

Shiur L'Yom Shishi¹

[Friday's Study]

READINGS: ***Torah Sh'mot:*** **Exodus 5:1 - 6:1**
 Haftarah: **Jeremiah 1:11 - 2:3**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Acts 7:41- 8:4**

Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh.

[Exodus 6:1]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 18:14-19;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #11, *Y'rushalayim* [Jerusalem]

V'achar ba'u Moshe v'Aharon vayomeru el-Par'oh – Afterword Moshe and Aharon went in/out and spoke to Pharaoh ... *Ko-amar Adonai, Elohei Yisrael* – This is what the Holy One, the God of Israel, says ... *Shelach et-ami* - Send My People forth **Exodus 5:1a.**

Last night Moshe and Aharon debuted their new prophetic and signs and wonders empowerments to rave reviews. The elders of B'nei Yisrael all ooh-ed and ahh-ed when Moshe threw down his rod and it turned into a serpent. They then looked on in amazement as Moshe had stuck a perfectly healthy hand into the bosom area of his garment, then pulled it back out oozing with *tzara'at*. To top off the evening Aharon that these were all just signs that the Holy One was about to ***bring [Israel] out of the wretchedness of Egypt, to the land of the Kena'ani, Hitti, Emori, Perizzi, Hivi and Yevusi - to a land flowing with milk and honey.*** **Exodus 3:17.** What a finale!

The elders were convinced. The crowd screamed for more. The place where they had gathered broke out in something the world had never seen – *a whole community of Hebrews simultaneously bowing their faces to the ground as an act of spontaneous worship of the Creator of the Universe.* See **Exodus 4:31.** Maybe this *prophet-of-the-most-High-God stuff* wasn't going to be as hard as Moshe had thought!

Morning Light – and Harsh Reality

With the morning light, however, reality began to sink in. Pharaoh and his court represented a much *tougher audience*. Today Moshe's message will be much less likely to resound as deep speaking unto deep. Today Moshe and Aharon's words will fall off the edge of the world into a dark abyss of arrogance, prejudice, and cynicism. Today hundreds of Egyptian spears will be poised and ready to strike Moshe and Aharon through if Pharaoh commands. Today there will be nowhere to

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run and nowhere to hide if things go badly. So, as Moshe approached the new Pharaoh for the first time [Exodus 5:1(a)] I can picture the old Levite muttering to himself “*Oh, Lord, please don’t let my communication skills fail me now!*” *Let’s see ... what was it I was supposed to say? Oh yeah - “Sh’lach et-ami!* [send My people forth!]*” Those words came so easy last night, as we were being cheered and blessed by our Hebrew brethren in our secret meetings. Today’s audience, I fear, is not going to be quite as receptive. Isn’t there a little more diplomatic way to say what the Holy One wants us to say than just coming right out with it?”* Alas, Dear Reader, here is a lesson we all need to learn and learn well – personal opinions, biases, agendas, and talking points have to be put on the back burner – and ultimately disavowed completely. Our heart must be completely flooded with our Kingdom’s noble theme. Our tongue must be the pen of a ready writer, but which recite only the verses authorized by our King. Our mouths must become fine-tuned instruments of Divine Revelation - not loose cannon portals of opinion, ideology, philosophy, theology, moral revulsion, indignation, outrage, disdain, criticism, judgment, or condemnation.

How Will the Act That Was Such A Hit at the Coffeehouse Be Received at The Palace, When Presented to the Beast and the Elites?

After the big debut, the news spread quickly. Pharaoh had ears everywhere – and Egypt had its fair share of wagging tongues just like every other nation. The next morning, it seemed like everyone in the land of Egypt was buzzing excitedly about the signs and wonders performed by Moshe the former prince of Egypt turned enemy-of-the-state and his new associate, Aharon the Hebrew. The news inevitably made its way to Pharaoh, of course, and he - ever a fan of a good magic show - decided to give the new act an audience in the Palace. What, after all, could the embodiment of Horus possibly have to fear from mere mortals such as these? When the signal was given for the show to begin, however, there was no magic. There were no signs. There were no wonders. There were no tricks. There was no show. All that happened was that Aharon, speaking for the duo, delivered a very short speech – a speech the Holy One had written for the occasion. *Koh-amar Adonai Elohei Yisra’el* [This is what the Holy One, God of Yisrael, says: *Shalach et-ami* [‘Send out My people] *v’yachogu li b’midbar* [so they can hold a feast² to honor Me in the desert].’

Pharaoh’s court waited with bated breath. Surely there was a punch line coming.

² The verb root of the word our English Bibles translate as ‘hold a feast’ is *chagag, chet, gimel, gimel*, Strong’s Hebrew word #2287, pronounced *khaw-gawg*. Strong’s says it means “to hold a feast, hold a festival, make pilgrimage, keep a pilgrim-feast, celebrate, dance, and stagger.” It is the same word used by Torah to describe what the Holy One’s people are to do at the *sh’losh regalim* [three pilgrimage festivals] – *Pesach* [Passover], *Shavu’ot* [Weeks/Pentecost], and *Sukkot* [Tabernacles]. The Hebraic pictograph or mural presented by the letters that make up this word is that of people dancing under a *chuppah* [wedding canopy].

Hopefully there was a rabbit coming out of a hat, a dove appearing out of a scroll – or some kind of trick for his entertainment. But there was nothing of the sort. Aharon was done. He delivered his prepared speech, then fell completely silent. Moshe, who had not said a word, just stood there - waiting, as it were, for some invisible ‘other shoe’ to drop.

An uncomfortable silence fell on the room. All the eyes that had been on Aharon and Moshe shifted to Pharaoh – then to the floor. ‘*Is that ... it?*’, everyone must have thought. This was ... well ... awkward. Somebody *do something – anything!* Improvise. Don’t leave the audience hanging like this.

I Only Do What I See My Father Doing ...

Note what Moshe and Aharon, acting as true prophets of the Holy One, did NOT do or say when they got an audience before the leader of the most powerful nation on the earth. They did not disrespect their adversary. Though their flesh probably wanted to, Moshe and Aharon did not condemn a single one of the oppressive regime’s policies - even the maniacal ‘*throw all male Hebrew babies in the Nile*’ decree promulgated by this man’s predecessor. They did not demand that Egypt abolish slavery as an institution or human trafficking as a practice. They did not call Pharaoh inflammatory names like ‘tyrant’, or ‘fascist’, or ‘nazi’, or ‘racist’, or ‘bigot’, or ‘*phobe*’ or ‘misogynist’. They did not order Pharaoh to tear down any walls. They did not insist that he let in – or keep out - more immigrants. They did not demand more government aid programs for the poor. They did not even suggest an increase in the minimum food allotment for Egypt’s slaves. They did not call for the Egyptian people to repent of occult practices, perverse lifestyles, or idolatrous practices. They did not try to convince anyone that the special days and celebrations the Egyptian culture had embraced were all pagan in origin. They did not demand that Pharaoh either increase or reduce taxes. They did not demand free education or health care. They did not insist that Egypt cut its military spending or bring home its troops from foreign deployments. They uttered nary a whisper about the way Pharaoh was running the economy. They had nothing whatever to say about either the inequities inherent in the class-structure of Egyptian society or the intrusiveness and oppression of the Egyptian government. They did not demand that Pharaoh or any member of his administration step down – or be impeached. They did not threaten a revolution. They were not there for their idea of ‘justice’. They were there on a Kingdom of Heaven mission, engaging in carefully scripted Kingdom of Heaven diplomacy. They therefore stuck to the Kingdom of Heaven’s diplomatic agenda, and just read the script – despite all the things they might personally have believed and/or wanted to say to Pharaoh, or in front of the Egyptian media of the day.

Moshe and Aharon followed Egyptian court protocol. They did not speak until spoken to. They did not interrupt other speakers. They did not try to upstage their host. They resisted the temptation to grandstand. They stifled their urge to lecture Pharaoh on his or his people's morals, their politics, their ideology, their philosophy, or their religion. They did not rant. They did not protest the vast oceans of innocent blood Pharaoh had caused to be shed. They did not make accusations of scandal or outrage. They did not argue; they did not chant slogans; they did not incite resurrection. They were respectful and polite. They maintained decorum. They kept their *shalom* at all times. In short, they acted like responsible diplomats of the Kingdom of Heaven, honorable guests in the courts of a king, instead of peasants with a chip on their shoulder, or spoiled brats with a sense of entitlement. All they proposed – because all the Holy One authorized them to propose - was that Pharaoh allow *a one-time introductory encounter* between the Hebrews in his charge and the Holy One. All they did was engage in Phase I Kingdom Diplomacy. They weren't there to express their personal opinions about Pharaoh or Egypt or slavery as an institution – and they didn't. Well done, good and faithful servants. That was an excellent beginning to your grand diplomatic mission. There will be more tests of your dedication to the Grand Plan, the Strategy, and the Timing of the Holy One in the days, weeks, and months to come – but for now, you have served your Kingdom well. The ball is now in Pharaoh's court.

How Will Pharaoh Respond? How Would You Expect A Person With a Thought-Life Center-of-Gravity Like His to Respond?

The Holy One knew Pharaoh would not grant any request that Moshe and Aharon – or any Hebrew – made. So, He made sure the request that was presented was innocuous. He knew how thoroughly the man who carried the cobra-shaped scepter reeked of pride. He knew that pride was guaranteed to lead to an epic Pharaoh-fall. He knew that pride would make Pharaoh quick to anger, quick to offense, quick to judge, quick to react negatively to anything that was not his idea, and quick to expose both his horrible temper and his addiction to cruelty. He knew Pharaoh's pride would ultimately cause his thin veneer of sanity to unravel, thread by thread, until he himself obliterated whatever respect he still had from anyone in Egypt or the world.

The first words we ever hear coming from the mouth of the monarch of Egypt reveal the depth of the darkness that permeated his heart, his mind, and his soul. Those words expose the depths of his hatred for not only the Hebrews but for the One True God. Read the first words of this despot very, very carefully, Dear Reader. You will almost certainly hear very similar words from the most powerful ruler in the world in your day. ***Mi Adonai*** – *'Who is the Holy One ... asher esh'ma*

bekolo – that I should sh'ma Him ... *l'shalach et-Yisra'el* – and send Israel out?

Lo yadati et-Adonai

I do not know [or acknowledge] the Holy One!

V'gam et-Yisra'el lo ashale'ach

And as for Israel, I will not send him out.'

[Exodus 5:2]

With strong words, Pharaoh makes it clear that he has no interest in *cooperation*, in *diplomatic solution*, in *negotiation*, in *quid pro quo*, or in *peace*. What he wants is a *winner-take-all showdown*. So let it be written; so let it be done. A few weeks from now the new Pharaoh of Egypt will look back on the events of today's aliyah and shake his vulture-headaddress crowned head. At that time this brash tyrant will wish he had known *then* what he knows *now*. Perhaps then he will realize that the Holy One could have taken Israel from him any time He wanted, and that he would have been powerless to do anything about it. For now, however, Pharaoh is - or at least he thinks he is - in *control of the situation*. He does not know the "god" spoken of by Moshe and Aharon. He does not want to know Him. In his deceived, depraved mind he has no interest in granting the requests of, and no reason to fear, a little-known deity who chooses a murderer-fugitive with a stuttering problem as his spokesperson.

The Beast Arises, Growls, and Roars – Right on Cue!

When any new leader of Egypt took the ancient title of *Par'oh* [*Pharaoh*] unto himself he laid claim to being more than a mere man. To be Pharaoh in ancient Egypt was to be deemed to serve as the *avatar* of *Horus*, the 'lord of the sky' of ancient Egyptian lore. Who was *Horus*? He was believed to be a god who *controlled all the forces of nature*. It was *Horus*, therefore, who was believed to hold *sole authority on earth to decide who would eat and who would starve, who would suffer and who would bask in opulent splendor, and who would live and who would die*. You are, I hope, beginning to see the prophetic implications.

What kind of man will the new ruler – this new avatar of *Horus* - turn out to be? What will be his policy – and what will be his legacy? What, over the course of time, will his character, his personality, and his priorities be revealed to be? What will he choose as his purpose in power? Will he choose to rectify the sins of his predecessor – or will he choose to continue and/or magnify them? Will he lighten the burden of the poor foreigners his forbearer enslaved – or will he tighten the noose around their necks? Will he cooperate with the plan of the Creator of the Universe to set the Hebrew people free and send them back to the land of Kena'an to fulfill their assigned function in the Grand Redemptive Plan – or will he stubbornly refuse, arrogantly resist, and bring about the ruination of his own country and people in the process?

We will speak much, much more about Egypt's new Pharaoh – and the world's new beast from the waters – later in these studies. We will get to know the beast's deep deity-delusion, his violent anti-Semitism, and his depraved self-obsession very, very well before the Exodus story is over. We will come to understand that he is indeed the embodiment of a spiritual being, as he insisted. But we will learn that the spirit he embodies is not the spirit of some mythical creature named Horus – it is instead *the very real spirit of anti-Messiah*. If anyone has ears to *sh'ma*, let him *sh'ma*. We will soon find out exactly how dangerous a prophetic 'beast' has just slithered out of the waters of the Nile.

What is the Status of the Seed of Avraham? Can These Bones Live?

As Egypt's new Pharaoh is busy establishing and solidifying his government, the spotlight of Torah's narrative turns back to the Hebrews. Two sons of the Covenant in particular have the Divine Author's attention. Those two are Moshe and Aharon. From the family of Levi, these two are suddenly bursting forth as burning and shining lamps. Moshe's face, heart, hands and shepherd's rod are all glowing from his recent encounter with the Holy One at the burning thorn bush of Horeb. Aharon's lips and tongue are now infected with the same prophetic fire. While no human being alive could have understood it at the time, what these two Hebrews were about to start talking about and doing is going to turn out to be far more important than anything that was being spoken of in the courts of Egypt's new Pharaoh. The balance of power in the world always follows the light, not the darkness. And it is these two Hebrews, not anyone in the palaces of the nations that the Holy One has raised up to serve as the burning and shining lights of humanity in this hour. Moshe and Aharon have been appointed and commissioned as the appointed witnesses of the Holy One - in their generation and far, far beyond. They have been called and empowered to serve humanity as the most recent light-bringers of the Covenant. When they speak, therefore, their voices radiate with the glory and majesty of the Creator of the Universe.

It is always destined to be so, Dear Reader. The Holy One will not be left without a witness, a witness duo, or a witness throng. So do not be confused, dismayed, or intimidated by the propaganda, the lies, the fear mongering, and the foolishness being spoken by the talking heads of the world's palaces, think tanks, educational institutions and media centers. Sift through the nonsense. Tune your ear to hear the Voice of the Creator. As long as the sons and daughters of the Covenant *sh'ma* the Voice of the Creator and yield the members of their bodies to be used by the Holy One as His tuning fork³, the words we speak and the actions in which we

³ A *tuning fork* a two-pronged steel fork the tines of which form a U-shaped bar. When struck, the tines start to resonate at a specific constant pitch. After an initial moment of adjustment, while some high

participate carry a far greater weight and have a far greater long-term impact than anything being said or done by any earthly ruler or any institutional spokesperson.

Was All This Really Necessary?

Before we go any further I have a question to ask: Have you wondered if all the confrontation and plague stuff we know is about to occur was *really necessary*? Have you ever wondered, for instance, why the Holy One did not just cause a *deep sleep* to fall on Pharaoh and his army - or strike them all blind as he had done to the men at S'dom who congregated outside Lot's house - and just have the people take what they wanted and leave - no muss, no fuss? Or why couldn't the Holy One have just *blasted Pharaoh with a bolt of lightning or something*, and rescued Israel out of Egypt any time He wanted?

Of course He could have. And He would have, I suspect, if all the Exodus story was about was a cosmic battle between good and evil, or even a contest between the Holy One and Pharaoh. But neither of those things is at all what the Book of Exodus is. Sefer *Sh'mot* is, you see, in essence, a *love story* - a *story of Divine Romance*. Do not misunderstand me however – this great Book of Torah is not about the *giddy, sleazy kind of 'romance'* portrayed in movies or on television today. It is not about *infatuation* or *lust* or *ooey-gooey sentiments* of mutual admiration. It is not about an *emotion-driven*, or *self-seeking*, or *pleasure-focused relationship*. It is instead a story about *romance the Holy One's way* – a romance of covenant-commitment developed in *Divine Order*, walked out according to *Divine Protocol*, experienced in a series of *Divine stages*, intended to effectuate *Divine Purposes*. The first stage of Divine Romance – the stage we are about to enter - is the *Courtship stage*; the next stage will be *Betrothal*.

Striking Pharaoh with a lightning bolt and snatching a group of people who don't even know the Holy One, and forcibly removing them from the only home they have ever known while they were in a state of shock, would simply not be the way to start a successful Courtship. The Holy One has a far better plan than *smash and grab*. Let us consider the essence of the Courtship Phase ... and its place in the greater drama of Divine Romance.

It is Time for the Courtship Phase of Divine Romance

In the courtship phase⁴ of Divine Romance - which began the day the Holy One announced His intentions to Moshe at the burning thorn bush and will continue all the way to the theophany on *Har Sineh* - the Holy One will accomplish two things. First of all, He will *introduce Himself to the object of His affection* [Israel], through

overtones burst forth and then die out, what is emitted by the tuning fork is as pure a musical tone as can be found on earth. Instruments can be tuned to it, and voices can be trained to it.

⁴ The betrothal stage will be discussed in great detail in connection with *Parshot Yitro* and *Mishpatim*.

appropriate – and non-threatening - protocol. Secondly, over a course of time, He will *prove to the object of His affection that He is a worthy courtier* – one who can be trusted to nurture, amply provide for, protect, honor, and cherish the maiden, take over the role performed for her by her ‘papa’, and help her to do what ‘papa’ could never do - *achieve her fullest potential*. These are the things true courtship is all about. Anything else is a fraud.

Let us look at the component parts of this Divine Courtship plan one by one:

1. The Courtier will *introduce himself* to the object of his affection through appropriate protocol;
2. The Courtier will *prove himself worthy* in each of the following areas:
 - a. As a *nurturer*;
 - b. As a *provider*;
 - c. As a *protector/defender*;
 - d. As one who *honors* the one who is courted; and
 - e. As one who *cherishes* the one who is courted.
3. The Courtier will *demonstrate his ability to, and establish a procedure whereby He will, take over the ‘papa’s’ role* in the life of the one who is being courted; and
4. The Courtier will *make a commitment to, and begin the process of, starting the one being courted on a path that will lead her toward fulfillment of her fullest potential*.

In connection with these steps the courtier will never approach the object of His intentions directly. That would be to ‘*arouse or awaken love before the desirable time*’ as Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5, and 8:4 caution against. Instead of direct approach the courtier first must announce his intentions with regard to the courtship to, and establish a framework of ongoing communications with, a ‘*friend of the Bridegroom*’.

In this instance of Divine Romance, of course, the Courtier is none other than the Holy One, the one being courted is none other than Israel, and the chosen ‘friend of the Bridegroom’ is Moshe. But if you have ears to hear what the *Ruach HaQodesh* is saying in this hour, it just might be that the pattern of Divine Romance set out in *Sefer Sh’mot* is a pattern that should be considered by all young men and women of faith – and their parents – in the critical times in which you and I live. If we could see the damage being done to our children – and the institutions of marriage and family - by the ‘dating game’ and the ‘singles game’ our 21st Century cultures have allowed to become the socially-expected rites of passage through which young men and women must pass in their search for prospective mates, perhaps we would

reconsider the wisdom of encouraging our young people to participate in those sadistic and downright pagan behaviors. Perhaps as an alternative we might even offer our children the choice to return to the Divine Romance pattern set forth in the Book of Exodus.

I know some of you out there are *incredulous* - and others are *aghast*. I know that what I just suggested sounds like a *radical* – maybe even *scandalous* – idea. I do not suggest for a second that what I have suggested is a ‘commandment’ of the Holy One. But I wonder - what terrible things might happen to our society if the *Sefer Sh’mot* pattern of Divine Romance was presented to children in Torah-based homes as one of many possible alternatives to dating, co-ed parties and dances, youth group cruising, and singles club shopping?

I wonder – is it possible that for several generations now we have been sending our young people out of our homes *looking for love in all the wrong places*? Oh well, back to our story.

The Roles of the “Friend of the Bridegroom” and of the “Friends of the Bride”

The first act of the ‘friend of the Bridegroom’ is to pass the courtier’s declaration of courtship on to a ‘friend [or friends] of the bride’. It is then the task of the friend [or friends] of the prospective bride to decide if [a] they approve of the courtier as a prospective Bridegroom, and [b] if they feel the courtship is in the best interest of the maiden.

The role of ‘friends of the Bride’ in this case was assumed by Aharon and by *ziknei Yisrael* [the tribal elders of Israel]. But it was not enough for the Holy One to declare His intention to court the young maiden [Israel], or to get approval and blessing from the friends of the potential Bride. The protocol of courtship required that after He received the anticipated positive response and blessing from the friends of the potential Bride, He had to go to the maiden-in-question’s ‘papa’ to request a meeting. And since Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov/Yisrael were all dead, and since the maiden-to-be was living in the house of Pharaoh, under his house rules, well ... guess who the ‘papa’ happened to be? Yep, you guessed it! The ‘papa’ – the guy doing the closest thing to nurturing, protecting, and providing for the maiden-in-question and who therefore had the right to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ - is the new king of Egypt we were speaking about earlier. He is the rich guy in the palace at Memphis we have identified as the next beast arising from the waters. He is the pompous-looking fellow wearing a crown in the shape of a serpent’s head. He is the guy that everybody is so afraid of that they won’t even mention his name, but refer to him only as ‘Pharaoh’. He is not the best ‘papa’ in the world – but he’s the

closest thing to a ‘papa’ the object of the Holy One’s affection has got. Hence the Holy One does not just knock the guy out with a lightning bolt and steal the young maiden away from him. He goes through proper courtship protocol. He does it for HER SAKE – not for Pharaoh’s.

The Holy One wants only the best for this maiden. And He will do *whatever it takes* to convince her of that fact.

Perseverance in the Face of Adversity

The Holy One is not in the least deterred. Pharaoh will be given chance after chance to change his mind – or to harden his heart, whichever course he decides to choose. Because the Holy One is not about to give up on the Grand Plan of Redemption He has set in motion, Moshe and Aharon – who are now resonating with the Holy One’s true tone - do not give up either. All they asked for so far was that the Hebrews be given three-days off, after decades of uninterrupted and hellish slave labor, to hold a formal chaperoned courtship meeting with the Holy One. So, the friend of the prospective Bridegroom and the friend of the Bride-candidate repeat their petition in slightly different words.

Vayomeru Elohei ha-Ivrim nikra aleinu

The God of the Hebrews has revealed Himself to us,' said [Moshe and Aharon].

nelechah-na derech sh'loshet yamim b'midbar

'Allow us now to take a three-day journey into the desert,

v'nizbechah l'Adonai Eloheinu

and we will build altar to/for/unto the Holy One our God.

pen-yifga'einu b'dever o v'charev

Otherwise, He may smite us with a plague or a sword.'

Pharaoh probably thinks to himself: *These guys really do not get it. They need to understand who is in control around here. It is time to get tough with them. It is time to put an end to this ‘sh'lach et ami’* [Let my people go/send my people forth] *nonsense once and for all.* So Pharaoh says to them:

L'mah Moshe v'Aharon tafri'u et ha-am mima'asav

'Moshe and Aharon, why are you distracting the people from their work?

lechu l'sivloteichem

Get back to your own business!'

Vayetzav Par'oh b'yom hahu et-ha-nogsim b'am v'et-shotrav

That day Pharaoh gave new orders to the people's administrators and foremen.

l'emor lo tosifun latet teven l'am libon ha-levenim kitmol shilshom hem

He said, 'Do not give the people straw for bricks as before.

Yelchu v'kosheishu lahem teven
Send them out to gather their own straw.

Arbeit Macht Frei [i.e. 'Work Makes You Free']

Pharaoh thinks he is in control. He scowls. He mocks. He hisses. He issues orders and decrees. “*Let the people of Moshe go and gather their own straw!*” he barks.

Fast forward to 1940. After solidifying their control of Poland, the Nazis built interment camps 37 miles west of Krakow, at Auschwitz. Here they brought enemies of the state – which to them especially meant anyone of Jewish lineage. Over the entrance to the camp Rudolph Hess, the Commandant, ordered that a sign be put up which read *Arbeit Macht Frei*. This is a German slogan that meant that *if you work hard you will find freedom*. To the millions of Jews who wound up there, what the phrase really meant was ‘*we will work you mercilessly until you are useless to us, or you displease us in any way, then we will exterminate you.*’

Pharaoh might as well have put us such a sign over the work camps where he interred all foreigners in Egypt. His ethnocentric regime had enslaved all foreign populations. All races who had come to Egypt over the years for food or opportunity – or who had been conquered by Egypt’s armies – were now herded into squalid camps and required to provide the heaviest forms of manual labor for Egypt’s building projects. But in response to Moshe’s request that the Hebrews be allowed to take off work a few days to worship the God of their forefathers, Pharaoh decided to crack down on especially hard on the Hebrews. To make sure the maximum amount of suffering was inflicted on the Hebrews Pharaoh ordered that their respective daily work quotas not be reduced, but that the task of gathering straw for the brick-making industry be added to their burden. This guaranteed that every Hebrew slave would have to work as hard and long and fast as humanly possible – and beyond – and still fail miserably. He ordered that the new, impossible work requirements be enforced by the taskmasters with cruel force. Pharaoh wanted the Hebrews to have no time to think about such things as *feasts, or altars, or any god other than the one he envisions himself to be – much less ever leaving Egypt alive.*

Will Pharaoh’s intimidation tactics and witchcraft-like mind control strategies deter the Divine Courtier who is calling the people out to the desert to meet Him? Not one whit. A confrontation Pharaoh wants? A confrontation he shall have. And at the end of it all Pharaoh will know the Holy One. And he will *sh'ma* Him. And he will beg for mercy. And he will let Yisrael go.

The Bridegroom Speaks

The Holy appears to Moshe once more, and prophesies as follows:

Atah tir'eh asher e'eseh l'Far'oh

Now you will begin to see what I will do to Pharaoh.

ki v'yad chazakah yeshalchem

He will with the strength of his own hand send them out.

uv'yad chazakah yegarshem me'ar'tzo

And his own hand will forcibly expel them out of his land.

[Exodus 6:1]

The Bridegroom is one step ahead of Pharaoh. Intimidation is not a game He plays. Witchcraft does not work on Him. His Heart is unmoved. His Will is unshaken. His Plan is proceeding right on course. Pharaoh is on a shock collar with a very, very short leash. The Holy One will now *prove His worthiness as a Courtier* for the maiden Israel. He will prove it to the Friend of the Bridegroom. He will prove it to the friends of the Bride. He will prove it to the one the bride-to-be thinks of as her 'papa'. And most importantly, He will in the process prove it to the object of His affection as well. And before it is over, she will proclaim, as she was foreordained to before the foundation of the world:

***My beloved is ruddy and handsome -
the fairest among ten thousand. His head is like the finest gold;***

***His lips are lilies, dripping liquid myrrh.
His hands are rods of gold set with beryl.***

***His mouth is most sweet; Yes, he is altogether lovely.
This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!***

I am my Beloveds, and My Beloved is Mine!

[Song of Songs 5:10-16; 6:3]

Questions For Today's Study

1. Today's aliyah consists of a series of conversations. Moshe and Aharon converse with Pharaoh; Pharaoh converses with his taskmasters and foremen; the taskmasters and foremen converse with the people under their supervision; the Hebrew foremen converse with Pharaoh, then with Moshe and Aharon; and Moshe converses with the Holy One.

[A] When Moshe and Aharon go to Pharaoh for the first time, what is it specifically that they ask him for? [See verses 1 and 3 for a full answer].

[B] The word "go" is a predominant theme in today's aliyah. Do a study on each of the Hebrew verb translated as "go" in verses 1 and 2, as follows:

[i] In Strong's look up each of the Hebrew verb our text translates as "go";

[ii] Write the Hebrew verb in Hebrew letters with vowel points.

[iii] Write the transliteration and pronunciation of the words.

[iv] In Gesenius, find the *pa'al/qal* form of this verb (or as close to it

as you can get), and write the primary definition of the verb.

[v] Find at least two other usages of this verb in the Torah, two in the Psalms, and two in the prophetic writings, and discuss the meaning of the verb in each of those passages.

[vi] After reviewing the other notes of Gesenius regarding this verb, write a paragraph (at least three sentences) describing what you think Moshe and Aharon were asking for permission to do, considering what this Hebrew verb really means, and the shades of meaning and usage that pertain to the *pa'al/qal* form of the verb.

[C] What reason does Pharaoh give for denying the request of Moshe and Aharon in verse 1?

[D] What plan does Pharaoh employ to get the Hebrews' mind off 'go'-ing?

[E] How does the "Pharaoh solution" affect the Hebrew people and their resolve to "go"?

[F] How does the Holy One respond to Moshe's complaint that Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrews go despite Moshe and Aharon doing exactly what they were told?

[G] According to the Holy One, what, instead of Moshe's rod or Aharon's communication skills, will cause Pharaoh to let the people go?

2. In today's concluding aliyah of Haftarah ***Sh'mot*** the Holy One not only shows the young prophet *Yirmayahu* [Jeremiah] two visions – He even *interprets those visions for him!*

[A] Describe the two visions the Holy One gives to Yirmayahu in 1:11-16.

[B] What do you think are the interpretation and prophetic implications of the first vision?

[C] What do you think are the interpretation and prophetic implications of the second vision?

3. In Jeremiah 2:1-3 the Holy One gives Yirmayahu a specific message to speak "in the hearing of Y'rushalayim".

*The word of the Holy One came to me, saying,
Go, and cry in the ears of Y'rushalayim, saying,
Thus says the Holy One: I remember for you the kindness of your youth,
the love of your wedding day;
how you went after Me in the wilderness in a land that was not sown.
Yisra'el [was] holiness to the Holy One, the first fruits of His increase:
all who devour him shall be held guilty;
evil shall come on them, says the Holy One.*

[A] The Holy One compares the devotion and love the Hebrews felt for Him at the first to the love and devotion of a bride. Explain what you think it would

mean to be like a bride to the Holy One.

[B] According to verse 3 what does the Holy One say He did to the enemies of His people?

4. In today's concluding B'rit Chadasha aliyah Stefanos continues his inspired interpretation of Hebrew history to those who accused him of blaspheming Moshe and the Temple.

*They made a calf in those days, and brought a sacrifice to the idol,
and rejoiced in the works of their hands.
But the Holy One turned, and gave them up to serve the host of the sky*

[A] What does the first line of Acts 7:42 [*"The Holy One turned away from them and delivered them up to worship the starry host ..."*] mean to you?

[B] Is what Stephen said in verse 42 consistent with Yirmayahu 1:15-17? Explain your answer.

5. In subsequent verses *Stefanos* specifically discusses the *Mik'dash* [Temple] and its forerunner, the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle]. Remember that one of the accusations against him is that he "blasphemed" the Temple. For a century or so before Stefanos spoke these words, large groups of devout Jews had refused to participate in Temple worship, considering it totally polluted by a priesthood sold by Rome to the highest bidder, or as a political pay-off, rather than chosen according to Torah. Whole communities had moved away into the desert (such as the community at Qumran), and were awaiting a "*Teacher of Righteousness*" to come and drive out the "polluted" priests, cleanse the Temple, and rededicate it as a "house of prayer for all nations". [This helps explain the popularity of Yochanan the Immerser, and why everyone wanted to check him out].

Under these circumstances the Sanhedrin (made up largely of the "polluted" priesthood) had a very large "chip" on their shoulder, and considered any negative reference to Temple Ritual *as they practiced it* a threat to their continued employment. Read Stefanos' words concerning the Temple and its ritual carefully, and see if you find any basis in those words for an accusation that Stefanos was speaking against the Temple.

*Our fathers had the tent of the testimony in the wilderness,
even as he who spoke to Moshe commanded him to make it
according to the pattern that he had seen;
which also our fathers, in their turn, brought in with Y'hoshua
when they entered into the possession of the nations,
whom the Holy One drove out before the face of our fathers,
to the days of David, who found favor in the sight of the Holy One
and asked to find a habitation for the God of Ya`akov.*

*But Shlomo built him a house. However, Ha-Elyon doesn't dwell in temples made with hands,
as the prophet says, 'heaven is my throne, and the eretz a footstool for my feet.*

*What kind of house will you build me?' says the Holy One;
'Or what is the place of my rest? Didn't my hand make all these things?'*

[A] What does Stefanos say was the source of the design and function of the *Mish'kan* [Tabernacle]?

[B] What does Stefanos say was the source of the design and function of the *Mik'dash* [Temple]?

6. Finally Stefanos reaches the “application” part of his sermon and specifically relates the Scriptures and covenant history he has been reciting to “the council” [i.e. the Sanhedrin] which was conducting his trial. His words are not meek and mild. They sound like a prophet of the TaNaKh – or Yeshua with a braided cord in His Hand cleansing the Temple.

*You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,
you always resist the Ruach HaKodesh! As your fathers did, so you do.
Which of the prophets didn't your fathers persecute?
They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One,
of whom you have now become betrayers and murderers.*

You received the Torah as it was ordained by angels, and didn't keep it!"

[A] List the sins Stefanos attributes to the Sanhedrin.

[B] What do you think was the “root” problem that had led the Sanhedrin astray over the centuries?

[C] Stefanos specifically refers to the Torah in verse 53. He uses a verb our English Bibles translate as “keep” to describe what the people of the Sanhedrin – and their fathers - had failed to do regarding the Torah. Remember, Stefanos was speaking to Hebrew-speakers, and expressing Hebrew concepts. What Hebrew word is usually translated into English as “keep”? Look up that Hebrew word in Gesenius, and then describe what you think Stephen was accusing the men of the Sanhedrin of failing to do.

7. Stefanos’ *d'rash* [Torah teaching] is abruptly stopped by a violent reaction to his words. A riot ensues, and an illegal lynching-by-stoning (only Rome had the authority to put to death someone within Rome’s sphere of rule). Here are the details.

*Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart,
and they gnashed at him with their teeth.
But he, being full of the Ruach HaKodesh,
looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God,
and Yeshua standing on the right hand of the Holy One,
and said, "**Behold, I see the heavens opened,
and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!**"*

*But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed at him with one accord.
They threw him out of the city, and stoned him.*

The witnesses placed their garments at the feet of a young man named Sha'ul.

*They stoned Stefanos as he called out, saying, "Lord Yeshua, receive my Spirit!"
He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, don't hold this sin against them!"
When he had said this, he fell asleep. Sha'ul was consenting to his death.*

[A] What was it specifically that Stefanos said which first caused the men of the Sanhedrin to “lose it” as described in verse 54?

[B] After the men of the Sanhedrin “lost it”, and began “gnashing their teeth at Stefanos”, he sealed his own doom by telling of a vision he saw while they were yelling and screaming. What did he tell them he saw, and why did that make them want to stone him?

[C] Why did the men drag Stefanos outside the city to stone him?

8. It was this event – the stoning of Stefanos – which set off the “*great persecution*” of followers of Messiah in Y’rushalayim. Note, of course, that the Holy One did not consider Stefanos’ stoning, or the “*great persecution*” a great tragedy. That is because He sees earthly suffering and even death, from a Divine perspective, and knows that it is only for a moment.

Moreover, the Holy One prepares his people for persecution and even death – that of course is the point of the narrative of Stefanos’ vision at the point of death. Precious in the sight of the Holy One is the death of his saints. The Holy One uses our willingness to lay down our lives, if required, to advance His plan to reconcile men to Him, and return them to the Garden. Note for instance that it was because of the “*great persecution*” following Stefanos’ death that the word of Messiah’s coming was spread throughout the world – rather than being contained within Y’rushalayim. Let’s read the story.

*A great persecution arose against the assembly that was in Y’rushalayim in that day.
They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Y’hudah and Shomron,
except for the apostles. Devout men buried Stefanos, and lamented greatly over him.
But Sha'ul ravaged the assembly, entering into every house,
and dragged both men and women off to prison.
Therefore those who were scattered abroad went around preaching the word.*

[A] When the persecution of Messiah’s *talmidim* began in Y’rushalayim [Jerusalem], to what locations were those who *sh’ma’d* Yeshua’s Torah teaching initially scattered?

[B] The concluding verse of this aliyah indicates that wherever the Hebrews who followed Messiah were scattered, they “preached the word” [NIV rendering]. How do you think this message compared to the message Yirmayahu was told to speak “in the hearing of Y’rushalayim”, in today’s haftarah?

*May you follow the Holy One through the desert, through a land not sown,
just as willingly and passionately as you follow Him
through the green pastures and still waters.*

The Rabbi's Son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 18:14-19

*He sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
Yes, great lightning bolts, and routed them.
Then the channels of waters appeared,
The foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, Oh Holy One,
At the blast of the breath of your nostrils.
He sent from on high. He took me. He drew me out of many waters.
He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me;
for they were too mighty for me.
They came on me in the day of my calamity,
but the Holy One was my support.
He brought me forth also into a large place.
He delivered me, because he delighted in me.*