

# *Shiur L'Yom Shishi<sup>1</sup>*

[Friday's Study]

**READINGS:**      *Torah Va'era:*                      **Exodus 9:8-35**  
                         *Haftarah:*                                      **Ezekiel 29:17-21**  
                         *B'rit Chadasha:*                      **Revelation 15:5 - 16:11**

*For this reason I have allowed you to remain ....*

[Exodus 9:16a]

**Today's Meditation is Psalm 18:30-36;**

**This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition # 11, *Et-Tzemach David* [Sprout/Outgrowth of David]**

*Vaya'as Adonai et-ha-davar hazeh mimochorat* – Then on the morrow the Holy One did what He said ... *vayamot kol mikneh Mitzrayim* – and all the Egyptians' domesticated animals died. **Exodus 9:6.**

*Zeman sheibuteinu b'Mitzrayim* - our appointed season of captivity in Egypt – is rapidly drawing to a close. The Egyptian people want us deported YESTERDAY. The magicians of Pharaoh's court have seen the handwriting on the wall since *Ot ha-chinim*. The viziers and advisors of the Egyptian 'Cabinet' have recently begun to see the light as well. Now it is pretty much just Pharaoh who stands in the way of the freedom train, and his days of opposition are numbered as well. Soon his thin façade of occult insight, pseudo-intellect, political power, and strong-hand governance will dissolve into a humiliating puddle of raw emotions. In a fit of childish rage he will issue an expulsion decree, permanently banning Moshe and Aharon from his courts and ordering us to leave his land immediately and never return. He was not the first to do so; he will by no means be the last. That is why it is always a good idea for Hebrews to keep a 'go bag' packed. We have learned how to make a get-a-way – and to be like the cat who, though cruelly tossed about, somehow always manages to land on its feet.

Don't panic, Beloved; neither be offended, outraged, or distraught. Never allow a victim mentality to set in. Resist the temptation to lapse into *suffering messiah syndrome*. We just have somewhere else to be – it is as simple as that. Just smile, and remember what Yosef said: *Though you meant this for evil against me, the Eternal One turned it into good ....* **Genesis 50:20.**

So, expect no relief from pagan rulers, nor favor – or even civility – from their brainwashed minions. Labor under no illusions of welcome, delusions of acceptance, fantasies of belonging, or vain imaginations of support. Today may or

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may not be a Mandatory Departure Day. Soldiers may or may not be dispatched to pound down our doors – or shoot up our Sabbath gatherings – within the next 24 hours. But such a day is definitely coming ... and will be here SOONER RATHER THAN LATER! We are here to offer *shalom* to all houses and nations that we enter; but if the residents reject that offer, all we can do is shake off the dust of that place from our feet on our way out, and whisper: “*So be it - but know this, that the kingdom of the Eternal One came very close to you.*” Luke 10:5-12; Matthew 10:11-15.

***We Have Somewhere Else – Somewhere BETTER – to Be,  
and SomeOne Else – SomeOne more Worthy - to Be With***

You see, Beloved, the Holy One is not nearly as concerned with the attitudes of the Pharaohs of this world – or their minions - as he is with how well we represent His Heart. Any time He wanted to, you see, the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth could have transported us out of Egypt, without Pharaoh even knowing what He had done, much less having anything to say about it. Or He could hit Egypt so hard with one powerful blow that Pharaoh’s resistance would collapse in a milli-second. But He knows that this has to be handled delicately – so that we will be every bit as ready to leave as Pharaoh is to get rid us. He is therefore exercising the utmost of restraint. He is not hitting Egypt with anything close to His *best shot*. He is *shadow-boxing – pulling punches* right and left. He does not delight in human misery. He does not inflict rushed, premature judgment. He knows very, very well how *human intellectual and emotional inertia* – what some might call stiff-neckedness - works. He understands the deep affection that fallen human beings always have for *the familiar* – even when the *status quo* to which they cling is narcissistic, abusive and dangerously toxic. As the Creator of the human species, He is fully aware how much we tend to fear the unknown – preferring even the ‘evil we know’ over anything unseen or unfamiliar. He knows also that we Hebrews have been seduced by, and have become full-on addicted to, Egypt’s *leeks and onions* and *hard work and lashes*. He knows we have been effectively seduced by Egypt’s *occult arts, hyped-up religion, and false gods*. He knows that we occasionally long to dabble in/experiment with this Chamite culture’s dark energy – especially its passion for fleshly sensuality, gross materiality, sexual perversion, pseudo-intellectual ‘knowledge’, population control, and narcissism. So, the Holy One is dealing with our addiction the best way possible. He is slowly, methodically making the land of Mitzrayim odious to us. He is taking away its allure. He is defanging its seductivity. He wants to diminish our sense of belonging in the land of the Pyramids and amongst the people of idols like the Sphinx to the point that we will *be on board to leave, and both physically and emotionally prepared to head off into the vast unknown* when Pharaoh posts his *notice to vacate*.

So ... how much do you still love Egypt, Beloved? Virtually every aspect of Creation seems to be turning on this little piece of *terra firma*. No one has ever seen anything remotely like this. Scientists have no explanation for it. Secular governments have no programs to even ameliorate its effects, much less fix it. Practitioners of the occult are scratching their heads in bewilderment. Seven years of famine seem like a cakewalk in comparison. But Pharaoh is stubborn – so the people of Egypt are just going to have to batten down the hatches, ride it like a great wave, and see where it goes. It is as if we are living through a science fiction movie – or an episode of ‘The Twilight Zone’.

It all started with something macabre happening to Egypt’s *water*. In an instant every drop of exposed H<sub>2</sub>O throughout the country turned into blood. The water did not merely change due to interaction with red algae. It did not just take on a reddish coloration. Instead something – or was it Someone – interacted with trillions of water droplets on a molecular level. Each droplet actually *became* blood the Nile became a swirling, foaming, toxic cesspool of plasma, platelets, erythrocytes and leukocytes. But alas, that was just the beginning. Shortly after the blood dried up, the creatures that ordinarily made the river and its associated bottomland their home began to flee their natural habitat in droves. Hippos and crocodiles, monitor lizards and snapping turtles, snakes and frogs, invaded the nearby towns, farms, and villages, and cities. Creatures from the swamp took over every roadway, every garden, every house, every business, every army barracks, every palace, every storehouse, and every granary. After those creatures died off, the focus turned to the soil in which our food supplies grow. Before our eyes every square millimeter of topsoil of Egypt transformed into lice. This wasn’t an invasion – it was a transformation. Lice did not just come upon the land – the molecules of soil actually became lice. Every square inch of sand or dust in Egypt was affected by this phenomenon. Egyptians could not walk outside without stepping on these creatures. They could not stand without being attacked and bitten by them.

Hmmmmn. Could all this be the result of ecological mismanagement – *i.e.* was it due to human-influenced *climate change*? Is it part of a process of *evolution* – *i.e.* a calling forth of the animal instinct in man? Can it be blamed on the presence of foreigners – especially the HEBREWS - in the land? Can we blame it on corporate greed? On government intrusiveness? Or maybe – just maybe - could it be that what is going on is bigger than any of those things? Could it possibly be that what is going on around us is something of *Biblical proportions* – something planned by the Creator of the Universe from the foundation of the world, for purposes that will only be understood by those with eyes to see beyond the temporal and with ears that can *sh’ma* beyond the political spin and the philosophical/ideological/religious

rhetoric of the day?

### ***Stepping Back, and Taking a Broader Look At What Is Happening***

The situation certainly bears watching. As stated above, things are definitely getting intense in the land in which the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov are beginning to hear the Holy One's '***Lech Lecha***' call. The *status quo* around them is convulsing. Food sources are contaminated. Supplies are dwindling. The economy – and for that matter the whole of social order - is hanging by a thread. Nerves are on a razor's edge. Safety, security, and survival have displaced building store cities at the top rung of political and familial priorities. Race-carding and race-baiting are running rampant. Old ideological differences are widening into polar extremes. The prevailing feeling is *helplessness*. The prevailing attitude is *fear*. The prevailing emotion is *outrage*. The prevailing tone of voice is *sarcasm*. The prevailing forms of rhetoric are suddenly *posturing, name-calling, derogatory labeling, blaming, shaming, and incitement to violence in the name of 'resistance'*. Political discourse has turned so nasty that it has lost any semblance of credibility – except for the radical, deceived fringe on both/all sides who willingly believe and repeat whatever filth they hear spouted by their preferred set of demagogues. Social discourse has begun to devolve into whining, soapbox climbing, ivory tower judging, and profane ranting. Woes are being spoken. Fingers are getting pointed. The ideological, philosophical religious culture is reeling. The political mood is getting volatile. The balance of social influence is shifting. A great wealth transfer is occurring. Even yet, except for a healthy dose of attention-getting squeamishness, discomfort, inconvenience, and resultant anxiety, not a single human being has been harmed thus far in the unfolding of this great drama of redemption.

While human lives have been spared, things have not gone as well for the animal population of Egypt. Recently, domestic livestock have suddenly started dropping like flies. The cattle in the fields succumbed first. Then the horses in Pharaoh's stables started to show symptoms. Next to be hit were the donkeys, the camels, and the oxen that the Egyptian people – and, of course, their slaves – once used as beasts of burden to complete Pharaoh's projects. The plague also devastated the flocks of sheep and goats. It hit all species, in all provinces of Egypt - except one. In the ancestral Hebrew camps in Goshen, all was well. As Torah reports it: ... ***of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died.*** Exodus 9:6. Will Pharaoh see the handwriting on the wall? Will he relent, and repent, and loosen the oppressive bonds under which he has placed the Hebrews? No, not at all. Pharaoh will respond to his country's latest loss – the loss of all the livestock won for Egypt by

Yosef near the end of Sefer B'reshit<sup>2</sup> - by making his own heart *kaved* – i.e. by letting rebellious pride turn his heart heavy, insensitive, and unresponsive. And Pharaoh will not – no, not by any means – let even a single slave go. Exodus 9:7. Not yet, at least. ‘Skin for skin’, did I hear someone say?

### ***L’Dor v’Dor***

The traditional *Haggadah* that has been read at Passover for centuries contains within its many pages the following emphatic statement: ***B’chol dor v’dor*** – *Always, from generation to generation - chayav adam lirot et atzmo k’ilu hu yatza mimitzrayim* - every man is to view himself as if he personally came forth out of Egypt.

The point of this statement is that the narrative of the Exodus – including the narrative of the ‘plagues’ – is not something we are to look at as *mere history*. The Exodus narrative is not to be mere fodder for storytelling – much less *moralizing* or *sermonizing*. It is instead something we are each to take great pains to *climb into*, and strive to *personally experience*, as if we were there in the midst of it as it was happening. We are not to look at or think of the events leading up to and culminating in the *Exodus* as something that happened to ‘them’ – i.e. to some faceless, nameless souls who lived many thousands of years ago whose names we do not know and whose cries for deliverance we can scarcely *imagine* much less meaningfully echo.

*L’dor v’dor* [i.e. from generation to generation] we are instead called upon to consider the events leading up to and culminating in the Exodus as something real and fresh in our minds because it has happened to us, and to our children, in our lifetimes. But even that is not all. We are also called upon to consider the events leading up to and culminating in the Exodus as something that is even right now happening to us and to our loved ones and to all sons and daughters of the covenant the Holy One made with Avraham, natural and engrafted, at our ‘such a time as this’. And there is still more. *L’dor v’dor* means that in addition to the foregoing we are all also called upon to consider the events leading up to and culminating in the Exodus as *something that is yet going to happen to us or to our descendants in all its fullness again* in the not-too-distant future.

Generation by generation. Family line by family line. Household by household. Son of the Covenant by son of the Covenant. Princess of the Kingdom by princess of the Kingdom. This is our DNA, our identity, our mission, our testimonial, and our destiny. This is not ‘their’ story; it is OUR LIFE. It is branded on our souls in

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<sup>2</sup> Torah tells us in Genesis 47:15-17 that when, in the latter years of the 7-year famine, the currency of Egypt failed, all the Egyptians came to Yosef and said, “Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed”. Then Yosef said: “Give your livestock, and I will give you bread for your livestock, if the money is gone”. So they brought their livestock to Yosef ....

indelible ink. We can never stop re-living it. And why on earth would we want to?

### ***The Call to Personally Experience the Exodus in 'Real Time'***

It is my wish for you who read these studies that you really, really, really, know [Hebrew *yada*] the deliverance of the Holy One which this Book of Torah is introducing to us – not *vicariously or in a literary or academic sense*, Beloved, but UP CLOSE and FIRS<sup>T</sup>HAND. It is the desire of my heart that you never again think of the Great Deliverance of the Holy One for His Beloved academically or theologically, but that you FEEL IT WITH EVERY FIBER OF YOUR BEING. It is my hope that you never again look at the events leading up to and including the Exodus *from the perspective of a spectator or observer*, but that you WALK THEM OUT IN WONDER AND AWE AS ONE PERSONALLY TOUCHED BY THE POWER OF GOD AND PERSONALLY DELIVERED FROM BONDAGE TO A NEW AND WONDERFUL LIFE AS THE HOLY ONE'S *AM SEGULAH* [*i.e.* His *specially treasured possession people*].

If therefore in the course of reading this week's series of *Rabbi's son* studies you sometimes feel as if you are right there with Moshe as he stands *before a burning bush*, or *before the elders of Israel*, or *before Pharaoh and his officials*, then the author has accomplished his purpose. If you felt an *involuntary temblor* run through your soul as you read about the terror an Egyptian family felt as their home was taken over by swamp creatures, or as they did their best to soothe the burning and itching of their children's lice bites, etc., then this writer has done his job.

The events of this week's parsha are a *big part* of the Exodus narrative. I have therefore tried this week to make the events about which we studied seem REAL and MEANINGFUL. I know that no matter how hard I may have tried I have at best been only partially successful. I know that yet two things are needed to complete the process. First of all, of course, I know the endeavor is totally dependent upon the anointing of the *Ruach HaQodesh* Whose task and great joy it is to quicken the words of Torah in your spirits. Secondly, even with the anointing of the Ruach I know that for this endeavor to succeed in its fullest measure *you the reader must cooperate*.

This experience is not about me and about what I desire. It is instead about YOU and about what YOU desire. You must, if you are to experience the Exodus personally as is your birthright, *participate actively* – and sometimes *aggressively* - in the process. I call upon you therefore as this week draws to a close to make a very real effort to 'climb in' to the final aliyah of *Va'era*. I exhort you to close your eyes and imagine yourself as '*there*', and *personally affected* – when in the course of today's readings the Holy One shows forth *otot* [signs] number 6 and



number 7 of His Right Hand unto Pharaoh on the one hand, and unto the slave population which have recently taken refuge in Goshen under the shelter of the Holy One's Wings on the other hand.

This will be a good 'warm-up' for next week – which, I assure you, *you do not want to either miss or experience as only a passive observer*. For now however, I hear the bell ringing. It is time for round 6 of a scheduled 10-round 'fight to the finish' between the God of the Hebrews and the gods - and the obstinate Pharaoh - of Egypt.

***Ot #6: Ot Ha-Sh'chin***  
*[The Sign of Skin Lesions]*

Today as our aliyah begins we see the Holy One telling Moshe and Aharon to do a "new thing". Rather than hold forth the rod to bring about the next *ot* [sign], the Holy One instructs them to:

***Kechu lachem melo chofneichem piach kivshan***

*Take to yourself handfuls of ashes of the furnace,*

***uz'rako Moshe ha-shamaymah l'eynei Far'oh***

*and let Moshe sprinkle it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh.*

***V'hayah l'avak al kol-eretz Mitzrayim***

*It will become small dust over all the land of Mitzrayim*

***v'hayah al ha-adam v'al ha-behemah***

*and it will rest upon men and on animals*

***l'sh'chin pore'ach avabu'ot b'chol eretz Mitzrayim***

*For lesions, blisters, and running sores through all the land of Mitzrayim."*

[Exodus 9:8-9]

Did you catch that? The Holy One just told Moshe and Aharon to release a form of *biological warfare* on Pharaoh and his people. What *toxic form of ash* was to be released by these men into the air "*in the sight of Pharaoh*"?

The Holy One told Moshe and Aharon where to get the ash – from "*the furnace*". The Hebrew word translated "furnace" is *kiv'shan*<sup>3</sup>. It's first usage is found in Genesis 19:28:

*He [Avraham] looked toward S'dom and `Amorah,  
and toward all the land of the plain, and looked,*

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<sup>3</sup> Kivshan is *kaf, beit/veit, shin, nun sofit*. Strong's word, #3536, it is pronounced *keeve-shawn'*. The *shoresh*, or verb root, of this Hebrew word is *k'bash, kaf, beit, shin*, Strong's word #H3533, pronounced *kaw-bawsh'*, and meaning *to subject, subdue, force, keep under, bring into bondage*. This verb root finds its first usage in Genesis 1:28, when the Holy One blessed man not only with the ability to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, but also with the ability to *k'bash* [subdue] it, and to take dominion over everything He had created.

*and saw that the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace/kiln [kiv'shan].*

So this is not the first time the Holy One has practiced toxic warfare. The first time the Holy One used the fallout from the explosions of the pitch and bitumen deposits around S'dom and G'morrah. This time he uses the ashes *from Pharaoh's palace furnace*.

### ***What Is So Toxic About a Little Furnace Ash?***

What, however, was so toxic about these particular ashes that Moshe and Aharon threw into the air? What had burned in “*the furnace*” that was “*in Pharaoh's sight*” – namely, that was located at his personal palace? Don't forget, Pharaoh's palace was the “ground zero” of this series of disasters. Every plague was centered there, emanated from there, and was at its most potent force there. Was the furnace not fed in these days by blood-filled water jars, decaying frogs and other ‘swamp creatures’, dead lice, the carcasses of invading wild beasts that had been slain, and dead camels, donkeys, oxen, and sheep that had recently succumbed to the livestock epidemic? Was it perhaps *the residue of all the plagues* the Holy One had brought upon Pharaoh that had burned in his palace furnace? Would those ashes have been toxic enough to cause skin eruptions on people all across Egypt - except Goshen, of course? Perhaps. But let's consider another possibility. Remember that the Holy One dwells *outside of time* – in the realm of *eternity*. He can reach into our world of time, and simultaneously reach into the world of our *ancestors*, on the one hand, or our *grandchildren* on the other hand. Did He perhaps reach back to the time of S'dom and G'morrah and place handfuls of that ash into Pharaoh's furnace? OR did He perhaps reach forward into the future – to 1942 through 1945 – and take handfuls of ash from the Nazi “furnaces” at Auschwitz and Dachau, etc., and place them in Pharaoh's furnace?

***Vayikchu et-piach ha-kivshan vaya'amdu lifnei Far'oh***

*They [Moshe and Aharon] took the furnace soot and stood before Pharaoh.*

***vayizrok oto Moshe ha-shamaymah vayehi sh'chin***

*Moshe threw it up in the air, and it caused a rash,*

***avabu'ot pore'ach b'adam uv'behemah***

*which broke into boils, in man and beasts.*

***V'lo yachlu ha-chartumim la'amod lifnei Moshe***

*The occultist/magicians could not stand before Moshe*

***mipnei ha-sh'chin***

*as a result of the rash,*

***ki-hayah ha-sh'chin b'chartumim uv'chol-Mitzrayim***

*since the rash had attacked the occultists/magicians [as it had] the rest of Egypt.*

**[Exodus 9:10-11]**

The use of the ash of dead creatures in bringing about skin lesions should, of



course, be contrasted with the Holy One's "better" plan. Torah tells us in Numbers 19 of a better use of ashes of flesh – the making of the waters of cleansing with the ashes of the red heifer. Which way do you prefer *your* ashes, Dear Reader?

### ***Looking 'Back to the Future'— To the 'Foul and Loathsome Sore' of Revelation 16***

I have suggested at several points in the studies the past two weeks that the substance of what we are reading about in the opening chapters of *Sefer Sh'mot* is as much the future as it is the past. It is time to get a little more graphic with this message. Did you know that the plague of skin lesions described in today's aliyah will have a 'bookend' companion in the end of days? Let me explain what I mean. In the Book of Revelation we are told:

*So the first [angel] went and poured out his bowl upon the earth,  
and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast  
and those who worshiped his image.*

[Revelation 16:2]

Now, with this in mind do you remember how the author of Torah took special care to tell us that the lesions of Exodus 9 first erupted on and disabled and shamed the sorcerers in Pharaoh's court? Specifically we were told that: *the magicians could not stand before Moshe because of the lesions, for the lesions were on the magicians and on all the Egyptians.* Exodus 9:11. Why did we need to know this detail? What relevance is it to us that the sorcerers of Pharaoh's court were struck first? Has it crossed your mind that perhaps Torah might just be giving us a clue to help us identify the 'men who had the mark of the beast' who will be the first to receive the 'foul and loathsome sore' in the time of the bowl judgments of Revelation?

### ***The Biggest Mystery of All – the Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart***

The Holy One has of course been showing forth His awesome power all this week. His purpose in doing so is NOT to humiliate Pharaoh. Pharaoh is after all doing a first-class job of humiliating himself. Pharaoh's responses to the *otot* [*i.e.* signs that confirm and testify of the continuance of a covenant] the Holy One has revealed so far have been *irrational* and *self-defeating*. He has proven himself to be ... well, a *first-class fool*<sup>4</sup>. He has proven himself both *arrogant*<sup>5</sup> and *uncaring* beyond belief. He

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<sup>4</sup> One is reminded when considering Pharaoh's responses to the Holy One's words and actions of Proverbs 14:16, which reads [in the KJV]: "*A wise [man] feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.*" See also Proverbs 17:10: "*A reproof impacts a wise man than a hundred stripes impacts a fool.*" And see Proverbs 23:9: "*Speak not in the ears of a fool: for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.*"

<sup>5</sup> Pharaoh's response to the Holy One's words and His deeds epitomizes arrogance, and brings to mind Proverbs 16:18: *Pride [goes] before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.* One is also reminded of Proverbs 6:16-19: *There are six things which the Holy One hates; Yes, seven which are an abomination to him:*

has proven himself *a liar*. And what is worse, with his response to the last two *otot* [the ‘swarms’ and the livestock epidemic], he has gone past the *point of no return* – the point of *no possibility of teshuvah*. There is indeed such a point. Always, always keep that in mind. And never, never approach, much less cross, that line.

### ***Pharaoh and the ‘Point of No Return’***

In today’s aliyah instead of reading that *Pharaoh* hardened his [own] heart as we did in Exodus 8:15, 8:32, and 9:7 we read that now, once Pharaoh has gone beyond the point of no return, *the Holy One takes over the process* and becomes the causative agent for hardening Pharaoh’s heart even further. Here is how Torah records it:

***V’yechazek Adonai et-lev Pharaoh***

*And the Holy One hardened the heart of Pharaoh,*

***v’lo shama aleihem ka’asher diber Adonai el-Moshe***

*and he didn’t listen to them - as the Holy One had prophesied to Moshe.*

[Exodus 9:12]

Pharaoh has gone past the ‘point of no return’. What was that point for Pharaoh? That is not specifically stated, of course. I personally believe his point of no return may have come in connection with the *ot ha-arov* [sign of the swarms]. Remember that after both *ot ha-tz’farde’im* [the sign of the swamp creatures] and after *ot ha-arov* [the sign of ‘the swarms’] Pharaoh had promised – if Moshe would just pray to the Holy One to stop the ‘plague’ - that he would let the people go and worship the Holy One [albeit with limitations]. See **Exodus 8:8, 8:25, 28**. Then not once but twice, as soon as the Holy One lifted the ‘plague’, Pharaoh shamelessly *renege*d on his *promise*.

He himself had set the terms and he himself had made the promises. And yet when the crisis passed he *just laughed it off*. It was now very obvious – to everyone. Pharaoh was *not a man who could be trusted*. He had – and would never relinquish - *evil intentions* against the Hebrew people. And it was also very obvious with anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear that Pharaoh viewed – and employed – *words* not as a God-given medium for making binding commitments and covenants but merely as *tools he could use to manipulate people*. Pharaoh *used words*, you see, the way his magicians used *magic potions*. Pharaoh practiced *flagrant deceit* against the Holy One’s people – and for that matter even his own family members

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- *Haughty eyes,*
  - *a lying tongue,*
  - *Hands that shed innocent blood;*
  - *A heart that devises wicked schemes,*
  - *Feet that are swift in running to mischief,*
  - *A false witness who utters lies,*
  - *And he who sows discord among brothers.”*

and countrymen. He was *a master of spin*. He was a *sorcerer of disinformation*. He was the *author of confusion*. With a straight face, a carefully chosen turn of phrase, and an elegant word from his well-schooled tongue he had *raised the people's hopes time and time again* –only to cruelly dash them to pieces without a second thought.

### ***Hit Me With Your Best Shot!***

Using his own people as human shields, Pharaoh had basically said to the Holy One through Moshe: *'go ahead, hit me with your best shot!'* He treated human life almost as cavalierly as he treated promises to the Holy One. And that was when he crossed the 'point of no return' with the Holy One. But be not deceived, Pharaoh. The Creator of Heaven and Earth is not – cannot be - mocked. You had your chances – and you rejected them at every turn. Over and over again you have hardened your heart – not just toward the Holy One, which was forgivable, but also against the apple of His eye, which was not. You made your heart *chazak* multiple times – adding layer upon layer of self-justifying lies to your fantasy of control. Then you took the next step, and made your heart *kaved* – weighty; you actually assigned more value and weight to your own selfish and ethnicity-obsessed will than the will and glorious redemptive, restorative plan of the Creator of the Heavens and the earth. *Rav lachem!* You have gone way too far, done far too much. The die is now cast. Your fate is now sealed. That which you have sown you will now also *reap*. Brace yourself - the Holy One is the Lord of the Harvest – and He can play your game better than you can imagine.

When the Holy One responds to a hardening of the heart in it is an intensely sobering and downright frightening thing. One can know the Holy One and walk with Him all one's life and still shudder at the stark finality of it. Even Avraham, the 'friend of God', asked incredulously when time came for Sodom to be destroyed: *Will not the King of all the earth do justice' - 'Will you really destroy the righteous with the wicked?* But the Holy One knows *two corollaries of truth* that our flesh resists. The first is that *unrepentant evil absolutely must be judged*. The second is that *mercy without bounds is not truly mercy at all*. As the sages of Israel teach: *"To be merciful to the cruel is to be cruel to the merciful."* After what Pharaoh has done to his slave population, and after he has refused opportunity after opportunity of, and twice 'faked', repentance by lying to the *Ruach HaQodesh*, for the Holy One *not* to complete the humiliation of Pharaoh by bringing down his kingdom would cause much more suffering – not just to the Hebrews but to all humanity [including Pharaoh's own people] – than would the final series of *otot* the Holy One has planned.

### ***Escalation Time: The Holy One's Blunt Warning***

So the Holy One sends Moshe back to Pharaoh. Here is the message the Holy One

has Moshe deliver:

***Shalach et-ami veyah'vduni***

*Send my people out and let them serve Me.*

***Ki bapa'am hazot ani shole'ach et-kol-magefotai el-libcha***

*This time, I am prepared to send all My catastrophes against your very heart.*

***uva'avadeicha uve'ameicha***

*[They will strike] your officials and your people,*

***ba'avur teida ki eyn kamoni b'chol ha-aretz***

*so that you will know that there is none like Me in all the world.*

**[Exodus 9:13-14]**

If you thought things were bad before Pharaoh, *you haven't seen anything yet.* With surgical precision, according to a perfectly timed plan, the Holy One is about to dismantle the most powerful kingdom on the face of the earth. Multiple chances to repent and cooperate have been afforded. The response in each case has been *haughtiness* and *outright lies*. From now on Pharaoh the Holy One will strike *at your heart*. And the only reason you will be left alive – the **ONLY** reason, Pharaoh – is so you can live to see the full measure of the judgment your attitude and actions deserve. For the Holy One gave this message to Pharaoh through Moshe and Aharon:

***Ki atah shalachtu et-yadi va'ach oteicha v'et-ameicha badaver***

*I could have unleashed My power, killing you and your people with an epidemic*

***v'tikached min ha-aretz***

*and you would have been obliterated from the world.*

***V'ulam ba'avur zot he'emadeticha***

*The only reason I let you survive,*

***ba'avur har'oteicha et-kochi***

*was to show you My strength*

***ul'ma'an saper shemi b'chol ha-aretz***

*so that My name will be discussed all over the world.*

**[Exodus 9:15-16]**

There are, you see, some fates that are far worse than death. Ring the bell. Let round 7 begin.

**Ot #7:**

***Ha-Barad Kaved*** *[The Sign of the Glorious Hail]*

The boils his people suffered as the Holy One scattered the dust from Pharaoh's furnace across the country broke into blisters and formed running sores, incapacitating the entire Egyptian population. But that did not seem to faze Pharaoh in the slightest. He begged no reprieve. And none was afforded. But

what WAS afforded was a new kind of warning – for a new kind of ‘plague’. This one you see will, unlike the plagues which preceded it actually *endanger human lives*. Hence the Holy One provides a special warning and a special opportunity for all who *sh’ma*, to take precautionary measures for the preservation of life.

***Hineni mam’tir ka’et machar barad kaved me’od***

*Take note: at this time tomorrow, I will bring a very heavy hail.*

***asher lo-hayah chamohu b’Mitzrayim***

*Never before in Egypt, since the day it was founded,*

***L’min-ha-yom hivasdah v’ad-atah***

*For all time there has not been anything like it.*

***V’atah sh’lach ha’ez et-mik’neicha***

*Now send word and make arrangements to shelter your livestock*

***v’et kol-asher lecha b’sadeh***

*and everything else you have in the field.*

***kol-ha-adam v’ha-behemah asher-yimatze v’sadeh***

*Any man or beast who remains in the field,*

***v’lo ye’asef ha-baitah v’yarad aleihem ha-barad v’meitu***

*and does not come indoors, will be pelted by the hail and will die.’*

[Exodus 9:18-19]

The Holy One has previously set His people apart such that the destructive aspects of the *otot* did not fall upon them. But never before has the Holy One specifically afforded *the Egyptian people* – or indeed anyone other than a physical descendant of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya’akov - a means of protection and deliverance. This is radical. The Holy One is saying<sup>6</sup> – even to these gentiles – even, in fact, to those who are the enemies of his people [Pharaoh’s taskmasters, etc.], “*if you will fear Me, and will sh’ma My words, you will be saved, and all your houses!*” Two later writers will be moved by the *Ruach Qodesh* to express the same truth this way: ***God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble.***” Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6.

May all who have ears to hear *sh’ma* the warning of a merciful God Who does not desire that anyone perish.

Miracle of miracles, the message gets through. Those with ears to *sh’ma* – even among the Egyptians - do *sh’ma* and are delivered. Only those who refuse to *sh’ma* suffer the consequences of this *ot*. For in a passage which foreshadows the salvation which will be wrought by the Holy One for gentiles in all generations who ‘*fear the Holy One*’ and ‘*sh’ma the Holy One’s Word*’ we read that:

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<sup>6</sup> Please forgive the literary paraphrase that follows. The purpose for these paraphrases is not to add to the text, but to reveal truths that are, at least in English, hidden there.

***H'yare et-d'var Adonai me'avdei Pharaoh***

*Fear of the Holy One's Word fell on some of Pharaoh's servants*

***henis et-avadav v'et-mikneihu el ha-batim***

*and they made their slaves and livestock flee indoors.*

***V'asher lo-sam libo el-d'var Adonai***

*But those who did not fear God's word*

***vaya'azov et-avadav v'et-mikneihu basadeh***

*left their slaves and livestock in the field*

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***Vayach ha-barad b'chol eretz Mitzrayim***

*The hail then fell throughout all Egypt*

***et kol-asher b'sadeh***

*upon everything in the field*

***me'adam v'ad-behemah v'et kol-esev ha-sadeh hikah***

*man and animal who was outdoors*

***ha-barad v'et-kol-etz ha-sadeh shiber***

*The hail destroyed all the outdoor plants, and smashed every tree in the fields.*

[Exodus 9:19-20, 25]

Some of Pharaoh's people heeded the warning. And this struck a sword of division right through Egypt. No longer was Egypt unified under Pharaoh. Score one *direct hit* for the Holy One - before the next round even started.

But then the bell rings, and round 7 begins. Here is how Torah records it:

***v'Adonai natan kolot uvarad***

*And the Holy One caused it to thunder and hail on the land of Mitzrayim.*

***vatihalach-aish ar'tzah***

*And streaming fire streaked on the land*

***vayamter Adonai barad al-eretz Mitzrayim***

*And the Holy One sent hail on all the land of Egypt.*

***Vayehi varad v'aish mitlakachat b'toch ha-barad***

*There was hail, with lightning flashing among the hailstones.*

***kaved me'od asher lo-hayah chamohu b'chol eretz Mitzrayim***

*It was extremely heavy, unlike anything Egypt had experienced*

***me'az hayeitah l'goy***

*since it became a nation.*

In the Book of Revelation we are told that a similar plague will be sent upon the earth in the days immediately preceding the climactic battle of Armageddon. In Revelation 16:17-21 we are warned of the seventh bowl judgment as follows:

*Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings,*



*peals of thunder and a severe earthquake.*

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*From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men.  
And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.*

The hail that fell on Egypt, we are told, was like no hail that had ever fallen on that country theretofore. **Exodus 9:18, 24.** The supernatural hail that will fall on the nations of the world which gather to make war against Israel in the end of days will be *much more severe* - like no hail that has ever fallen before *anywhere* on earth. The supernatural hail that is coming will be almost as if the earth passes through the tail of a huge comet<sup>7</sup>. What if the chunks of ice released in the comet swarm weigh 100 pounds or more? What if the hail-like storm accompanying that plague is accompanied by a worldwide earthquake that makes it *next-to-impossible to find reliable shelter* from the storm. What if, in connection with this earthquake, even as the huge chunks of ice from the comet's tail are striking the earth the 'great city' is split into three parts? What if the cities of the nations collapse? What if the city the revelator identifies only as 'Babylon the Great' – the centerpiece of the world's economy – comes crashing down upon itself and its people? What if the Pharaoh of that day – the anti-Messiah – sees his one world order governmental system come crashing down around his head in an even greater way than the Pharaoh of the Exodus saw his kingdom decimated by the first supernatural plague of hail?

Which reminds me – what does Torah tell us that the effect of the 'seventh wonder' of parsha *Va'era* upon Pharaoh and his once mighty kingdom was?

### ***The Effects of the Hail upon the Economy of Ancient Egypt***

Torah does not leave us in the dark as to how the supernatural plague of hail unleashed by the Holy One in the days of the first Exodus affected ancient Egypt. Specifically, we are told:

***Vayach ha-barad b'chol-eretz Mitzrayim***  
*The hail struck throughout all the land of Mitzrayim*  
***et kol-asher b'sadeh me'adam v'ad-behemah***  
*all that was in the field, both man and animal;*  
***v'et kol-esev ha-sadeh hikah ha-barad***  
*and the hail struck every herb of the field,*

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<sup>7</sup> Comets are amalgamations of varying quantities of water and carbon dioxide ices, rock, dust, and various trace molecules. Because they have such a large concentration of ice, comets are sometimes called "dirty snowballs". Yet comets also contain crystalline dust grains that could only have formed at very high temperatures. One of the mysteries of comets is that they contain chunks of ice that should, to our way of thinking have melted long ago when exposed to the kind of intense heat believed to have created the dust crystals.

*v'et-kol-etz ha-sadeh shiber*  
and it shattered every tree of the field.

*V'ha-pish'tah v'ha-se'orah nukatah*  
The flax and the barley were struck,

*ki ha-se'orah aviv v'ha-pish'tah giv'ol*  
for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was in bloom<sup>8</sup>.  
[Exodus 9:22-25, 31(a)]

Every herb of the field - disintegrated. Every tree of the orchard – crushed into splinters. All the flax on the hills – gone. All the barley in the meadows – crushed back into the earth from which it grew. There had always been food in Egypt – but no more. In the markets – the tables were turned over; and the last few shelves were rapidly emptying. The buyers and the sellers were in a panic. The price for staples shot through the roof, then crashed to the ground. Commerce was non-existent. Caravans stopped coming. The carts and wagons used by the street merchants stopped rolling. Wealth disappeared in a flash. Money means nothing when there is nothing to buy. The breadbasket of the world was now out of business. There was nothing left to eat – much less to trade with neighboring countries. The only hope for this harvest season was the wheat and the spelt crop yet to mature, and therefore undamaged – by the hailstorm. And what of human life? Before the storm dire warnings were issued by the Holy One of the possibility of human casualties, but when it is all over Torah fails to give us a casualty report. The names of those who refused to seek shelter and were struck by gigantic chunks of ice or balls of fire are not mentioned. Not even the numbers of persons killed by the supernatural hailstorm are stated. This is apparently not information Torah deems it necessary for us to know.

All we need to know about that is that *not one human being was without advance warning that this plague was coming, or without more than adequate opportunity to take shelter*. All we need to know is that THERE WERE NO INNOCENT VICTIMS. All we need to know is that ONLY THE HARD OF HEART REFUSED THE WARNINGS. And we need to keep in mind that those who died as a result of not heeding the warnings of the Holy One and Moshe about the hail were the only human casualties of the ‘seven wonders’ of *Va'era*.

### ***What Else Can Possibly Happen?***

The last lines of today’s aliyah point out the next strategic area in which the Holy One is going to attack Egypt’s economy. Those lines tell us that while the hail struck every herb of the field, broke every tree of the field, and destroyed the

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<sup>8</sup> This places the timing of the Divine hailstorm in mid to late January, or perhaps the very early part of February – the time when Egypt’s flax crop blooms, and when its barley crop ‘heads out’ in preparation for harvest.

barley and the flax crops of Egypt *ha-chitah v'ha-kusemet lo nuku* - i.e. the wheat and the spelt were not struck, *ki afilot henah* – i.e. for they had not yet sprouted. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that if Pharaoh doesn't change his tune and let the descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov go, the next target of the Holy One will be Egypt's sole remaining crops - the *wheat* and *spelt*<sup>9</sup> on which the hail had little or no effect. After all, what else is left in Egypt for ... oh, let's say LOCUSTS ... to eat! The point is that the Holy One is *taking Egypt's economy apart piece-by-piece*. Next week it will finally all come undone – and Pharaoh will at long last let the Holy One's people go. For now however, note that in the midst of the first plague that actually threatened human life the Holy One showed mercy even in the midst of judgment – for all who *fear His Name*, and *sh'ma His Word*. *Are you learning anything, slaves of Goshen?*

### ***Questions For Today's Study***

1. Let's begin with some general questions about today's reading:

[A] What two judgments/plagues does the Holy One release upon Mitzrayim in today's aliyah?

[B] In Strong's, look up the word translated as "soot" in verse 8. Write the Hebrew word and its definition.

[D] What was Moshe to do with the "soot" he obtained from the kiln?

[E] What miracle did the Holy One perform with regard to the "soot"?

[F] In Strong's look up the word translated as "boils" in verses 10 and 11. Write the Hebrew word and its definition.

[G] What was Pharaoh's response to the sixth judgment/plague?

[H] This time, who hardened Pharaoh's heart? Why?

[I] Before the seventh judgment/plague, the Holy One explained the reason He was going to continue the judgments. What reason did He give in verses 14-17?

[J] The seventh judgment/plague is something we refer to as *hail*. Do a study on the Hebrew word translated as *hail* in verse 18 (and following verses), as follows:

[i] In Strong's look up the Hebrew word our text translates as "hail";

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

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

[iv] Write the primary definition of the word.

[v] Look for any other usages of this word you can find in the Torah,

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<sup>9</sup> Some translators render this *rye*, but this is not likely, as it is not believed that rye has been in cultivation long enough to make this the correct rendering. The grain in question is therefore probably spelt. Spelt is one of the oldest cultivated grains, spelt fell into disfavor in the industrial age because [a] it has a longer growing season than most other grains, and [b] it has a very tough hull, or husk, that makes it more difficult to process than modern wheat. However, the hard husk of spelt protects the kernel from hail and ordinary insects. Since spelt's hard husk also protects its grain from pollutants, modern health food stores often carry spelt products for those wary of pesticide contamination. People allergic to wheat are also frequent consumers of spelt.

in the Psalms, or in the prophetic writings, and discuss the meaning of the word in those passages.

[vi] After reviewing the other notes of Gesenius regarding this word, write a paragraph (at least three sentences) describing what you think the Holy One was promising to send, considering what this Hebrew word really means.

[K] How was this judgment of the Holy One different from all the preceding plagues?

[L] When Moshe lifted his rod as instructed by the Holy One, what came forth from heaven in addition to “hail”?

[M] What was Pharaoh’s initial response to the sixth judgment?

[N] Did Moshe believe that Pharaoh’s “repentance” was sincere? How do you know?

[O] If Moshe did not believe Pharaoh’s “repentance” was sincere, why did he ask the Holy One to end the sixth plague when he did?

[P] The concluding verse of *Va’era* describes Pharaoh’s attitude and his actions after the Holy One granted Moshe’s prayer for the sixth plague to end. In what condition was Pharaoh’s heart as this week’s parsha ends?

[Q] Why do you think that despite all that happened in this week’s parsha, and despite all that Pharaoh had learned about the Holy One (see, for instance, verse 27), Pharaoh was still resolved not to let the Hebrew people go?

2. In today’s Haftarah, *Yechezkiel* [Ezekiel] sees a vision of a great day in the future. In the vision Yechezkiel sees the army of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon plundering Egypt and destroying it as a world power forever. Here is how the prophet reports his vision:

*It came to pass in the seven and twentieth year,  
in the first [month], in the first of the month, the word of the Holy One came to me, saying,  
Son of man, Nevukhadretzar king of Bavel caused his army  
to serve a great service against Tzor:  
every head was made bald, and every shoulder was worn;  
yet had he no wages, nor his army, from Tzor, for the service that he had served against it.*

*Therefore thus says the Holy One GOD:  
Behold, I will give the land of Mitzrayim to Nevukhadretzar king of Bavel;  
and he shall carry off her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey;  
and it shall be the wages for his army.  
I have given him the land of Mitzrayim as his recompense for which he served,  
because they worked for me, says the Holy One.*

A significant part of Yechezkiel’s vision came to pass during his lifetime. After a lengthy and costly siege of the seacoast stronghold of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, a tidal wave “mysteriously” appeared wiping out the city and robbing Nebuchadnezzar of the plunder for which he had hoped. Furious, he turned his

wrath on Egypt and virtually destroyed it. Egypt has never been a world power since, to this day.

Even so, Egypt has yet to feel the fullness of the fulfillment of this vision. If you are watching for the ‘end times’, I suggest you keep your eye on Iraq and Egypt as well as Israel.

[A] Who, according to Yechezkiel’s vision, “gave” Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar?

[B] For whom, according to Yechezkiel’s vision did Nebuchadnezzar plunder and destroy Egypt?

3. As is the custom this week’s haftarah ends on a positive note. The Holy One promises His people that He will do three things for the House of Israel “on that day”.

***B’yom hahu atzmiach keren l’beit Yisra’el***

*In that day will I cause a horn to bud forth to the house of Yisra’el,*

***uleicha eiten pitchon-peh b’tocham***

*and I will give you the opening of the mouth in the midst of them;*

***veyad’u ki-ani Adonai.***

*and they will know that I am [the Holy One].*

[A] What is the first thing the Holy One promises He will do “in that day”?

[B] Do a study on the word “horn” as used in verse 21, as follows:

[i] In Strong’s look up the Hebrew word our text translates as “horn”;

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

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

[iv] Write the primary definition of the word.

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

[vi] After reviewing the other notes of Gesenius regarding this word, write a paragraph (at least three sentences) describing what you think the Holy One was promising to do, considering what this Hebrew word really means.

[C] What is the second thing the Holy One promises He will do “in that day”?

[D] Do a study on the word “mouth” as that word is used in verse 21, as follows:

[i] In Strong’s look up the Hebrew word our text translates as “mouth”; then write the Hebrew word, in Hebrew letters, with vowel points.

[ii] Write the transliteration and pronunciation of the word.

[iii] Write the primary definition of the word.

[iv] Look for at least two other usages of this word in the Torah, two in the Psalms, and two in the prophetic writings, and discuss the meaning of the word in each of those passages.

[v] After reviewing the other notes of Gesenius regarding this word, write a paragraph (at least three sentences) describing what you think the Holy One was promising to do, considering what this Hebrew word really means.

[E] What is the third thing the Holy One promises He will cause to happen “in that day”?

[F] How does this third promise relate to the overall theme of *Va'era*?

4. For today's concluding B'rit Chadasha reading of *Va'era* I have chosen the narrative of the first five bowl judgments of the Book of Revelation. As we have been discussing this week, the end times will, according to the B'rit Chadasha, witness plagues similar to, but in far greater magnitude than, the plagues which were inflicted on Egypt. These plagues parallel the Egyptian plagues.

[A] As today's reading begins, what is “opened” in the Temple in Heaven?

[B] Do you consider this related at all to the second promise of the Holy One in Ezekiel 29:21? Explain your answer.

[C] What did each angel have as he came out of the Temple?

[D] What did each angel receive from the Living Creature?

[E] Who was left in the Temple after the smoke filled it?

[F] Whose voice spoke in verse 1 of Chapter 16?

[G] On what aspect of creation did the first angel pour out his bowl?

[H] Who was affected by the first bowl, and how were they affected?

[I] Why do you think the faithful were not affected?

[J] On what aspect of creation did the second angel pour out his bowl?

[K] What happened when this bowl was poured out?

[L] What do you think the effect of the second bowl was upon the peoples of the earth?

[M] On what aspect of creation did the third angel pour out his bowl?

[N] What happened when this bowl was poured out?

[O] What do you think the effect of the third bowl was upon the peoples of the earth?

[P] After the third bowl is poured out, the “angel in charge of the waters” - which have just been devastated, and deprived of life - speaks to the Holy One. What does this angel say?

[Q] On what aspect of creation did the fourth angel pour out his bowl?

[R] What happened when this bowl was poured out?

[S] The effect of the fourth bowl upon the peoples of the earth is specifically



stated. List all the responses of the peoples that Yochanan [John] describes.

[T] On what aspect of creation did the fifth angel pour out his bowl?

[U] What happened when this bowl was poured out?

[V] The effect of the fifth bowl upon the peoples of the earth is specifically stated. List all the responses of the peoples that Yochanan [John] describes.

[W] To conclude this week's studies read and meditate on Revelation 18:4-

*May your mind be flooded with light from the Holy One,  
and may you receive His good tidings and enter His rest on this Shabbat.*

### ***The Rabbi's son***

### ***Meditation for Today's Study***

Psalm 18:30-36

*As for God, his way is perfect.  
The word of the Holy One is tried.  
He is a shield to all those who take refuge in him.  
For whom is God, except the Holy One?  
Who is a rock, besides our God?  
Who is God who arms me with strength,  
and makes my way perfect?  
He makes my feet like deer's feet,  
and sets me on my high places.  
He teaches my hands to war; so that my arms bend a bow of bronze.  
You have also given me the shield of Your salvation.  
Your right hand sustains me.  
Your gentleness has made me great.  
You have enlarged my steps under me;  
my feet have not slipped.*