12)

"The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine: as for the world and the fullness thereof, Thou hast founded them." (Psalm 89:11)

The earth is YHWH's and exists to serve Him. Israel is YHWH's and exists to serve Him. In fact, even Pharaoh is YHWH's and will ultimately serve Him. As the Psalmist declares,

"I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But Elohim is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another." (Psalm 75:4-7)

So it is with Pharaoh as well. YHWH declares over Pharaoh,

"And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth." (Exodus 9:16)

We witness in this conflict that ultimately YHWH ELOHIM will be worshipped and served not only by Israel, but by the rest of creation as well.

The third and somewhat more subtle lesson to be learned from this struggle is the difference between confession and repentance. At least twice in this story we hear Pharaoh confess that he has sinned and is in fact a sinner, but his admission of guilt, regardless of how sincere it may be, is not the same as true repentance. Had Pharaoh acknowledged his sin and then released the Hebrew slaves from bondage and paid their back wages, we would have witnessed an example of true repentance. What we witness with Pharaoh is typical of most human beings. Pharaoh is

sorry that he is suffering the consequences of his actions more than he is sorry for his actions. We too often find ourselves driven to confession by the consequences of our behavior, and yet fall short of true repentance. The Torah, the Prophets, and the Messiah call us not to confession but to repentance. The Torah commands that those who admit their guilt must also make restitution before their restoration is complete.

“Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against YHWH, and that person be guilty; Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed.” (Numbers 5:6-7)

True repentance is not simply saying, “Sorry.” True repentance is actively living out the reality of a changed heart and mind. Confession is with the lips, but repentance is with one’s whole being.

The fourth lesson to be learned from this struggle emerges from Pharaoh’s refusal to repent and release his captives. Instead of admitting defeat, failure, and wrongdoing, Pharaoh tries to maintain his position of power by offering compromises to Moses. Four times in this struggle Pharaoh, King of Egypt, offers Moses and the children of Israel an opportunity to compromise and stop the struggle. Before we look at these compromises in detail let me suggest to you that many of our families and friends are still living in a spiritual Egypt. With this in mind, let us turn our attention to the four compromises that confront the children of Israel.

As we have already seen, the conflict begins with Moses’ return to Egypt with the bold and repeated demand that Pharaoh let the children of Israel go into the wilderness for three days to celebrate a feast unto their Elohim.

“And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith YHWH ELOHIM of Israel, Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness.” (Exodus 5:1)

“And thou shalt say unto him, YHWH ELOHIM of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness...”(Exodus 7:16)

“And YHWH spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith YHWH, Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” (Exodus 8:1)

“And YHWH said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith YHWH, Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” (Exodus 8:20)

“Then YHWH said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith YHWH ELOHIM of the Hebrews, Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” (Exodus 9:1)

“And YHWH said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith YHWH ELOHIM of the Hebrews, Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” (Exodus 9:13)

“And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith YHWH ELOHIM of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before Me? let My people go, that they may serve Me.” (Exodus 10:3)

At first Pharaoh blatantly refuses to honor YHWH’s demand.

“And Pharaoh said, Who is YHWH that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not YHWH, neither will I let Israel go.” (Exodus 5:2)

After a few encounters with the power of YHWH, Pharaoh begins to soften and buckle under the pressure. Thus we witness Pharaoh in the awkward position of trying to save face before the Egyptians while at the same time trying to appease Moses, Aaron and the Elohim of the Hebrews lest his whole nation be lost. It is this shifting of power away from Pharaoh and the elohim of the Egyptians to YHWH the Elohim of the Hebrews and true Ruler of the Universe that provokes Pharaoh to compromise.

The first compromise is a simple one.

“And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your Elohim in the land.” (Exodus 8:25)

Here we witness Pharaoh conceding to allow the Hebrews to sacrifice an offering to their Elohim, but they are to do it in the land of Egypt. In other words, Pharaoh is telling them that he doesn’t care what elohim they worship, as long as they remain enslaved in Egypt. For many believers in Messiah, and especially those who are daring to serve YHWH ELOHIM by keeping His Torah, this is one of the first compromises to be confronted. As believers come to a Hebraic understanding of the Word and begin to desire to live a Torah-observant lifestyle, pastors, elders, parents, family, friends and employers will offer this compromise:

“Look, if you want to believe this Jewish stuff and call him Messiah - Yeshua - YHWH; if you want to use their Jewish names and keep these Jewish Feasts - great, more power to you. But don’t break fellowship with the Church. Don’t forget it was in the name of JESUS that you were saved. So go ahead and study this Jewish stuff, but don’t forget you’re still a Christian and you belong in the Church.”

The second compromise that Pharaoh offers the children of Israel shows that he is willing to be a little more flexible in his negotiations.

“And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to YHWH your Elohim in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away.” (Exodus 8:28)

Here once again we hear shades of Pharaoh in the words and intentions of our well-meaning friends and family as they seek to understand us while at the same time try to rein us in and continue to hold us in captivity. The second volley of compromise may sound something like this:

“Alright. We understand that this new Jewish stuff is really exiting, and you say you feel convicted about living it out. So go ahead and live it out. Stop eating ham and pork and shrimp, and celebrate Hanukkah. Look, you can do it; just don’t get too carried away with it. Don’t go too far or you’ll confuse people. You’ll get confused. Don’t take it too far or you might get lost. We’re praying for you.”

Pharaoh’s third compromise comes with an air of genuine concern. Pharaoh points out to Moses that originally the demand was for the men of Israel to go and worship YHWH, so now he is willing to concede and let the men go. Moses holds his ground and demands that all of the Hebrews go. There is no age restriction on obedience in the Torah. Pharaoh then points out that there is evil and danger in the wilderness, and therefore out of concern for the children, only the men are released to go. The children must remain behind.

“And Pharaoh’s servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve YHWH their Elohim: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed? And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve YHWH your Elohim: but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto YHWH. And he said unto them, Let YHWH be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve YHWH; for that ye did desire. And they were driven from Pharaoh’s presence.” (Exodus 10:7-11)

This compromise is directed mostly at those who are married and raising a family. We again hear our pastors, elders, families, and friends trying to reach us with their logic.

“Hey look, it’s okay that YOU have decided to embrace some new religion and change the way YOU live. It’s okay with us if YOU want to start acting like a Jew, but don’t drag your children into it. It’s not right to rob them of Christmas presents and Easter baskets. Other kids will make fun of them if they wear those strings on their pants! You go ahead and follow YOUR calling, but leave your children out of it!”

Pharaoh’s final compromise comes quick on the heels of the devastating plague of locusts, and truly appears to be a last-ditch effort to justify himself and hold on to something of the Hebrews. Seeing that Moses was holding firm to the demand that all of the children of Israel be released to go, Pharaoh offers to let them go if they agree to leave their flocks and herds behind in Egypt.

“And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve YHWH; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.” (Exodus 10:24)

We may remember that this plan worked for the earlier Pharaoh who had allowed Joseph and his brothers to leave Egypt to bury their father.

“And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father’s house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.” (Genesis 50:8)

For the modern believer this compromise will most likely come in the form of a warning about work or livelihood.

“Fine, you’re determined to follow this crazy stuff about the Torah and inflict it on your children as well, but don’t start asking for days off work for Sabbaths and holidays, and don’t think you’re going to stay in business if you start closing on Saturday. You’re going to ruin your career and cause your family to suffer. Look, do what you have to do to please your conscience, but don’t let it affect your livelihood.”

The compromises that I characterize in this teaching largely focus upon those who have come out or are in the process of coming out of the Church or Christianity. These are the compromises that I have encountered personally and am therefore familiar with. I recognize, however, that there are many who read these teachings that are likewise coming out of rabbinic Judaism, which in itself can be a form of bondage. I have no personal experience with this so I cannot speak on it. In truth, there are numerous types of bondage that we are called out of. The point I want to make is not focused on the compromises we may be asked to make, but on the need to stand firm upon the will and Word of YHWH ELOHIM. Moses did not accept any of Pharaoh’s offers. We cannot leave anything behind to draw us back. Moses stood his ground and was obedient to YHWH’s word. In this firm obedience, YHWH’s will and purpose were fulfilled. We should recognize that prior to YHWH’s promised deliverance coming to pass, the children of Israel first had to endure the hardships inflicted upon them by a very stubborn Pharaoh. This too, however, was clearly a part of YHWH’s plan for the children of Israel.

As we may remember from last week’s teaching, it is the events surrounding the great deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt that define the attributes of the name YHWH. While the Patriarchs were familiar with the attributes of El Shaddai,² this generation would come to know the attributes of YHWH as they were made manifest in the events surrounding the exodus from Egypt. Clearly YHWH could have defeated Pharaoh’s will in the blink of an eye. YHWH instead chooses a more magnanimous means to make His name known not only to the Israelites, but to Egypt and the rest of the world as well. Clearly it was YHWH’s intention to make His name known in the world.

“But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay My hand upon Egypt, and bring forth Mine armies, and My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am YHWH, when I stretch forth Mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.” (Exodus 7:4-5)

"Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto YHWH our Elohim." (Exodus 8:10)

"And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am YHWH in the midst of the earth." (Exodus 8:22)

"For I will at this time send all My plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like Me in all the earth." (Exodus 9:14)

"And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth." (Exodus 9:16)

"But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that YHWH doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel." (Exodus 11:7)

"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am YHWH." (Exodus 14:4)

As we shall see in future portions, the events surrounding the defeat of the mighty empire of Egypt put fear into the surrounding nations as well, thus protecting the children of Israel as they begin their long journey home. More importantly, however, these events were so spectacular in the eyes of the Hebrew slaves that they too would remember and recall these events from generation to generation.

"And YHWH said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these My signs before him: And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am YHWH." (Exodus 10:1-2)

In many ways the trials resulting from these plagues were the birth pangs of the nation of Israel. Here we must be clear that it was not a religion that was born from Egypt, but a nation and a people. We should understand that this was the promise that YHWH had given the Patriarchs.

"And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy 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 substance. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again." (Genesis 15:13-14, 16)

“And He said, I am Elohim, the Elohim of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again.” (Genesis 46:3-4a)

The final plague, the death of the firstborn of Egypt, was the final contraction that caused Pharaoh to thrust the children of Israel out of the confinement of the womb of Egypt and into the hands of YHWH ELOHIM, the deliverer of the nation of Israel. The birth imagery becomes even stronger in this passage when we think of the blood of the lamb splashed upon the doorposts of the Hebrew homes. The door and the pattern of the blood take the shape of the letter Chet, which when coupled with the letter Yud spells *chai*, which means “life.” The letter Chet is a picture of a fence - our closed door. The letter Yud is the picture of a hand. We may see that it is the outstretched HAND of YHWH that opens the DOOR to LIFE and freedom for the children of Israel.

The sixteenth chapter of the book of Ezekiel contains very similar imagery concerning the birth and development of the nation of Israel. Here we see but a small portion of this very poetic imagery. Through the prophet, YHWH declares,

“And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.” (Ezekiel 16:6)

So that the people of the nation birthed from this struggle would never forget how they came into being or who it was that delivered them, YHWH establishes for the children of Israel a whole new order to their lives. This new order begins with a new calendar.

“And YHWH spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.” (Exodus 12:1-2)

*“This day came ye out in the month of the *aviv*.” (Exodus 13:4)*

*“Observe the month of the *aviv*, and keep the Passover unto YHWH thy Elohim: for in the month of the *aviv* YHWH thy Elohim brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.” (Deuteronomy 16:1)*

By establishing the month of the *aviv* as Israel’s new year, YHWH is declaring that Israel’s life begins with the exodus. Along with this new calendar Israel is also given instructions for a unique rehearsal to commemorate these events. Every year in the month of the *aviv* the children of Israel are to rehearse the events of their deliverance. By keeping this rehearsal year after year the children of Israel remember their election, their birth, and most importantly their deliverer, YHWH ELOHIM. Israel not only remembers but relives these events so that every generation may experience them and know that they too are a part of this great nation of Israel, and that YHWH is their Elohim. We are not only to recall, remember, and read of these events, but also to live out their details as best we can so that our children and our children’s children may say,

“YHWH delivered ME out of Egypt.” Thus YHWH commands the children of Israel not only to remember the day, but also to keep the Feast year after year.

Over time and generations various traditions have developed concerning the way to celebrate Passover. For those who have observed the traditional rabbinic Seder, you may quickly realize how different it is from that which is described in our portion. Our portion depicts the eating of the Passover in a rather frugal fashion. The meal is simply roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. It is to be eaten in haste; we are to be dressed for leaving, with shoes on and staff in hand. The traditional rabbinic Seder is a very elaborate meal eaten in leisure while reclining at a table full of wonderful food. The thought behind such a practice is that the first Passover was eaten as slaves waiting for deliverance, but in this day, the Passover is eaten by free men who have been delivered.

It is not my place to tell you how you are to celebrate Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread; the Ruach and your conscience must be your guide. However, with this said, I will share that there are other ways of celebrating these events. Karaite Jews focus predominately upon the various Scriptures that tell the story of YHWH’s magnanimous deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. In our home we like to follow the biblical account as much as possible so that our children will feel a part of the events and spiritually lay claim to their heritage.

Whichever way you chose to celebrate, Passover is the celebration of our freedom, not only from bondage to Pharaoh but also from bondage to sin, through the blood of Yeshua, the Lamb of Elohim! As believers in Yeshua this celebration is not just the birth of the nation of Israel, but also our rebirth from our formerly polluted lives. Here let us understand that the sin that Yeshua died for was our failure to be a faithful covenant partner. By the blood of Yeshua both the house of Judah and the house of Israel are atoned for. It is by the death of Yeshua, the Lamb of Elohim, that we are reborn and may enter again into covenant with our Creator, Deliverer, Redeemer and Elohim. In Messiah, our struggle with sin and death is ended and we are reborn to serve YHWH ELOHIM.

SHAVUA TOV !

¹ Literally, 'come.' Since God is omnipresent, He does not tell Moses to 'go.' Alternatively, this may be an colloquial use of the word **come**. Literally, the word translated into English “go” is the Hebrew word “lech.”

² Exodus 6:3