

October 29, 2017 - Ex. 6:2 – 7:7 - Moses' Weakness and Pharaoh's Hard Heart
Torah Reading: Exodus 6:2 – 7:7 - Moses' Weakness and Pharaoh's Hard Heart
Psalm 45
Haftarah: Isaiah 42:8-16, 21
Isaiah 52:6-13 + 53:4-5

Exodus 6:2-4 - "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH (YHWH) was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers."

"but by my name JEHOVAH (YHWH) was I not known to them." - Wait! Of course they knew it, didn't they?

In the same way Elohim is God's name or title associated with his work as Creator, and El Shaddai (Almighty) describes his mighty works and miracles, so the name Yahweh always relates to God's covenant with the patriarchs.

They had known this name and his covenant (mentioned many times in Genesis), but without experiencing or seeing the promise fulfilled. Israel was now about to see the covenant fulfilled. So Moses and Israel were going to know God in a fuller way in the fulfillment of his word, by His bringing them into the Promised Land.

Rashi - I made promises to them, but I did not fulfill [them while they were alive].

Hebrews 11:13 - "These all died in faith, not having received the promises."

Paul says this is ultimately fulfilled in the resurrection:

Acts 13:34 - "And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.'"

He's quoting **Isaiah 55:3** - "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

God's promise to Abraham looks to an eternal fulfillment:

1 Peter 1:3-5 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Plus, Moses had asked about God's name.

Rashi - Many times I revealed Myself to them as the Almighty God and they did not ask Me, 'What is Your name?' But you asked, 'What is His name? What shall I say to them?'" (Exod. 3:13).

Exodus 6:6-8 - Seven important "I wills" promised by the Lord are listed.

- (1) I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and
- (2) I will rid you out of their bondage, and
- (3) I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And
- (4) I will take you to Me for a people, and
- (5) I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And
- (6) I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and
- (7) I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord" (vv. 6-8)

In the first four expressions of redemption here, the Jews say this is the basis for the four cups of wine at Passover.

Compare this to the similar list of seven promises of the New Covenant:

Jeremiah 31:33, 34. - "After those days, saith the Lord,

- (1) I will put My law in their inward parts, and
- (2) write it in their hearts; and
- (3) will be their God, and
- (4) they shall be My people. And
- (5) they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: and (6) I will forgive their iniquity, and
- (7) I will remember their sin no more".

Exodus 6:9 - "And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage."

Shortness= *qotser* - shortness, impatience, anguish
 breath = *ruwach* - breath, wind, spirit, courage

A combination of impatience and the overwhelming burden of their labors combined to keep the children of Israel from hearing Moses.

They had previously believed Moses:

Exodus 4:31 - "And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped."

The people really only believed after they had passed through the Red Sea and they

saw Pharaoh's army was destroyed.

See **Exodus 14:31** - "And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses."

In the same way, our personal belief in Christ comes after God has already effected our salvation through Christ's death on the cross, "The Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" (**Revelation 13:8**).

Exodus 6:10 - "And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt."

What was the "charge unto the children of Israel"? The Rabbis saw in this irregular grammar a secret about the nature of leadership and respect for God's people, and toward those on leadership (Pharaoh). (Remember that Moses was punished for "slandering" the people of God). It meant that the leader was not only accountable to God, but to the people. Despite (or perhaps because of) the potential hostility, it is the leader's responsibility to treat his or her community with the utmost respect. And to address even a tyrannical monarch with civility and respect.

Maimonides:

"It is forbidden for a person to lord it over the community in a domineering manner but he must exercise authority with humility and reverence; it is likewise forbidden to treat the people with disrespect even if they are ignorant; and a leader should not ride over the heads of the holy people. Though they be ordinary people, common folk, they are the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the host of Hashem who brought them out of Egypt with great might and a strong hand. The leader should rather bear patiently the cumbrance of the community and their burden, as Moses our teacher, as it is said: "as a nursing father carries the sucking child" (Numbers 11:12). Look at Moses, Master of all the prophets. We are told that no sooner did the Holy One of Blessing send Moses to Egypt that "He commanded them regarding the children of Israel" which our tradition takes to mean that God made Moses and Aaron accept the leadership of the people "on the understanding that they will curse you and stone you." (Hilkhos Sanhedrin, 25:1-2; translation from Nehama Leibowitz's Studies in Shemot, 144, modified).

Exodus 6:14-25 - The genealogies of the first three sons of Israel are listed, specifically showing the lineage of Moses and Aaron.

It is an example of God's grace that it was from a tribe that lay under a curse (**Genesis 49:5-7**) that God chose the deliverer of Israel from bondage. Also, Moses was the younger son, who was given prominence over the elder son.

Our strength is made perfect in weakness.

Exodus 6:30 - "And Moses said before the LORD, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?"

All Moses' complaints and excuses in the last two chapters number seven - showing the completeness of his own weakness and failings. This is to highlight the perfections and power of God in bringing to pass this redemption.

2 Corinthians 12:9 - "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

God's Sovereignty and Predestination

Exodus 7:3 - "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt."

See **Romans 9:18** - "whom he will, he hardens." Or as **Psalms 105:25** has it: "He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants."

It also affirms that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Both are true, but beyond our capacity to explain further because of our finite understanding. Because free will is considered a foundational truth of human nature and moral reasoning, Jewish commentators along with Christians wrangle with this problem without coming to a satisfactory conclusion.

God did the same to Sihon, king of Heshbon (**Deuteronomy 2:30**) and the Canaanite cities (**Joshua 11:19-20**).

He did this even to backslidden Israel:

Isaiah 6:10 - "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."

Proverbs 21:1 - "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."

Revelation 17:17 - "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

The same is even said about our ability to repent:

Lamentations 5:21 - "Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned"

On the other hand, sometimes when scripture says God performs things, at other times it says we do:

Ezekiel 18:31-32 - “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.”

Somehow, God’s sovereignty exists alongside our responsibility for our sins.

Romans 9:14 - “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.”

Romans 11:33-34 - “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?”