

# COMMENTARY ON EXODUS

## *Shemot* Names “Israel, Cry Out!”

Exodus 1:1-6:1  
Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23 (A);  
Jeremiah 1:2-3 (S)

This week in our Torah studies we begin our examination of the Book of Exodus. In my personal meditations on the first *parashah* of Exodus, I was really hit with what the following verses communicate:

“The LORD said, ‘I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them’” (Exodus 3:7-9).

*Shemot* takes us from the death of Joseph to the time when the people of Israel begin to be delivered from the oppressing hand of the Egyptians (Exodus 6:1ff). The principal figure in the Torah narrative shifts from Joseph, who we saw at the end of Genesis, to a Levite named Moses,<sup>1</sup> who will be called by God to lead Israel out of its Egyptian bondage.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 2:1-4:31.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 3:10-22.

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In essence, much of our *parashah* reveals the process of how Israel will be released from the bondage of physical human slavery, and we see how its relationship to God will be more clearly described and defined. This portion has a number of interesting vignettes which can help Bible readers better understand our Creator. Moses has his burning bush experience,<sup>3</sup> and we see God first revealing His Divine Name to people.<sup>4</sup> We see in many specific ways how the Most High is a very personal God to His people, and that He talks to His servants and instructs them in what He wants them to do.

## The God Who Sees and Listens

I would like to focus your attention on two statements from *Shemot*, which reveal how our covenant-keeping God is intimately concerned about the condition of His people. In fact, we see how He saw and listened to the very groans and cries of His people:

“Now it came about in *the course of* those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of *their* bondage rose up to God. So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice *of them*” (Exodus 2:23-25).

“The LORD said, ‘I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings.’” (Exodus 3:7).

Here, we are reminded how God watches over His covenant people and listens to their concerns. Like a good shepherd minding his fold of sheep, the Lord oversees His chosen flock. He is faithful to remember the promises He has made to the Patriarchs.<sup>5</sup> This should be very comforting not only for us to read in the Scriptures, but for those who serve the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *today*. As the Psalmist reminds us, the Holy One of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps:

“A Song of Ascents. I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come? My help *comes* from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever” (Psalm 121:1-8).

The Lord is always attentive to our pleadings. The question we must ask ourselves is simply this: **Are we crying out for His presence and**

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<sup>3</sup> Exodus 3:1-9.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 3:14-15.

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 3:6, 16.

**deliverance as in days of old?** What can you learn from our reading in *Shemot*, that you have perhaps glossed over in the past?

## The Cries of David

We know that the Holy Writ is replete with examples of faithful men and women who have cried out to God for help. Perhaps one of the most consistent “criers out” to the Lord is King David. Multiple times we are reminded in his Psalms that he cried to God for guidance, mercy, and compassion. Are there some principles we should be learning about our relationship with Him? Consider these varied quotations from the Book of Psalms:

- “Heed the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God, for to You I pray. In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order *my prayer* to You and *eagerly* watch. For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You” (Psalm 5:2-4).
- “In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry for help before Him came into His ears” (Psalm 18:6).
- “Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice, and be gracious to me and answer me. *When You said, ‘Seek My face,’* my heart said to You, ‘Your face, O LORD, I shall seek’” (Psalm 27:7-8).
- “The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears are *open* to their cry. The face of the LORD is against evildoers, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. *The righteous* cry, and the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles” (Psalm 34:15-17).

Here, in just four Psalms, we can detect some important characteristics about how King David communed with the Lord. We see how David cried out to God on a regular basis. We are told that in the morning, he prayed before Him. David’s words remind us that he understood how the Lord is indeed approachable through prayer and supplication. David knew that the Lord heard his pleas, and by some of the statements delivered in Psalms, we know that He would speak back to David:

“*When You said, ‘Seek My face,’* my heart said to You, ‘Your face, O LORD, I shall seek’” (Psalm 27:8).

Here, David says that He requests him to seek His face. Of course, when David hears God’s voice, the response is an immediate affirmation of the request. Should not this be the kind of intimacy we should all be seeking?

## God’s People Today

From the testimony of the Ancient Israelites and how they were eventually delivered from Egyptian bondage, we should have confidence that God will hear

our groans and cries. But are we consistently offering them before the Father's throne, or are they issued before Him as *complaints*? Do we simply issue some kind of lip service to the Lord, because ultimately we are in bondage to the things of this world that are either not oppressive enough to prompt any pleadings—or that we actually *want* to be in bondage to?

We know that the whole Creation is groaning because of its slavery to sinful corruption. In a like manner, we should be groaning for the ultimate redemption of our bodies, which has been promised from the beginning. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul, who describes this reality:

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:20-23).

Paul was writing to Believers who had been redeemed by the power of the Spirit of God, but were still waiting for the Second Coming and the complete restoration of the body. Because of Yeshua's atoning work, they were able to approach the Father much more easily and personally than the Ancient Israelites before them, and pray for the ability to overcome the struggles of life:

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Yeshua from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Messiah Yeshua from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:11-16).

Here, Paul teaches that Believers have not received a spirit of slavery that leads to fear, but instead have received a spirit of adoption that leads to hope. In this case, as redeemed people we should now be crying out with even greater confidence than King David—because we have the Spirit of God testifying that we are His adopted children!

As redeemed children of God, how much more secure should we be, in knowing that our groans and cries to Him are heard? Today, it is our responsibility as God's people to be crying and groaning for the sake of Israel and our fallen world. As fellow heirs with the Messiah, we can intercede for the lost just as Yeshua interceded in prayer:

“Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Romans 8:17, NIV).

May the Lord encourage you in your walk, as you approach Him and intercede to Him for those who have not yet been adopted by Him as a son or daughter of faith. Perhaps our groaning and cries will lead to another great deliverance for Israel, and indeed, the entire world. **Certainly, we should be rest assured that our cries will be heard!** May His deliverance occur in our lifetimes!

## *V'eira* I appeared “Proclaim His Power and Might”

Exodus 6:2-9:35  
Ezekiel 28:25-29:21

Our Torah portion for this week begins with us seeing the Lord summarize His covenant faithfulness with His people, as He prepares to act in delivering them from Egypt:

“God spoke further to Moses and said to him, ‘I am the LORD; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned. Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant*’” (Exodus 6:2-5).

Throughout *V'eira* we see God reign down various judgments upon Egypt.<sup>6</sup> Even though Moses and Aaron constantly return to Pharaoh with the Divine plea, “Let My people go,”<sup>7</sup> his heart continues to be hardened.<sup>8</sup> Reading through our *parashah*, it seems that God’s two spokespersons are actually losing ground in their role as His agents to deliver the Israelites from the oppression of the Egyptians. If you will remember, as the previous Torah portion, *Shemot* (Exodus 1:1-6:1), came to a close, Moses himself was perplexed about this dilemma. The people of Israel were in worse shape than when the requests to Pharaoh began. The complaints and criticism were bearing down on Moses and Aaron:

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 7:14-9:35.

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 7:16; 8:1, 20f; 9:1, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34-35.