

Reflection for *V'eira* “Is God Discriminating?”

Romans 9:14-17
2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

The account of Ancient Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian slavery is rather universally known, because the traumatic events surrounding the Exodus are so dramatically moving! The Exodus is well known for *more reasons* than simply depicting the salvation available in the sacrificed Lamb of God, Messiah Yeshua, as important as this is. The Exodus has motivated people throughout history to oppose oppression, to promote liberty, and to help one’s fellow human beings—even among those who do not accept the Bible’s record as historically accurate. Even with debates among conservatives over the timing, route, or actual numbers of the Exodus—second to Yeshua’s death and resurrection—it might be the most important event in Scripture! And we agree: **a large number of descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob really did escape Egypt in actual history sometime over three millennia ago.**²

One of the most intriguing, and perhaps perplexing aspects of the Exodus account, is the Lord’s assertion that He was going to use the judgment upon Egypt to declare His power throughout the Earth. We know this has taken place because the Exodus is so well known, even to those who are not that familiar with the Scriptures. What might not be as well known to the average person—although it is quite debated among interpreters—is how the Sovereign God declares several times how He is going to harden Pharaoh’s heart, along with Pharaoh hardening his own heart, in order to accomplish His will. In fact, we not only see the Lord hardening Pharaoh’s heart, but also what the primary reason is for such a hardening:

“And the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, “Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, ‘Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth. For *if by* now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth’”’” (Exodus 9:12-16).

The Holy One of Israel chose to make an example of the king of Ancient Egypt, and his actions, in order to declare who He is to the world. When the Israelites were led out of Egypt, the Canaanites were going to hear about the miracles their God has performed:

“In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; in Your strength You have guided *them* to Your holy habitation. The peoples have heard, they tremble; anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were

² For a further review, consult the relevant sections of the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper* by Messianic Apologetics.

dismayed; the leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; until Your people pass over, O LORD, until the people pass over whom You have purchased” (Exodus 15:13-16).

The power of the Lord’s deliverance of Ancient Israel, as we certainly know today, **has most definitely been used to proclaim who He is throughout the Earth** since the Exodus occurred 3,300 years ago. But as great as the Exodus was, it would not be great unless there had been a foe to defeat. While the destiny of the average Egyptian who endured the judgments of God can be debated, the destiny of the Egyptian Pharaoh cannot be. For some reason or another, the full brunt of God’s judgment was directed toward the Pharaoh. Some think that since the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, that he was just a player in the larger scheme, and should have been exempt from any punishment. Yet at the same time, even theological traditions that emphasize the free will of human beings more than God’s sovereignty may have to concede that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was an exception.

I have always taken great comfort as a Believer, in knowing that God is sovereign in the choices He has made. I have frequently looked to various statements made by the Apostle Paul in Romans chs. 9-11, to find support for this. Is God discriminating? *I think He is.* God chose to use Pharaoh to be an example of His judgment. Can God’s mercy be shown to be mercy, without the example of what it means to not be shown mercy? Consider what the Apostle Paul says:

“What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, ‘I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION’ [Exodus 33:19]. So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH’ [Exodus 9:16]. So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires” (Romans 9:14-18).

God is absolutely just in all that He has done and will ever do—because that is who He is and that is what His perfect character requires. And do keep in mind, God did not necessarily condemn the Egyptian Pharaoh by hardening His heart. The Egyptian Pharaoh believed himself to be a god, and the chance of him ever acknowledging a God of slaves as his superior, was quite impossible. God needed to use someone to judge, in order to proclaim His justice and goodness to the whole Earth, and the Egyptian Pharaoh was the best one to make an example of.

As Believers in Messiah Yeshua, who have partaken of God’s mercy and salvation, we understandably want to focus more on His selection of vessels for whom He has shown mercy. This week as we read through *V’eira*, more attention will be given to the figure of Moses, who was selected by the Lord to be His carrier of deliverance for the Israelites. But remember, the reason Moses was selected, was because of his great humility (cf. Numbers 12:3). If you want to be used by God to be there in a time when He needs you—you must likewise be a humble servant.

Be one who can follow the example of Moses, and humbly submit to the will of the Father! Hardening your heart is an option, but as seen by the example of Pharaoh, **it is not at all the best choice.** Circumcise your heart, and be sensitive to God’s purpose for your life:

“So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe” (Deuteronomy 10:16-17).

Our Creator does exercise His power on a discriminating basis: **some have definitely been chosen to be vessels worthy of His wrath.** At the same time, we might consider that the opposite has been true as well: **some have definitely been chosen to be vessels worthy of His mercy.** Whether these realities are the case for all people, as opposed to specific individuals in history, we will leave for another time. But we all must be united on how God’s justice is without flaw and everlasting. Let us praise Him, and make sure that we are all vessels who receive His mercy!

Reflection for *Bo* “The Passover Lamb”

John 1:29; Luke 2:22-24

John 19:31-37

Acts 13:16-17

Revelation 8:6-9:12; 16:1-21

The Ancient Israelites’ deliverance from Egyptian slavery is one of the most dramatic and pivotal events continually remembered in human history. It is not only significant because of the physical impact of initiating the return of Israel to the Promised Land, but also the spiritual significance of depicting deliverance from the bondage of sin by God’s power. The *parashah* we are considering this week, *Bo* or “Go” (Exodus 10:1-13:16), describes in great detail not only the final judgments of God on Pharaoh and Egypt, but also the formula for escaping the ravages of plagues and the lethal angel of death. The symbolism of what occurs in the conflict, as blameless lambs have to be killed in order to preserve Israel, serves as a marker for later salvation history when Yeshua the Messiah arrives to be the consummate Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). But in order for any Believer today to fully understand and appreciate the severity of the sacrificial blood of the Lamb, it is important to understand the foreshadowing events that preceded it in the Exodus.

The way I look at what we are reading about in *Bo* is that the Holy One, in His illustrative way, proceeds to lay the groundwork for humanity that will ultimately lead to people understanding that they need a Divine Savior to pay for the penalty of their sins. I am reminded of how without the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit to guide us, we mortals are usually blind to spiritual realities. Even with the Spirit sometimes, many still only see through a glass darkly (1Corinthians 13:12). But, we should all praise God for how there is an unveiling that comes through the enlightenment of the Spirit, and we are able to see His message to us more clearly:

“But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Messiah. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory*