

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

of Pharaoh is so difficult that extreme measures are taken, so that future generations will know of God's exploits against those who do not recognize His sovereignty. The explanation of the plague of locusts,<sup>1</sup> the three days of darkness so heavy that one could feel it,<sup>2</sup> and the death of the firstborn are described in detail.<sup>3</sup> The Sages noted parallels in the words of Jeremiah, who described another time of judgment upon Egypt as Nebuchadnezzar expanded the influence of Babylon. We find a contrast between punishments meted upon Egypt, and the ultimate deliverance of the Jews who were to be taken into Babylonian captivity for only a limited time:

“I shall give them over to the power of those who are seeking their lives, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of his officers. Afterwards, however, it will be inhabited as in the days of old,” declares the LORD. **‘But as for you, O Jacob My servant, do not fear, nor be dismayed, O Israel! For, see, I am going to save you from afar, and your descendants from the land of their captivity; and Jacob will return and be undisturbed and secure, with no one making him tremble. O Jacob My servant, do not fear,’** declares the LORD, ‘For I am with you. For I will make a full end of all the nations where I have driven you, **yet I will not make a full end of you; but I will correct you properly and by no means leave you unpunished”** (Jeremiah 46:26-28).

The Exodus account and the ten judgments that provide the Israelites release from Egyptian servitude, can be contrasted with those who follow human leaders versus those who know the Creator God. Jeremiah understood these two options, describing the Pharaoh of Egypt as a big noise, compared to the Lord of Hosts who loomed like a prominent mountain:

“They cried there, ‘Pharaoh king of Egypt *is but* a big noise; He has let the appointed time pass by!’ **‘As I live,’ declares the King whose name is the LORD of hosts,** ‘Surely one shall come *who looms up* like Tabor among the mountains, or like Carmel by the sea” (Jeremiah 46:17-18).

Let's face it: the immutable Master of the Universe is not impressed by mere mortals, pretender gods, or some part of the created order that human beings elevate to godlike status. If people choose to worship the sun or the moon or elements like the Nile River or various creatures—or anything other than the Holy One of Israel—they are deceived and are following after false gods. In our Torah reading as the Lord is describing the procedure for avoiding the death of the firstborn, He states that a major part of what He is doing is to judge the gods of Egypt:

“For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; **and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the LORD”** (Exodus 12:12).

The jealous God of Creation (Exodus 34:14) will not share His glory with anything that He has made, or anything that humanity misconstrues to be worthy of worship. The Egyptians discovered this in a very graphic way during the period of the Exodus, and later when they were enticed into an alliance with Judah prior to the Babylonian invasion. What is interesting is that even with these historical precedents duly recorded for us in Scripture, there is a coming time when these lessons are going to have to be repeated as the world will once again turn to leaders or other created things for so-called deliverance.

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 10:1-20.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 10:21-29.

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 11:1-10.

As seen in the Book of Revelation, there are similarities between the judgments upon Egypt in Exodus, and what transpires against the entire world when the Time of Jacob's Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) occurs at the End of this Age. Note some of the parallels between the ten judgments upon Egypt, and the seven bowls of wrath seen in Revelation 16:

"Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, 'Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.' So the first *angel* went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. The second *angel* poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like *that* of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died. Then the third *angel* poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, 'Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.' And I heard the altar saying, 'Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.' The fourth *angel* poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory. Then the fifth *angel* poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds. The sixth *angel* poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. And I saw *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. ('Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.') And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon. Then the seventh *angel* poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, 'It is done.' And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake *was it, and so mighty*. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe" (Revelation 16:1-21).

The similarities between the original Exodus judgments and those at the End of the Age include sores from the pestilence, bloody seas and rivers, a judgment upon the Nile and Euphrates Rivers, darkness and sun changes, earthquakes and hailstones. God, in essence, will use the created order to execute His punishment at some future time, just like He has done in the past. This pattern of punishment described in Revelation, while not necessarily exact, does warn us that these events will eventually take place. It is imperative for those of us who know the Holy One of Israel and who are studying His Word, that as we review passages from Exodus and Jeremiah and consider prophecies from the Book of Revelation, that we are mindful of our task to point people to **the only solution** to the problems to come.

In this week's *parashah*, the physical acts of slaughtering a lamb at the designated time, and taking some of the blood and wiping it on the doorposts and doorframe of the house, were the instruction to avoid the death angel (Exodus 12:7, 22-23). By faithfully obeying this command, the Israelite homes, and all of the livestock, were protected from the death of the firstborn that God used as His final judgment to get Pharaoh's attention.

Similar to the Exodus, those of us living today have another event, which took place nearly two thousand years ago, which requires our faithful heartfelt acceptance in order to avoid eternal separation from our Creator. This is, of course, trust in the atoning work of the Messiah Yeshua, our Passover Lamb who paid the penalty for not only our iniquities, but our fallen nature in Adam. There in Jerusalem, hung on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13), pierced for our transgressions (Zechariah 12:10), He bled and died for us. He was buried and received the punishment that our transgressions merited. He was resurrected and ascended to the right hand of the Father in Heaven.

Now if we believe in the Messiah Yeshua as our Savior and Redeemer, we do not have to turn to human leaders or nations for our deliverance and salvation. Instead, we turn wholly to Him and to Him alone for what is required for eternal life! He rules from Heaven above! If you want to spend eternity with Him, then you must believe in Him with all your heart in order for God's Spirit to take up residence in your new heart of flesh. Eventually in His timing alone, just like the Ancient Israelites in Egypt or the Jews who were exiled to Babylon, His greater plan of salvation and deliverance will be realized. The Prophet Ezekiel says,

"For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God" (Ezekiel 36:24-28).

How this all will take place is something only to be considered in the Lord's timing. We each often have to remember that the Ruler not only rules, but He makes the rules—including the time of the final ingathering. In the meantime, our responsibility is to witness to a lost and searching world. Living a life that is pleasing to Him, and proclaiming the good news pointing to Him, are required of each of us. Looking at passages of Scripture like the above on a consistent basis, so that we are reminded of our duties and obligations, helps immeasurably. Pretending these truths do not exist, or are only to be considered by those in full time ministry, is not an excuse.

Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and a multitude of others down through the centuries, discovered that the Creator God rules regardless of whether human beings recognize it or not. Denying truth does not change or alter truth. Ignoring the rules of salvation according to the Scriptures has devastating consequences. One might think that if those in unbelief could only ask someone who has died in unbelief what happens, things would be different, but not even a man having come back from the dead could have convinced another's brothers to change their ways—if the Scriptures had not been able to convict them:

"And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will

repent!’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead!’” (Luke 16:27-31).

We have a Savior who raised from the dead! Believe in Him and His work! He is seated at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:32-34) and He rules (Matthew 28:18)!

## ***Haftarah B'shalach*** **“Singing Prophetesses”**

Judges 4:4-5:31 (A); 5:1-31 (S)

This week’s deliverance of the Ancient Israelites from the clutches of Egypt is completed, as the dramatic destruction of the Egyptian charioteers in the Red Sea highlights God’s miraculous activities during the escape and early weeks of the Exodus from Egypt. Our Torah portion (Exodus 13:17-17:16) portrays visible and tangible evidences of God’s presence and provision. The ubiquitous pillars of cloud and fire that led and protected Israel from the vengeful Egyptians, not only manifested themselves, but they became a guiding fixture during the wilderness journey.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, bitter water was made potable, with sweet water emerging to slake the Israelites’ thirst.<sup>5</sup> Eventually, the arrival of the daily provisions of manna, separating out the Sabbath as a day of rest, provided nourishment for the next forty years.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the never-ending war with the Amalekites is noted, as Joshua prevailed in this early battle.<sup>7</sup>

With all of these extraordinary events, it may be curious to us that the Sages focused on Miriam’s singing praises of victory over the Egyptians, connecting it to a song of victory song by Deborah in the Book of Judges. Both Miriam and Deborah are labeled as *prophetesses*, providing a connective link that draws our Torah reading and Haftarah passage together:

**“Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing. Miriam answered them, ‘Sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; the horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea’”** (Exodus 15:20-21).

**“Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment”** (Judges 4:4-5).

Drawing a parallel between Miriam and Deborah at this relatively early stage in the annual Torah reading cycle, gives the Messianic student an opportunity to be reminded of the critical roles gifted women have had and *continue* to have in the Body of Messiah. The fact that these Scriptures cite both Miriam and Deborah, associating these women with the office of “prophetess” or *neviah* (נְבִיאָה), means that they possess the same authority and responsibility that similar male prophets have been given down through the ages. God looks at His chosen vessels without prejudice regarding their sex, nationality, or station in life. This is why the Apostle Paul can so confidently assert,

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 13:21-22.

<sup>5</sup> Exodus 15:22-27.

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 16:1-7.

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 17:8-16.