

Thankfully, the Lord has given us the extended testimonies of individuals like Moses and Jeremiah. The testimony of those like Paul confirm that there has been a line of faithful people called by God for His service. As saints who have received the same calling of salvation, it is inherent upon each of us that we continually grow and mature in the knowledge not only of our Messiah Yeshua, but our respective responsibilities and the mission we are to perform. With this in mind, I offer you this given our collective need to be enlightened in every capacity, so that we might all fulfill the call that is upon each of our lives:

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Messiah, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the [assembly], which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:18-23).

No one called of the Father has an excuse to avoid the works that He has prepared for us in which to walk! He will perform His word whether we believe it or not. Moses, Jeremiah, and Paul all knew it to be true. If you are called, respond accordingly and accomplish much in the Lord! *He will receive all the glory!*

Haftarah V'eira **“God’s Discipline”**

Ezekiel 28:25-29:21

The common themes that rise up in this week’s Torah reading, *V'eira* (Exodus 6:2-9:35), and its connected Haftarah selection, accentuate the first return and the future eschatological return of Israel to the Promise Land—contrasted with the ancient judgments on Pharaoh’s Egypt. The opening verses address what is commonly understood to be, from Ezekiel’s perspective, a distant return of Israel to the Promised Land after he looks back from what has taken place via the Babylonian captivity. Here, we read that God will not only gather Israel from all the nations where the people have been scattered, but He will also execute judgments upon all who scorn them:

“Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and will manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they will live in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob. They will live in it securely; and they will build houses, plant vineyards and live securely when I execute judgments upon all who scorn them round about them. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God!’” (Ezekiel 28:25-26).

It is critical to recall that during Ezekiel’s time, when the geopolitical climate had come against Ancient Judah, that God raised up the idolatrous Babylonians as His instrument to judge the idolatrous Judahites. Judah’s king decided to desperately call upon a military alliance with Egypt, in order to avoid what was ultimately God’s punishment. This action neither prevented nor deterred God’s judgment. While much of Ezekiel leads one to consider

the judgment upon Israel, Ezekiel's oracles actually include a series of judgments that God will enact upon those whom He has used to judge His people or those who may think they will benefit from their downfall. Ezekiel chs. 29-30 detail how God will punish Egypt. Ezekiel's warning—both for then in ancient times, and now as we consider things happening in the Middle East today—is something Believers should contemplate as we look to the Holy One, *the only Source* for our deliverance and salvation.

This week, as we contemplate the first seven judgments upon the stiffening neck of Pharaoh, which were transferred to Egypt and its people—we are reminded that the consequences of opposing the Creator are devastating. Pharaoh not only suffered, but the entire country he led also suffered. Can you imagine all of the individuals and families of Egypt which were affected by Pharaoh's decisions to prevent the Ancient Israelites from leaving Egypt for a time of worship outside the confines of Goshen? While the narrative of Exodus focuses on broad subjects in describing the various judgments, if you place yourself as a subject or family under Pharaoh's authority, think about how you would be personally judged for the actions of your leader. In a similar vein as you review the history of the Southern Kingdom and its subsequent exile in the timeframe of Ezekiel's prophecies, we find leaders who depended on outside nations for their protection and survival rather than the Almighty. Consequently, the chastisement of the Southern Kingdom occurred as Babylonian hordes sieged Jerusalem and took a substantial number of the people into captivity.

Reading the statements of Ezekiel in the preceding and following verses regarding God's judgment on the nations, **the implication is seen that Israel is not immune from the discipline of God.** In fact, as Biblical history and Scripture reflect, God's people are purposely disciplined as a matter of His love. The principle of lovingly chastising a person, or even a nation for its errant ways, was known by the ancients who believed in the Lord. Consider the thoughts of Job, who certainly understood the concept of being disciplined by the Almighty:

“Behold, how happy is the man whom God reproves, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty” (Job 5:17).

Job understood God's perfect plans for His creatures, declaring to his companions this ultimate vow during his many personal trials: “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him” (Job 13:15a).

In a like manner, Proverbs echoes this same understanding about a connection between a loving God and the object of His affection:

“My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, for whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father *corrects* the son in whom he delights” (Proverbs 3:11-12).

The author of Hebrews cites these two verses, as he exhorts his fellow Believers during a time of great trial and tribulation in the mid-to-late First Century. Note in this passage what the end result of this discipline is to be:

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ‘MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.’ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short

time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us for our good*, so that we may share His holiness. **All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness** (Hebrews 12:5-11).

Here we are told that the profitable yield of discipline is the peaceful fruit of righteousness. While the chastisement might not be seen as joyful, but rather as sorrow and remorse, the ultimate purpose is to draw people into a place of walking right with the Almighty.

In this week's reading, we see that God uses nations to reprove and admonish His people. As our Haftarah selection winds down, we see that both Egypt and Babylon were pawns in the hands of the Eternal One as He chastised His people, and to a certain extent, gave these pagan nations some temporal rewards. However in the end, after the judgment was concluded, Israel was given hope. The House of Israel will be drawn into a fuller understanding that the Almighty is the Lord of all, despite some temporary "spankings":

"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. And he will carry off her wealth and capture her spoil and seize her plunder; and it will be wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labor which he performed, because they acted for Me," declares the Lord GOD. **'On that day I will make a horn sprout for the house of Israel, and I will open your mouth in their midst. Then they will know that I am the LORD'**" (Ezekiel 29:19-21).

In the opening verses of this Haftarah reading, we are given hope that God will eventually return a scattered people of Israel to their homeland. The concluding verse is that they will ultimately know that He is the Lord. Lamentably in the interim, it appears that the pattern will continually evidence how various nations and the decisions of leaders bring about the chastisement necessary to draw us to Him. This is a pattern that God has faithfully used down through the centuries. As we look at the current landscape of world affairs in our era, it appears He will use it again.

The good news is that if we understand that as a loving Father, His discipline is for our good, we will be changed into sons and daughters who walk in righteousness before Him. In so doing, we will be a light to others (Isaiah 42:6), and people who come into our presence will know we are different. No matter how difficult the judgments become, God will always preserve a righteous remnant who will shine forth His truths—until the Messiah returns to rule and reign from Jerusalem:

"Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

May we be so privileged to shine, as we, by example, lead many to righteousness!

Haftarah Bo **"God Rules"**

Jeremiah 46:13-28

As the continuing saga of Israel's departure from Egypt proceeds, this week's *parashah* (Exodus 10:1-13:16), entitled *Bo* or "Go," describes God's final three judgments upon Egypt and the first description of the Passover instructions. Freeing the Israelites from the clutches