

*Shiur L'Yom Revi'i*¹

[Wednesday's Study]

READINGS: **Torah Bo:** **Exodus 11:1-10**
 Haftarah: **Jeremiah 46:15-17**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Romans 12:3**

Every first-born in Egypt will die

[Exodus 11:1]

Today's Meditation is Psalm 18:46-48;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #13, the Petition for Intimate Relationship

Vayomer Adonai el-Moshe – Then the Holy One said to Moshe ... ***Od nega echad avi al-Par'oh v'al-Mitzrayim*** - Yet one more surgical strike/strategic blow/stunning and temporarily disabling touch will I bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt. **Exodus 11:1a.**

Od nega echad - yet one more surgical strike - then Pharaoh's bloody reign of terror over B'nei Yisrael will be over. Yet one more *strategic blow* - then the 'great nation' the Holy One promised to make of Avraham's seed will finally burst forth from Egypt's violently constricting womb. Yet one more *stunning, temporarily disabling touch* – and the bloody nightmare of Egyptian captivity will end. But what exactly does 'yet one more' mean? What will the *climactic ot/nega* consist of? What one single event/intervention by the Holy One could possibly pry the cold, hard, maniacal fingers of Pharaoh away from the controls of human destiny – without destroying more than it helps and heals? What *nega echad* could the Holy One release at this moment that would bring this dark chapter of one world order government-inflicted human misery to a merciful end – without completely/permanently spoiling the ecosystem?

***Setting the Stage – It is About as Bad as it Can Get in Egypt,
So Something Has to Give!***

Pharaoh is the most powerful man on the planet. The political-economic system he heads up is undeniably 'beast-like'. The government over which he presides is the most despotic in human history so far. We have seen *RA* [i.e. narcissistic self-obsession], *SHACHAT* [corruption of heart leading to corrupt agendas, speech deeds, values, priorities, and behaviors] and *CHAMAS* [violence, cruelty, oppression, and refusal to afford grace, mercy, empathy, or forgiveness to anyone other than cronies] operating for centuries, of course – but never has the great trifecta of human degradation been so fine-tuned, harmonized, normalized, systematized, institutionalized, and spread with such maniacal fervor as happened in ancient Egypt under the Pharaohs. We will

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see this degree of toxicity again periodically throughout the remainder of human history, of course. It will spring back to life in *Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon*, then resurface with a vengeance in *Alexander's Greece*. It will spread forth from Antioch through *Antiochus IV*, from Rome through a long line of *Caesars and emperors*; from central Asia via *Genghis Khan's Mongol horde*. It will then rise again through *the corrupt Vatican's Crusades and Inquisitions*, through *Robespierre's French Revolution*, via *the Bolshevik and Communist revolutions in Russia*, through *Mao Tse Tung's CCP takeover of China*, through *Arafat and company's long campaign of 'Palestinian' Intifadas*, on and on to the ultimate Beast/One-World-Order/Occult-empowered Anti-Messiah Kingdom of Biblical prophecy.

***How – and Why - In the World Do Narcissism,
Ethnocentric Hatred, Violence, Oppression, and Perversion
Get So Normalized So Frequently?***

How and why do such curses on humanity, and such blights on the Ecosystem gave mankind to steward, seem to keep springing up, generation after generation? It begins with what I call *the demagoguery of discontent*. Instead of following the Holy One's ways of life, health, peace, redemption, and restoration, someone with a bone to pick, a chip on their shoulder, a point to make, and/or a score to settle starts shouting down whoever he envies. He raises his voice, shakes his fist, and lifts high his banner of hate. He accuses. He indicts. He judges. He sentences. He executes – through libel and slander if not through incitements to violence. He mocks. He rants. He shouts obscene and inflammatory slogans. Dead set on getting everyone within the sound of his voice to hate the person, or group, of whom he is jealous or with whom he is offended, he throws in whatever oratorical or literary license it takes – starting with fearmongering, hatemongering, gender-jealousy arousing, and class-envy inciting diatribe, then adding in a healthy helping of ethnocentric propagandizing; truth-stretching; history rewriting, narrative reframing; virtue-signaling, and culture canceling. If this guy is skilled enough with his manipulations, pretty soon he finds he has formed himself a 'movement'. Now the real trouble can begin – because every malcontent, manipulator, and busybody loves a movement! If managed shrewdly enough, a movement can lead to political power. Political power leads to economic power. Once political and economic power are solidified in the malcontent movement's talking heads and their cronies, land and wealth are redistributed to the movement's co-conspirators and handed out to hand-picked enforcers of the new world order as bribes of patronage. This new group of 'elites', once formed, quickly morph into cabals and cartels – who take control of neighborhoods, corrupt police forces, shake down private businesses, and marginalize – if not murder in cold blood – anyone who does not support them. They solidify their power and wealth through every weapon

from human trafficking to vice/addiction enablement; from mob-like ‘protection rackets’ to selectively enforced ‘over-regulation’, replete with strategic episodes of ‘over-policing’ and/or ‘under-policing’; from ‘newspeak’/political correctness propaganda to crisis-manipulation, to youth indoctrination/mind-control programs, to ‘equity’ reparation payment policies, and far, far beyond. These growing cancers on humanity then start to manipulate the supply chains for everything from food and clothing to technology and transportation and education in ways that keep the populace in a constant state of anxiety if not uproar. They condone the blocking of traffic by ideological highwaymen. They manipulate prices upward to the point that the common man cannot survive without selling their soul to the government. Promoting their treachery as ‘progressive economic policy’, they alternate preying on the poor, the weak, the widow, the fatherless, and the foreigner and pretending to help them. They plant acolytes in the faculty and administration of educational institutions to brainwash the nation’s youth. They promote perversion in its most noxious forms, then skim under-the-table ‘cuts’ from those who profit from such perversions. They normalize paranoia, profanity, and outrage. They glamorize lust, greed, gluttony, sloth, sarcasm, and cynicism. They infiltrate and weaponize the *thought, emotion, speech, and narrative control centers* of the culture – especially its institutions of entertainment, science, medicine, religion, and technology. With a mixture of carefully crafted half-truths and outright lies they convert these institutions into vehicles through which they incite violent protests, stir up ethnic conflicts, trigger class-based jealousies, and manufacture ideology-motivated outrage. They enlist charismatic spokesmen from the fields of entertainment, sports, religion, and information media to popularize their disinformation, publicize their propaganda, and ‘mainstream’ their deceptions. Because they are experts at controlling the thoughts that people think, the emotions that people feel, the narratives that people hear, and the things that people do and do not see, they can de-legitimize and silence all opposing viewpoints at will. They manipulate emotional responses by triggering lingering ethnic, age/generation, gender, and class-based biases. They can stir up feeding frenzies of envy, fear, or hate at that the drop of a hat, whenever they think it serves their purpose. They do such things with impunity - whatever human misery they cause. Thank Heaven that is all about to change. The power base of Pharaoh and his oligarchs – *i.e.* their ability to control the thoughts, emotions, fears, and biases of the masses – is collapsing like a house of cards. Feeling his grip on men’s souls slipping away, Pharaoh has settled into a state of maniacal, semi-homicidal rage. When we last saw him he was railing loudly at Moshe, ordering him out of the palace, and threatening the prophet’s life if he ever so much as saw his face again. Oh Pharaoh – threatening prophets is probably never a good idea. But threatening the Holy One’s appointed agent of redemption? ***Od nega echad*** – *i.e.* one more surgical strike – and we will see *who will live ... and who will die.*”

The Greatest Wealth Transfer is One that is Totally Voluntary

Before the last of the ten *otot/nega'im* was to begin the Holy One gave Moshe a special briefing to pass on to the Hebrew population. As the first active assignment for the average Hebrew in the Holy One's Grand Plan of Redemption, each Hebrew was instructed to go to his nearest Egyptian neighbors and ask them to make donations that would help fund their officially forbidden excursion into the desert. They were to go hat-in-hand and ask their Egyptian neighbors for any gold or silver (or any fine garments) that they could spare. Their demeanor was to be that of a humble supplicant presenting a *request or plea* - not anything even remotely resembling a *demand* for reparations. They were not to threaten. They were not to coerce. They were not to smash windows. They were not to light fires. They were not to break into anyone's home or business to get what they wanted. They were not to rob, steal, or loot. They were not to try to manipulate the Egyptians with guilt trips. They were not to accuse anyone of anything. They were not to play a 'victim card'. They were not to judge anyone as having a real or imagined 'privilege'. They were not to take a single thing that was not offered freely, voluntarily, and unreservedly. They were not to resort to force, intimidation, stealth, coercion, deception, or manipulation. They were just to humbly go, and politely ask. If when they presented their humble plea they were met with resistance, rebuff, insult, or rudeness – they were to remain humble, peaceful, and pleasant, and seek no recourse or redress against the reluctant Egyptians whatever. This was a *fund-raising appeal* – not a *shakedown*; a matter of *favor* – not *right*; a call for *kindness* and *goodwill toward fellow man* – not for *reparations* or *entitlement* in the name of *social justice*. Here is what the people were to do.

v'yish'alu ish me'et rei'eihu v'ishah me'et rei'utah

... let them ask every man of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor,

klei-chesef uchelei-zahav

articles of silver, and articles of gold."

[Exodus 11:2]

This was a critical test – both for the Hebrews who had to step out of their comfort zones (and in some cases risk their lives), on the one hand, AND for each individual Egyptian, who suddenly had to choose, irrespective of his government's policy, whether he would 'bless' the seed of Avraham, to 'ignore' him, to 'resent' him, or to 'curse' him.

The Test This Presented For the Average Hebrew ...

For the average enslaved Hebrew man, woman, or child the instruction to personally sally forth and ask for funding for their imminent journey home represented the very first *mitzvah* in which they had ever been called to participate. Heretofore the Grand Redemption campaign that began in Exodus 2 had all been

the Holy One's work. Acting through the agency of a couple of prophets carrying shepherding rods, He had done absolutely everything; the average Hebrew just found a safe place for his family to weather the storm and watched the Holy One's awe-inspiring sign-and-wonder show. The season of spectating, however, is ending. In just a few days each person of Hebrew descent is going to have to make some major decisions – and take some radical actions. First, they will have to decide if they will publicly declare their commitment to their Hebrew identity and calling by painting the doorposts of their houses with lamb's blood. Then they will have to decide if they will - or will not - pack up their meager belongings in haste and follow Moshe into the desert, leaving behind everything they had ever known of 'life'. Before they have to face these major leaps of faith, the Holy One wanted to prepare them. He therefore called them to a 'lesser action' – going to their Egyptian neighbors to request donations. Before opening the door for them to step out into the desert on their long-anticipated journey back to the land of the patriarchs, the Holy One as a 'Good Shepherd' knew that His 'sheep' needed a lesser 'test of faith'. He intends to train them – has to train them - to *sh'ma* His Voice. If they – if WE - do not sh'ma His voice, they/we will never become the portal of Heavenly Kedusha or the blessing to all families of the earth that he calls us to be - much less do the 'Divine-image Shadowing' work that He has called us to do. Will we – *can we* – DARE we – *sh'ma* our Great Shepherd-King's Voice? Will we follow His instructions? Will we walk in His Ways? Will we *asah* His mitzvot? Will we serve our world with excellence, modeling the wisdom of Heaven, as Yosef served his? It is quite a challenge. We need practice, training, patience, and discipline to develop self-control. There will be learning curve. The mitzvah of 'asking of our neighbor' will be our first step. The discomfort we feel in stepping out of our comfort zone will constitute our initial test of *emunah*².

The test will not be made easier by the fact the whole idea seems ludicrous. After all, Egypt's economy is in ruins. All the country's internal food sources have been wiped out by the *nega'im* [surgical strikes/strategic blows] the Holy One has been releasing to effectuate deliverance. The supply chain has been disrupted. Staples of life are in extremely short supply. Prices are through the roof. Consumer confidence is nil. Fear for – indeed panic over - Egypt's future is palpable. The government spin machines are putting all the blame for these woes on the Hebrew population. With the economy of the country being in this pitiful shape, and with the tension in the air being this intense, and with everyone sensing they are on the brink of disaster, is it REALLY a good time to mount a fund-raising campaign? All

² *Emunah*, the Hebrew noun that has traditionally been translated into the English language as 'faith' or 'trust', is derived from the verb *aman* [*alef, mem, nun sofit*]. This verb means to take in a *life-force* (esp. *in utero*, or as a nursing infant), and to adopt, nurture, support, and protect that life-force all the way to maturity and beyond. The life-force in question is the *living Word* of the Creator, which – as Holy Writ attests – is alive.

who have ears to *sh'ma*, let them *sh'ma*!

The Test This Presented For the Average Egyptian ...

The Egyptian people were not demons or ogres – just human beings. They had enjoyed some good times – in significant measure at the expense of the industrious Hebrew population they had inherited as slaves. Now, however, their world was being shaken to the core. The government was blaming the Hebrews. The prevailing ‘science’ of the realm demanded that Egyptians consider any association, involvement, or contact with a Hebrew a likely source of contamination and/or infection – *i.e.* an ‘abomination’. See **Genesis 43:32 and 46:34**. What was the average Egyptian – reeling from the economical and societal losses that flowed from the *nega'im*, and undoubtedly suffering intense episodes of post-traumatic stress syndrome - to be expected to do if a Hebrew came walking up to their door? Assuming they did not immediately ‘trigger’, and start throwing stones, shooting arrows, or chunking spears at them to repel them, why on earth would they even open their door, much less give away precious gold and silver – or fine garments or fabrics – like the Hebrews would be seeking? With the economy in their country in tatters, their society on the verge of collapse, and their families facing extremely hard times if not starvation, wouldn't they need every valuable asset they possessed in order to survive the coming apocalypse? For any Egyptian to give any Hebrew – or anyone at all – anything of value whatever would require the Holy One to work a ‘heart-miracle’, activating both *supernatural favor* and *irrational generosity*. That is exactly what Torah says happened. Read it for yourself:

Vayiten Adonai et-chen ha-am b'eynei Mitzrayim

The Holy One gave the people favor in the sight of the Mitzrim.

[Exodus 11:3a]

Moshe's 'Farewell Tour'

At this juncture let us pause for a moment and consider the *personal side* of this moment for the man who once called an Egyptian Pharaoh ‘father’. The palace from which he has just been banished was once his ‘home’. It was in *this palace* that the woman who had a servant pluck him from the Nile and who *became a mother to him* had lived - perhaps still lived. It was in these very halls – now cloaked in a heavy and oppressive darkness - that he played as a child. It was in this palace's library that he learned the language skills he would later employ in recording the Torah, as well as the nuances of history and law and of interaction of governments and peoples. This palace had, at one time, meant every bit as much to Moshe as it did right now to Pharaoh. But no more. He had disentangled. He had no more part or lot in Egypt's palace. His heart had not been there for a long time – and now, the rest of his body was about to catch up. Moshe's assigned task in this palace - the purpose for which the Holy One had carefully steered the woman

Yocheved's basket-coated-with-pitch to this place some 80 years previously was finally accomplished ... concluded ... done ... finished. So, when Moshe walked out this time he would not look back. The focus of his life now - finally - was elsewhere. *Where*, you ask? Ah, that is the message of the aliyah. As it is for Moshe, *so it is for us*. When we leave, we will be done with this country. We will never pass this way again.

A New Focus, A New Reason to Live

Moshe's life will from this point forward no longer be wrapped up in a palace in Egypt. What happened in that palace will never more be any of his concern. From this day forward Moshe will have not only no palace to call home, he will not even have the comfort of a fixed place of dwelling. For the rest of his life on earth Moshe's home will be a tent in the desert. But what joy awaits him! He will stand in much better places than the halls of an Egyptian palace. He will stand, and see, and be amazed by:

- *a sea of reeds parting for the People of the Covenant*
- *a Rock that pours forth water sufficient to quench 2,000,000 thirsts, every day*
- *a sky ever pregnant with manna*
- *a pillar of fire and of cloud that moves with inspired intentionality and leads the people like a shepherd leads the sheep under his charge*
- *a mountain where a Voice both terrifying and beautiful waited to speak words like unto the flames of fire he had once seen burn in a bush*
- *a tent he could not enter because of the intensity of the *Sh'kinah* manifestation*
- *a plain in Moav where he would teach all Israel the Torah*
- *a mountain called Nebo from the heights of which the Holy One would show him the land He promised to Avraham so long ago*
- *a mountaintop in the land flowing with milk and honey where he would hold conversation with the promised Messiah on the day of transfiguration.*

So do not pity Moshe. Reserve your human feelings of compassion for the man whose beautiful palace – along with hundreds of thousands of houses throughout Egypt - will soon become a morgue. And as you think about Moshe's final goodbye to the palace of Pharaoh, contemplate the moment of your final goodbye to the comforts, cultural pleasures, and economic security of the worldly system to

which you have subconsciously grown so fondly attached.

The cry of the Bridegroom is about to be heard, saying: “***Come out of her, My People! Lest you share in her sins and receive of her plagues!***” Revelation 18:4.

The Birth Pangs of Nation-Birthing are Getting Intense!

Egypt has just experienced a taste of what *tohu v'vohu v'choshek*³ was like. For seventy-two trying hours thick, deep, tangible darkness - the supernatural kind of darkness that had not been seen on earth since Genesis 1:2 - covered the land of Egypt like a burial shroud. In the thick darkness of this extended night there was no form, no color, no depth, no faces to look at, no movement to see, and no sense of meaning to life. The sun could not be seen during what was normally 'day; the moon and stars could not be seen during what was normally 'night'. Moreover, all lamps and torches – every potential source of light for men – went mysteriously dark as well. There was not even any lightning. Movement was rendered impossible, all across Egypt - EXCEPT, of course, inside the houses of the Hebrews in the region of Goshen. Inside the humble dwellings of the Hebrew slaves hated so much, the Genesis 1:3 LIGHT of ELOHIM shone gloriously - illuminating the faces and setting aglow the hearts of all sons and daughters of the Avrahamic Covenant. *Ot ha-chosech* was not just a sign to Pharaoh and Egypt, you see. It was also a sign to Israel. And the message to Israel was that the appointed time has come for the sons and daughters of the living God to arise and shine.

The Holy One created light. He placed the sun, the moon, and the stars in their assigned places and set them upon their assigned courses. He has just proven that He still can do with light – as well as all other things He has created - whatever He pleases, whenever He pleases. It is just His Kindness that allows mankind to continue to experience the empowering energy of light day after day, month after month, year after year, to the point we come to believe we are somehow entitled to it. The reality, however, is that, except for the mercy of the Holy One man is not even entitled to *tohu v'vohu v'choshek*. And as all Egypt is about to find out, much less is any parent entitled to the pleasure of watching his or her firstborn grow up and live the life the parent has dreamed for him to live. Every moment of life on earth is a great privilege extended to a man by the Creator of life. But the privilege is granted *conditionally*. Any time that the Creator feels that the overall good of Creation requires that a particular man – or child's – privilege of life be revoked, He can – indeed should for the 'common good' – revoke that privilege. Egypt as a

³ *Tohu v'vohu v'choshek* is the Hebrew phrase describing the Heavens and the Earth before the Ruach brooded over the face of the Deep and the Holy One said 'Light, Be!' See Genesis 1:2-3. The phrase refers to a state of chaos, meaninglessness, and deep, impenetrable darkness.

culture and a nation has devalued human life – and oppressed and trafficked in human beings at will - for a long, long time. The innocent lives it has claimed in the name of national dominance number in the millions. Egypt's leaders and its people have been warned repeatedly – and all but a very few have stubbornly refused to heed the warnings. They have been blessed with the presence of the descendants of Avraham, and they have chosen to curse them rather than bless them. According to the Avrahamic Covenant that choice has consequences. *Midah keneged midah* – i.e. *measure for measure* – will the curses they have pronounced fall upon them. The Day of Reckoning is near.

Moshe's Parting Word to Pharaoh – Od Nega Echad!

It is a propitious moment in history – and in prophecy. The hour is late. The time of redemption is almost upon us. Our long dark night of indentured servitude to a pagan mindset and death-obsessed culture is about to end. The descendants of Avraham are about to drink deeply of the extravagant love of the Bridegroom of Heaven, as Phase II in the Holy One's plan for the redemption of mankind and creation through the formation of a *sh'ma*-people begins in earnest. It is almost our appointed time to take a lamb, splash the blood on the doorposts and lentils, eat a covenant meal - and start to *really live* instead of just survive.

It is fitting that in this critical moment in the history of mankind the Holy One steps out of eternity and infinity into time and space and speaks. Torah records the Creator's words for posterity:

Od nega echad avi al-Par'oh v'al-Mitzrayim

Yet one more surgical strike will I bring on Pharaoh, and on Mitzrayim;

acharei-chen y'shalach etchem

afterwards he will send you (plural) out.

mizeh keshaleicho kalah garesh yegaresh etchem mizeh

And when he sends you out, he will surely thrust you out altogether.

[Exodus 11:1]

Yet one more surgical strike to weaken Egypt's socio-economic-religious institutions. Yet one more choice to be made by Egypt's Pharaoh, his court, and his people. Yet one more proof of His Love of and special plans for B'nei Yisrael.

Why Is This Night Unlike Any Other Night?

It is time for the Holy One's to reveal the final 'wondrous sign' He intends to perform on Israel's behalf. These are His words:

Kachatzot ha-laylah ani yotze betoch Mitzrayim

About midnight I will go out into the midst of Mitzrayim,

Umet kol-bechor b'erezt Mitzrayim
and all the firstborn in the land of Mitzrayim shall die,
mibechor Pharaoh ha-yoshev al-kis'o
from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne,
ad bechor ha-shifchah asher achar ha-rechayim v'chol bechor behemah
even to the firstborn of the maidservant who is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of cattle.
[Exodus 11:4-5]

There is a finality to this declaration that is stunning and overwhelming. This time there is no *'if you do not let my people go.'* This time there is no *'if you do not repent'*. This time it is no *'maybe'*. This is not a *conditional decree*. This decree is **FIXED**. This decree declares what is **GOING TO HAPPEN**. This word of the Holy One's is just as sure as the **"Light, BE!"** of Genesis 1:3. And what that means is that as surely as the Nile River ran red with blood, death is *on its way* for the firstborn of Egypt – from Pharaoh's firstborn son in his private suite in the palace, all the way down to the firstborn of the maidservant who works at the mill, and even including the firstborn of any livestock not destroyed by the livestock epidemic, the boils, or the glorious hail.

This event is written in the Book of Life in *indelible ink*. Options are off the table. Alternate realities have all faded into oblivion. There is simply *no other way it can end*.

Why Did it Have to Come to This?

Back at the 'burning bush', before bringing forth upon Egypt any of the 'plagues' [as Pharaoh saw them] or 'wondrous signs' [as the Holy One taught us to look upon them], the Holy One told Moshe:

When you go back to Egypt,
see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand.
But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.
Then you shall say to Pharaoh,
'Thus says the Holy One: "Israel is beni vechori - My firstborn son.
So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse
to let him go, surely I will kill bincha bechoreicha -your son, your firstborn"
[Exodus 4:22-23]

The day concerning which the Holy One prophesied to Moshe at the bush – the day of striking Egypt's firstborn – is now *at hand*. Pharaoh and his people have struck the Holy One's firstborn, have enslaved and oppressed him, and have refused to let him go *one too many times to be forgiven*. The point of no return has been crossed – and there is *Heaven to pay*. The question *'How long, Oh Lord?'* need be asked no more.

Moshe's ministry to Pharaoh is now officially over. From this point in the narrative forward the Holy One has Moshe turn his complete attention away from Pharaoh to the people he will very soon lead out of Egypt.

The Tze'akah Gedolah – or 'Great Cry'

The Holy One tells Moshe that on the night the angel of death takes Egypt's firstborn sons the night skies will resound with a horrifying sound:

V'hayetah tze'akah gedolah b'chol-eretz Mitzrayim
There will be a great cry throughout all the land of Mitzrayim,

asher kamohu lo nihyatah v'chamohu lo tosif
such as there has not been, nor will be any more.

In Hebrew the operative phrase is *tze'akah gedolah*. The operative word is *tze'akah*⁴, from the verb root *tza'aq*. The first usage of this verb by Torah was to describe the piercing sound that the blood of *Hevel* [Abel] made from deep within the earth after he was slain by *Kayin* [Cain]. This sound would not be a whimper; it would be a horrified *scream*. This is exactly the kind of cry the Holy One prophesied in His opening discourse with Moshe, when He said:

... behold, the tza'akot [cries/screams] of the children of Israel have come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.

Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

[Exodus 3:7-10]

The cry/scream of innocent blood suffering cruel oppression *at the hands of men* the Holy One will regard with compassion and *sh'ma*. He will comfort and tenderly console the human beings who emit such a cry/scream. The cry/scream of an arrogant oppressor, reeling under the *judgments decreed by a righteous God after rejecting numerous calls to repent* – however, the Holy One will not regard, and will not *sh'ma*.

The prophetic announcement of the coming *tze'akah gedolah* – *i.e. great outcry or scream* – of *B'nei Mitzrayim* leads us to the ultimate 'distinction' that will be made by the Holy One between those who choose to think and act like *B'nei Mitzrayim* – *i.e. sons/disciples of Egypt* - and those who choose to think like, trust in the Holy One like, and endeavor to always conduct their personal and business lives in *Yosefian excellence* like *B'nei Yisrael*.

⁴ *Tze'akah* is Strong's Hebrew word #6818. Written *tzade, ayin, qof, hey*, it is pronounced *tzaw-awk-ah'*.

The Final ‘Distinction’ – Hebrew Yaf’leh - Is Drawn

In connection with each of the *nega'im* since *ot ha-l'chinin* [the sign and *nega* of lice] the Holy One has ‘made a *distinction*’ between Egypt and the Hebrews. The final *ot/nega* – the visitation of firstborns by the death angel – will also involve the Holy One making a ‘distinction’ between the Egyptians and the Hebrews. This time the Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as ‘distinction’ will be *yaf’leh*⁵. The Holy One has thus far caused B’nei Yisrael to carry a *pedut* mark – *i.e.* one that works like a force-field around them, allowing them to be spared the direct force of the *nega'im*. This will be different. *Yaf’leh*, the word the Holy One uses to describe the ‘final’ distinction He promises to draw between *B’nei Yisrael* and *B’nei Mitzrayim*, takes the distinction beyond a matter of *kinsman redemption* to a matter of *extreme Divine favor and delight*. Not only will *B’nei Yisrael* be redeemed from bondage by a Mighty Hand and an Outstretched Arm because its people bear the distinguishing mark of a *pedut-level distinction*; as the redemptive process is unfolding, a great fear/reverence relating to them will fall, such that *not even a dog will wag its tongue against them* – as the result of them bearing the Holy One’s *yaf’leh-level* distinction.

Ul’chol b’nei Yisra’el lo yecheratz-kelev l’shono

But against any of the children of Yisra’el a dog won’t even bark or move its tongue,

l’me’ish v’ad-behemah

against man or animal;

l’ma’an ted’un asher yaf’leh Adonai

that you may know that the Holy One makes a distinction

beyn Mitzrayim uveyn Yisra’el

between the Mitzrim and Yisra’el.

[Exodus 11:6-7]

The *yaf’leh* distinction is not so much a mark of *redemption* as a mark of *separateness* and *consecration*. The basis for this distinction is not going to be *location* [i.e. Goshen vs. greater Egypt] as it was in Exodus 8:22. Nor is it necessarily going to be *along straight ethnic* lines in the sense of Hebrew vs. non-Hebrew. The distinction which will be drawn by the Holy One regarding the final, deadly plague will, simply put, be *between those who sh’ma the Word of the Holy One and anoint the doorposts of their home with the blood of a Passover Lamb, on the one hand, and those who lo sh’ma the Word of the Holy One, and do not anoint their doorposts with blood, on the other*. Those who *sh’ma* the Word of the Holy One – whatever their physical nationality – will be considered as Yisrael. But just as certainly, those who *lo sh’ma* the Word of the Holy One – whatever their physical lineage – will be considered as Mitzrayim.

⁵ The verb root of *yaf’leh* is *palah - peh, lamed, hey*. It is Strong’s word #H6395.

Many more details on this distinction will soon follow. For now however please note that the option which all others that will ever live upon the earth will have - of applying the blood of the Passover Lamb to one's doorposts to avoid the 'last plague' in *sh'ma* response to the Word of the Holy One - is not afforded to Pharaoh. He apparently has gone far, far beyond the point of no return.

Moshe Takes His Leave

Finally the Holy One is releasing Moshe from that part of his calling that involves direct communication to Pharaoh. That is part of the Burning Bush call that Moshe had most feared, and to which he had most objected. With the Holy One's guidance and direction, despite a hiccup of fleshly emotion here and there, Moshe has now fulfilled this part of the calling admirably. Well done, good and faithful servant. Step by step, confrontation after confrontation, Moshe has learned to lean into the Holy One so resolutely in the spiritual realm that his physical body in the natural realm has actually managed to *stand 'toe to toe' and go 'head-to-head' with the most powerful human being on the earth.* The timid excuse-maker of *Horeb* has – for the time being at least - overcome all fear of what man can do to him. That is because – for the moment at least – he sees Pharaoh through the *eyes of God* instead of through the eyes of man.

Earlier in the aliyah we were told

Gam ha-ish Mosheh gadol me'od b'erez Mitzrayim

Moreover the man Moshe was very great in the land of Mitzrayim,

b'eynei avdei-Far'oh

in the sight of Pharaoh's servants,

uvei'eynei ha-am

and in the sight of the people

[Exodus 11:3b]

What kind of effect do you think that kind of fame/prestige have on you? How would your ego handle it? Let's look at what Moshe does next as a textbook example of the negative impact that public adulation tends to engender. As Moshe leaves Pharaoh's presence something unnerving happens. Hot human emotion – anger, even rage – raises its ugly head – seemingly for the first time since pre-burning bush Moshe committed murder four decades ago. Heretofore in his dealings with Pharaoh Moshe has remained calm and stuck to the script and mission. It has all been professional, not 'personal'. He has been an agent, a diplomat, an ambassador – not speaking for himself, but for the Holy One. But now, as his ambassadorship assignment is about to conclude, Moshe speaks for himself instead of the Holy One. Instead of sticking to the Divine Script, and maintaining decorum, and moving on, Moshe turns back and gives Pharaoh a piece

of his own mind:

V'yardu chol-avadeicha eleh elay

All these your servants shall come down to me,

v'hishtachavu-li l'emor

and bow down themselves to me, saying,

ze atah v'chol ha-am asher-b'ragleicha

'Get out, and all the people who follow you;

v'acharei-chen eitzei

and after that I will go out."

vayetze me'im-Par'oh bochori-af

And [with that] he went out from Pharaoh in hot anger.

[Exodus 11:8]

Nowhere in his instructions to Moshe did the Holy One tell him to say such things. Nowhere in this rant did Moshe even suggest that the Holy One had told him to say such things. This was all about Moshe's personal feelings, and the offense he had taken up against Pharaoh. It is not for us to judge Moshe, of course; that is totally between him and the Holy One. But what we are required to do is decide, in every situation we face, whether we will emulate Moshe and leave script and assigned task to express our own feelings and/or offenses OR choose a more excellent, more God-honoring way. We are not set apart to be people of wrath. We are set apart FROM – and are to provide an alternative to - people of wrath. Even the best of us tend to forget that from time to time. May we instead always heed the wise counsel of our Great Rabbi's brother Ya'akov, whom English Bibles have chosen to call 'James': ***So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not/cannot produce the righteousness of God.*** James 1:19-20. Ah, Dear One - blessed is he who is *not offended*.

Questions For Today's Study

1. The ninth plague - three days of thick, oppressive darkness - had come and gone, and Pharaoh's heart was still hard. Yesterday's aliyah concluded with Pharaoh banishing Moshe from the palace and threatening him with death if he ever returned. Today's aliyah begins with the conclusion of the banishment scene. Before Moshe leaves Pharaoh's presence, he relates to Pharaoh one last message from the Holy One.

[A] In verse 1, what does Torah tell us that the Holy One had previously told Moshe? [Hint: See Exodus 4:23]

[B] What was to be the participation of Moshe in the last plague?

[C] Why do you think the Holy One chose not to have Moshe do anything at all to set in motion the last and decisive plague on Egypt?

[D] What does Moshe say the Holy One is about to do to bring about the 10th and final “plague”?

[E] At “about” what time does Moshe say the Holy One will do this?

[F] Why do you think the Holy One did not tell Pharaoh the exact time?

[G] List three examples of the firstborn creatures who will be slain.

[H] In Strong’s and Gesenius, look up the word our English Bibles translate as “*cry*” (or “*great cry*”) in verse 6. Write the Hebrew word - in Hebrew letters with vowel markings, as well as in its transliterated form - and list its meanings. Meditate on this verse, and try to hear the “cry”, and see, in your mind’s eye, and feel the emotions of, the people who were to utter it.

[I] How does today’s aliyah tell us the Holy One will distinguish in regard to the upcoming tenth plague, between the Hebrews (actually, as we will learn later, between that group of Hebrews who heed Moshe and sprinkle their doorposts with the blood of the Pesach lamb) and the Egyptians?

[J] What does Moshe predict the officials of Pharaoh will do after the firstborn of Egypt all suddenly die?

[K] The group of people who is to be set free from Egypt is described in verse 8. It is not described as “the Hebrews”, “the Jews”, or “the descendants of Israel”. How is the group of people who will leave Egypt described? Does this group of people include people who were not physically descended from Ya’akov/Yisrael? Explain.

[L] What had the Holy One revealed to Moshe would be Pharaoh’s response to the final plague/judgment? What purpose was this response to accomplish?

[M] What do you believe is the message - to you today - of verse 10?

[N] In this week’s haftarah reading from the prophet Yirmayahu [Jeremiah], as what kind of God does the Holy One say He wants to reveal Himself to the inhabitants of Egypt?

2. Before the last plague was to begin the Holy One told Moshe to instruct the Hebrews to visit their Egyptian neighbors.

[A] What did the Holy One instruct the Hebrews to do?

[B] What were the about-to-be homeless slaves going to do with “jewels of silver, jewels of gold”?

[C] When before had a Hebrew left Egypt loaded down with silver and gold?

[D] How does the receipt of silver and gold from the Egyptians fulfill (at least partially) the Holy One’s promise to Avraham in Genesis 15:14-15?

[E] Were the Egyptian people (as opposed to Pharaoh and his officials) angry with the Hebrews? Why do you think this was the case?

[F] What do you think the Egyptian people felt about what had happened since Moshe and Aharon arrived and made their first appearance before Pharaoh?

[G] Did the Holy One love the Egyptian people? Did He love Pharaoh’s

officials? Did He love Pharaoh? Explain your answers to these questions in light of the Holy One's infliction of the plagues/judgments on Egypt.

[H] Does the fact that the Holy One loves you mean you can expect to escape the effects of judgments the Holy One inflicts upon the nation and the city in which you live? Explain what you believe in this regard - and consider, in this regard, the events of the Garden (the Holy One's judgment after the Fall), to the Flood, to the events surrounding the destruction of S'dom and G'morrah, and to the prophesied judgment day of Messiah, when He will cast "goat" nations into outer darkness.

3. In today's Haftarah reading the prophet *Yirmayahu* [Jeremiah] portrays in vivid imagery the way in which the Holy One will humiliate the mighty Egyptian army.

*Why are your strong ones swept away?
they didn't stand, because the Holy One did drive them.
He made many to stumble, yes, they fell one on another:
and they said, "Arise, and let us go again to our own people,
and to the land of our birth, from the oppressing sword".
They cried there, "Pharaoh king of Mitzrayim is but a noise;
he has let the appointed time pass by".*

[A] Why will the mighty soldiers of Pharaoh's army not be able to fight?

[B] What will these once mighty soldiers do as a result?

[C] What will these soldiers say about Pharaoh? How would you translate this into today's language?

4. In today's thematically connected B'rit Chadasha reading Shaul gives all believers - those from among the goyim who have met Messiah, as well as the redeemed of Israel - a strong warning. This warning specifically relates to the discussion of chapter 11 which immediately preceded. There Shaul spoke to gentile *talmidim* of Messiah concerning how they should relate to unbelieving Israel. He told them:

*But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive,
were grafted in among them, and became partaker with them
of the root and of the richness of the olive tree: **don't boast over the branches.**
But if you boast, it is not you who support the root, but the root supports you.
You will say then, "**Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.**"
True; by their unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by your faith.*

***Don't be conceited, but fear;**
for if the Holy One didn't spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you.*

In light of this discussion Shaul reveals the Holy One's plan to 'provoke Israel to jealousy' through the influx of gentiles into His Kingdom [*i.e.* the Torah-centered world where Messiah's will is done joyfully and unselfishly by surrendered hearts] a warning to all believers:

*I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man who is among you,
not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think;
but to think reasonably, as the Holy One has apportioned to each person a measure of faith.*

[A] Against what does Shaul warn us all?

[B] For what, according to Ezekiel 28 (last week's haftarah) did the Holy One judge Pharaoh?

[C] Shaul indicates there are two factors which should be the basis for our opinions of ourselves. What are these two factors?

[D] How does building self-esteem based on these two factors alone keep us from doing what Shaul warned us about, and what caused Pharaoh's downfall?

*May the Holy One make your neighbors favorably disposed toward you,
And yet may you still not think of yourselves higher than you ought.
The earth is the Holy One's,
and He gives it, and its silver and gold, to Whom He wills.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Psalm 18:46-48

*The Holy One lives; and blessed be my rock.
Exalted be the God of my salvation,
Even the God who executes vengeance for me,
and subdues peoples under me.
He rescues me from my enemies.
Yes, you lift me up above those who rise up against me.
You deliver me from the violent man.*