

Congregation T'shuvat Yisrael – www.Yeshuati.com

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For those who do not know, the Portion name comes from the first word or words of the portion in Torah. This week the Torah Portion name is Sh'mot and it is translated as “Names”

The Torah Commentary:

Ex. 1:1-1:8

Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob. Rueben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin. Dan, Naphatali, Gad, and Asher. And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already. And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose a up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

The portion of Sh'mot begins with the telling of the names of the children of Israel now in Egypt and the death of Joseph. The children of Israel become numerous and prosperous in the land of Ham, and the stage is set for the change of their fate as we are told a new king arose which did not know Joseph. This means that for either political, religious, or ideologically reasons this king does not see Joseph as a deliverer of Egypt and holds no loyalty or thanks to the children of Israel.

Through the rest of chapter 1 and chapter 2 we are quickly walked through the change of fortune which the children of Israel experience. They face state sanctioned infanticide, and hard bondage at the hands of the new rulers and the people. During this period we are introduced to Moses whom escapes infanticide to be raised in Pharaoh's house, grows up, kills an Egyptian persecuting one of the children of Israel, and flees the country becoming a shepherd in Midian.

Now at the beginning of chapter 3 we see Hashem appears to Moses in the famous Burning Bush experience. I would like to focus less on the super natural part of Moses meeting and more on the words of Hashem's promise.

Ex. 3:6-3:8

Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I

have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

Now after God's promise we hear Moses protest of the situation and God's reaffirmation of his promise. One I find most interesting is Chapter 4:1.

Ex. 4:1

And Moses answered and said, But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The lord hath not appeared to thee.

This statement gives me pause to think of the words of Yeshua in Luke Chapter 18:8 "when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth".

Moses questions the people's faith and is reassured by the Lord with demonstrations of his divine power over the creation, and his promise to deliver the children of Israel and deal with Pharaoh through miraculous intervention. However, as we find out in chapter 5, Moses is not off the mark in questioning the faith of the people. After meeting with Pharaoh and requesting the release of the children of Israel to hold a feast unto God Pharaoh responds by increasing the burden of the children of Israel, and making them gather their own straw to make bricks for their building assignments. Quickly the children of Israel become incensed at Moses and he cries out to the Lord setting the stage for the Lord to deliver his people with a great and mighty show of force.

Ex.5:21-6:1

And they said unto them, The lord look upon you , and judge; because you have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us. And Moses returned to the Lord and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people: neither hast thou delivered thy people at all. Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

In a similar manner through the writings of the Prophets and in the Brit' Ha Dashah we are promised the children of Israel's deliverance from the nations back to the land of Israel. I wonder can we muster more faith than our forefathers, or we will too doubt and look to Pharaoh for kindness rather than the Lord. The greatest part of this portion to me is that in spite of the lack of faith Hashem undeterred moves on with his covenant promise to redeem the nation.