

# BREAD OF LIFE TORAH STUDIES

*"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger ..." John 6:35*

---

## EXODUS 5-7

Chapter 4 ended on a very positive note: Moses and Aaron spoke to the children of Israel; did the signs God had given; the people believed and were so moved that the LORD had visited them in their affliction that they bowed their heads and worshiped. So far, all is going according to plan.

### CHAPTER 5

*1 Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'"* *2 And Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go. So they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the LORD our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."*

**Q. Do you think Moses and Aaron spoke the words God told them to speak?**

Moses' and Aaron's pleas to Pharaoh to let the people go simply hardened his heart so that he increased their workload unbearably. They had to put out the same number of bricks, but now they had to come up with their own straw. They were falsely accused of idleness and beaten. This sorely tested the peoples' belief in Moses' divine mission. The officers of Israel approached Moses and Aaron with the words: <sup>21</sup>*"Let the LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us."*

Moses begged God for an answer saying, *"Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me?"* <sup>23</sup>*"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."*

Let's pause here and see what we need to understand from this untenable situation.

**Q. Put yourself in their position. Can you imagine you would have reacted differently?**

Moses' hope of freeing the Jews by diplomatic means had just failed. His faith has faltered; he expected God to come through for him, but God has not fulfilled his expectations – things have only gotten worse for the people. Thus, we end chapter 5 on a note of deep despair.

**Q. Have you ever found it difficult to believe God's express promises when your situation seems to be worsening? Why does God allow this?**

### CHAPTER 6

<sup>1</sup>*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."*

#### The Name

<sup>2</sup> *"And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the LORD. <sup>3</sup>I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El Shaddai, but **by My name YAHWEH I was not known to them.** <sup>4</sup>I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers."*

Yes, the Holy Name of God has come up before on numerous occasions, but to **'know'** the Name of God is to witness the manifestation of those attributes which that Name denotes. In Genesis the name *El Shaddai* is most often tied to promises of descendants—e.g.: *Gen. 17:1 ... "I am El Shaddai . . . and will multiply you exceedingly."* *Gen. 35:11 ... "I am El Shaddai. Be fruitful and multiply—*whereas the name YHVH is tied to **redemption to the Land of Promise**— e.g. see Genesis 15:7 & 28:13.

We have seen the promise of fruitfulness being fulfilled, (Ex.1:7) but the manifestation of God's saving power and faithfulness to His Covenant promise regarding the Land, had not been realized by the patriarchs, nor yet by Israel as a nation. The key to the new revelation of the name of God is that the LORD is about to act on His promise regarding the Land, which will begin by releasing His children from bondage. This is such a vitally important theme that it forms the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment. Exodus 20:2 *"I am YHVH your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."*

#### **6:5-8 – Take particular notice of all the action verbs:**

*I appeared (to the patriarchs); I established my covenant with them; I have heard the groanings of the people of Israel; I have remembered my Covenant with them ... **therefore** say to the people of Israel... I AM THE LORD (YHVH)*

This is then followed by the four "I wills", which will form the basis of the four cups of the Passover Seder:

- |   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1. <b>"I will bring you out</b> from under the burdens of the Egyptians"      | – Cup of Sanctification |
| 2. <b>"I will rescue you</b> from their bondage"                              | – Cup of Deliverance    |
| 3. <b>"I will redeem you</b> with an outstretched arm & with great judgments" | – Cup of Redemption     |
| 4. <b>"I will take you as my people</b> and I will be your God"               | – Cup of Praise         |

*... **Then you shall know** that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup>**'And I will bring you into the land which** I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.'"*

Throughout the centuries of exile, the promise of the Land has remained the hope of the Jewish people. At the end of every Passover Seder, they say: "Next year in Jerusalem".

Freedom from oppression is only meaningful when there is a purpose and goal to being freed. God doesn't simply promise to rescue them, but ultimately to 'take them'<sup>1</sup> into a special relationship with Himself and give them the Land as a possession— a land that was already covenanted to them through their forefathers.

While other nations are bound by a common land, Israel's bond lies in the worship of one God. Israel's national existence is not dependent upon the possession of its land. On the contrary, possession of land is directly dependent on the faithful performance of Israel's mission as a nation. **Discuss**

**NT Insight:** Whilst a physical land is certainly envisaged here, we also need to understand the spiritual dimension to this promise. It seems that understood this, as we read in Hebrews 11:8-10 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance... by faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country... For he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

---

<sup>1</sup> *I will take you* – This covenant language recalls marriage in many societies, even today.

Moses reiterated God's promises to the people of Israel but they were not able to take hold of them because of the new burdens they endured. Moses also seems to have let the worsening situation steal his faith in God's ability to use him to bring freedom to Israel, saying: 6:12 *"The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?"*

### **Genealogy - v. 14-27**

At this tension-filled moment in the narrative, in the face of the people's closed ears and Moses' self-doubt, there is an unlikely break with the insertion of the genealogy of Moses and Aaron from Levi. This Levite genealogy finishes with:

*These are the same Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies." These are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt. These are the same Moses and Aaron.*

Note here that Aaron is first mentioned before Moses; then it is Moses who is mentioned before Aaron. Again, we see an equality and unity between Moses and Aaron. This might surprise us because Moses has traditionally been seen as *the only one* who brought them out of Egypt, and certainly, he does become pre-eminent, but Aaron is a vital part of the deliverance process, and will continue to play a pivotal role.

#### **Q. Why might this genealogy be inserted here?**

Having interrupted the narrative to give the family background, the Torah then picks up the story where it left off. <sup>28</sup>*And it came to pass, on the day the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt,* <sup>29</sup>*that the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I am the LORD. Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you."* <sup>30</sup>*But Moses said before the LORD, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?"* This is a repetition of verse 12, so virtually brackets the genealogy.

## **CHAPTER 7**

1 *And the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God (Elohim) to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. Again, Moses is called to rise up and see himself as God sees him.*

**Read v. 8-13, especially noting the role of Aaron here.**

Egypt had the most powerful kingdom in the world, whilst the Israelites were just a bunch of disheartened and miserable slaves. The pre-rehearsed sign of the staff becoming a serpent and swallowing up the staff of Pharaoh's magicians should have left them in no doubt whose God was greater. Every Pharaoh held a staff as a symbol of their authority, and they were also associated with specific gods. The pharaohs also wore an emblem of a cobra as a head ornament. This represented *Uraeus*, the serpent goddess, which was one of the earliest Egyptian deities.

Of course, the adversarial relationship between man and the serpent goes back to the Garden of Eden, so it is fitting that this is the first sign given.

**NT insight:** We understand that the crucifixion is God's ultimate judgment upon and defeat of the "serpent", as depicted in Numbers 10 when Moses held up the bronze<sup>2</sup> serpent on the standard.

---

<sup>2</sup> Bronze speaks of judgment.

## The Ten Plagues

Whilst the main purpose of Moses' mission has been stated as bringing the people of Israel out from under the bondage of the Egyptians, the LORD also brought about the ten plagues in order to demonstrate His total sovereignty over all the gods of the most powerful nation on earth. This is seen most clearly at the final plague where He says: *"and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment"* (Ex.12:12). Numbers 33:4 also states that the plagues were an attack on the gods of Egypt.

We won't look into the plagues in detail, but just list them and mention a few relevant points.

1. **Waters turn to Blood** (7:14-24)

2. **Frogs** (8:1-15)

3. **Gnats** (8:16-19)

This plague occurs without any prior warning or invitation to repentance. After this plague *the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them.*

4. **Swarms** (8:20-32)

This is the first plague where it clearly states that the people of Israel would be untouched. *... that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. Thus I will put a division between my people and your people.*

5. **Plague on Cattle** (9:3-7)

6. **Boils on Man and Beast** (9:8-12) - Again this plague occurs without warning.

7. **Hail** (9:13-35) - *... this time I will send all my plagues on your heart and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth . . . I will cause very heavy hail to fall, such as never has been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now.*

This plague would be the severest so far.

*Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, "This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. Plead with the LORD, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer." (9:27-28)*

As the plagues grew harsher, Pharaoh's stubbornness seemed to shift and he considered sending them out – not because it was God's will, but to relieve his own suffering.

*10:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants that I may show these signs among them; and so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I made a mockery of Egypt and My signs that I placed among them – that you may know that I am YHVH."*

8. **Locusts** (10:12-20)

Moses warned Pharaoh that a plague of locusts would descend upon the Egyptian crops but he still did not relent. *Pharaoh's servants said to him "How long will this be a snare for us? Send out the men to worship the LORD their God. Don't you yet know that Egypt is lost?"*

9. **Darkness** (10:21-23)

The LORD then instructed Moses to initiate the next plague – again without warning.<sup>3</sup> Total darkness descended upon the Egyptians for three days, but Israel was given light in their dwellings.

---

<sup>3</sup> There are 3 sets of 3 plagues. The 3rd in each set comes without warning to Pharaoh.

Pharaoh tried to persuade Moses to compromise – ‘Only your men may go.’ (10:11); Then after the 9<sup>th</sup> plague, ‘Go, even your women and children may go, but not your livestock.’ (10:24). But Moses would not compromise – ‘Not a hoof will be left’ Moses said. (10:26) **DISCUSS**

Plagues 1-9 explicitly conveyed three messages:

1. 8:10 ‘that you may know that there is no one like YHVH our God.’
2. 8:22 ‘that you may know that I am YHVH in the midst of the land.’
3. 9:14 ‘that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth’

The whole essence of pagan idolatry is the belief that every force in nature has a god that controls it. The Ten Plagues were designed by God to flip all the laws of nature on end to demonstrate — not just for the Jewish people but for all of humanity, for all of history — that He alone controls all of nature, all of the physical world, and that there is nothing outside of His control.

Throughout the entire narrative we have seen that, rather than simply slam Egypt with plagues, God has given Pharaoh every opportunity to turn from the stubbornness of his heart and let the people go. Is this the perfect justice of God at work?

### The Hardening of Pharaoh’s Heart

In the battle between God and Pharaoh, five times we have seen that Pharaoh’s heart was hard, presumably through his own doing. But after the sixth plague the text changes— it is now the LORD who is said to harden Pharaoh’s heart (see 9:12, 10:20, 10:27)— but what we don’t see in translation is that a different word is used when it is the LORD who hardens Pharaoh’s heart.

**Hebrew insight:** In all previous cases, the word translated as “hardened” (or equiv.) is *kä·vod* - to be heavy, be insensible, dull. However, *kavod* also has an opposite meaning. When used in a good sense it means to bring honour or to glorify. In fact, it is more often used in this sense in scripture. However, when it is God who hardens Pharaoh’s heart, in 9:12 and following, a different Hebrew word is used – *khä·zak* – which means to ‘strengthen’ or ‘make hard’.

So what we see is that Pharaoh is hardening his resolve to hold on to his own glory—he won’t be told what to do. After five plagues (5 denotes ‘grace’), it seems that God strengthens Pharaoh’s will in his own choice. When a person chooses the path of good it becomes easier and easier to walk that way. When a person chooses the path of sin it is increasingly easy to commit even greater sin, until the path seems irreversible and he finally ‘forfeits the opportunity to repent. *Midrash* says “The Holy One gives a person the chance to repent once, twice, three times, and if he doesn’t repent, he locks his heart altogether, cutting off the possibility of repentance in the future.” So it is with Pharaoh—the LORD sent him five warnings but Pharaoh ignored His words and persisted in choosing the path of evil.

Chapter 10 concludes with these verses:

*10:28-29 Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!” So Moses said, “You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.”*

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.