

VA'EIRA I appeared (to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob)



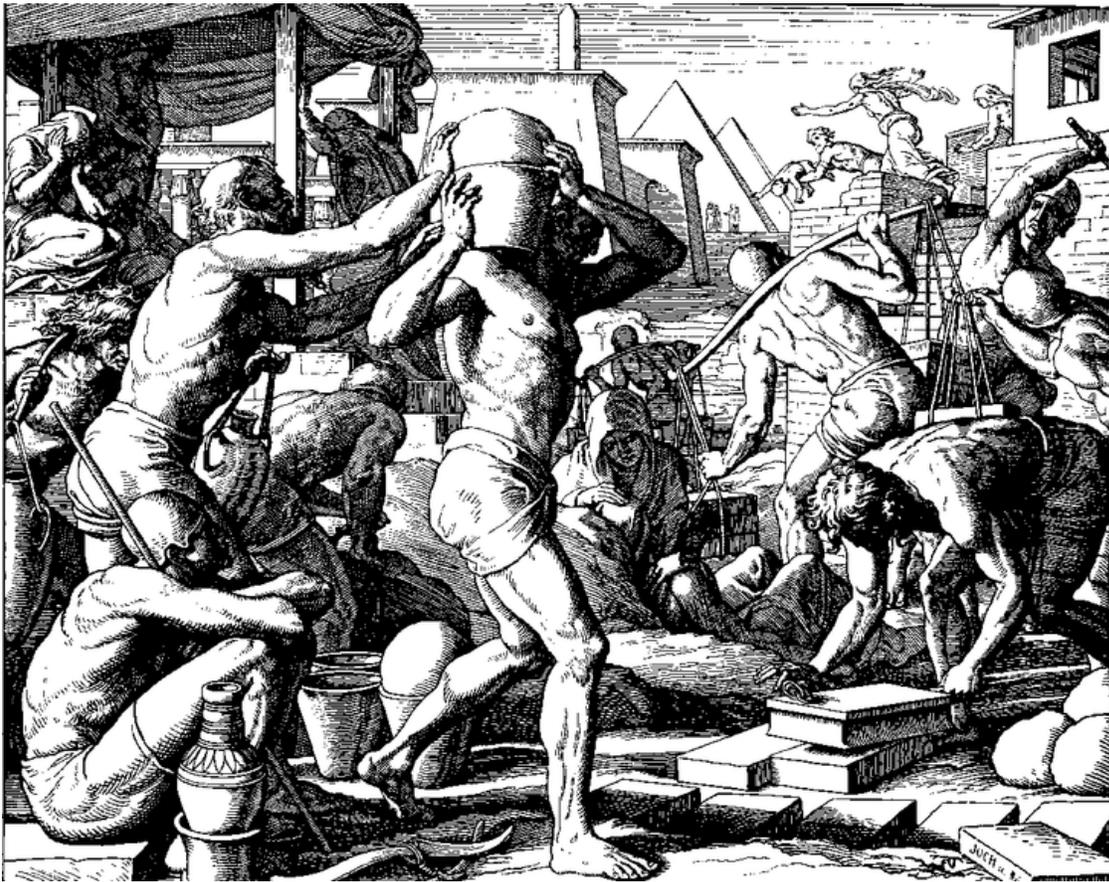
Moses talks with Elohim

**Exodus 6:2. And Elohim spoke to Moses and said to him, I am יהוה: 3 And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, by the name of El Shaddai, but by My name יהוה I was not known to them.**

**Question:** What was יהוה saying to Moses? יהוה rebuked Moses harshly: Many times I revealed Myself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and they did not question My ways, nor did they say to me, "What is Your name?" You questioned My ways and asked from the start, "What is Your name?" and now you are saying to Me, "You have not saved Your people!" unlike Abraham, to whom I said, "Isaac will be considered your seed" and then I said to him, "Raise him up to Me as an offering" -- still, he did not question Me." The Patriarchs only knew Me by El Shaddai (sufficient), you know Me by יהוה and yet you question Me. The Patriarchs never saw miracles and yet they had faith in Me. Moses would soon witness miracles of a magnitude that dwarfed anything the Patriarchs had ever seen. (Chumash)

**Question:** Why was Moses' arrival in Egypt followed by an immediate intensification of the slavery of the Israelites? The Egyptians could not be punished until their "measure of sin" was full. יהוה is patient even with the wicked. By Pharaoh's cruel decree to deny straw to the slaves, Pharaoh had reached his lowest point and so the process of the exodus and the punishment of Egypt could now begin. (Chumash)

**4** And I have also established <sup>את</sup> My covenant <sup>אתם</sup> with them, to give them <sup>את</sup> the land of Canaan, <sup>את</sup> the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. **5** And I have also heard <sup>את</sup> the groaning of the Children of Israel, <sup>אתם</sup> whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered <sup>את</sup> My covenant.



The Egyptians Afflicted the Israelites with Burdens  
(woodcut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld from the 1860 *Die Bibel in Bildern*)

**6** Go say to the Children of Israel, I am יהוה and I will bring <sup>אתכם</sup> you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will *take* <sup>אתכם</sup> you out of their bondage and I will redeem <sup>אתכם</sup> you with a stretched out arm and with great judgments: **7** And I will take <sup>אתכם</sup> you to Me for a people and I will be to you an Elohim: and <sup>אתכם</sup> you will know that I am יהוה your Elohim, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. **8** <sup>והבאתי</sup> And I will bring <sup>אתכם</sup> you into the land that <sup>נשאתי</sup> I swore to give <sup>אתה</sup> it (her) to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob; and I will give <sup>אתה</sup> it (her) to you for a heritage: I am יהוה.

**Question:** What was יהוה promising his people? The four expressions of redemption relate to the four aspects of our liberation from Egypt:

- 1) "I will bring you out" -- our physical removal from the geographical boundaries of Egypt;
- 2) "I will rid you of their bondage" -- our delivery from Egyptian supremacy (Egypt was a superpower that enslaved and oppressed many nations and peoples outside its borders);
- 3) "I will redeem" -- the elimination of any future possibility of enslavement by the "great judgments" inflicted upon the Egyptians;
- 4) "I will take you to Myself for a people and I will be to you an Elohim" -- our election as יהוה's chosen people at Mount Sinai and the gift of Torah, the purpose of the Exodus. (Chumash)

**9 And Moses spoke *this to the Children of Israel: but they did not listen to Moses because of their anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.***

**Question:** Did the Israelites not have faith? Their negative attitude was due not to lack of faith, but to the difficult physical and emotional circumstances under which they labored. (Chumash)

**Question:** We should not rely on miracles. What does this mean? Not to rely on miracles means that we should try our best to live according to what appear to be the rules of nature and not take foolish chances, such as running across a busy highway and assuming that יהוה will cause the speeding cars to miss us. However, this doesn't preclude hoping and even praying for unlikely events or even miracles to happen. Nothing is beyond יהוה's ability, and the more deeply we realize it, the more miracles יהוה will reveal in our lives.

**Question:** Can a person's hopeful attitude have any effect on the events around him, or do things just happen however they do in spite of how we feel? Our attitude affects reality in many ways. Firstly, a positive attitude gives us additional energy to help us think more clearly and act more effectively to reach our goal. But in a deeper sense, יהוה designed life in a way that we, through our attitudes, can have a say upon how we perceive events, and even to an extent upon their outcome. A positive, hopeful attitude can really be the key to living a life full of miracles.

**10 And יהוה spoke to Moses saying, 11 Go speak to Pharaoh King of Egypt that he *must* let go of אֶת־ Children of Israel from his land. 12 And Moses spoke before יהוה saying, *The Children of Israel have not listened to me; how will Pharaoh hear me, I am of uncircumcised lips (a poor speaker)?* 13 And יהוה spoke to Moses and to Aaron and gave them a charge to אֶת־ Children of Israel and to Pharaoh King of Egypt to bring *the Children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.***

**Question:** How should a person react when he has to face something that is really difficult for him? The most positive approach is to realize that although it may not be easy, we should strive to put in our best effort, while turning to יהוה for help. We will often find that we can do much, much more than we thought.

**Question:** How do you think that being challenged to overcome our limitations can improve our relationship with יהוה? When life is a breeze, it is very easy to write יהוה out of the picture. But when we are forced to face a situation, or part of ourselves in which we feel limited, we are better able to abandon the illusion of self-reliance, and realize that we need to turn to יהוה if we hope to succeed. This serves to open us to the spiritual reality that even the things that seem to come easy are also only gifts given to us from יהוה. At this point, our relationship with Him jumps to an entirely new, higher plane.

**Spiritual Exercise:** Can you think of an obstacle you had to overcome? How did you do it? Did you ask the Almighty for help?

**Question:** Moses lacked the self-confidence to try to free his people from slavery, but יהוה helped him build up the confidence to try - and succeed! יהוה wants us to believe in ourselves too, and make the most of our lives. Why do you think a person wants to give up? It's natural to feel like we're failures, especially when things don't work out right away. But if we make the effort to believe in ourselves and not give up, we'll find we can do many things we thought we couldn't.

**Question:** Can a person ever be 'too' confident? If by that we mean acting arrogantly or taking foolish risks, then the answer is 'yes.' However, in most things situations, a healthy, confident optimism is the key to a happy, successful life.

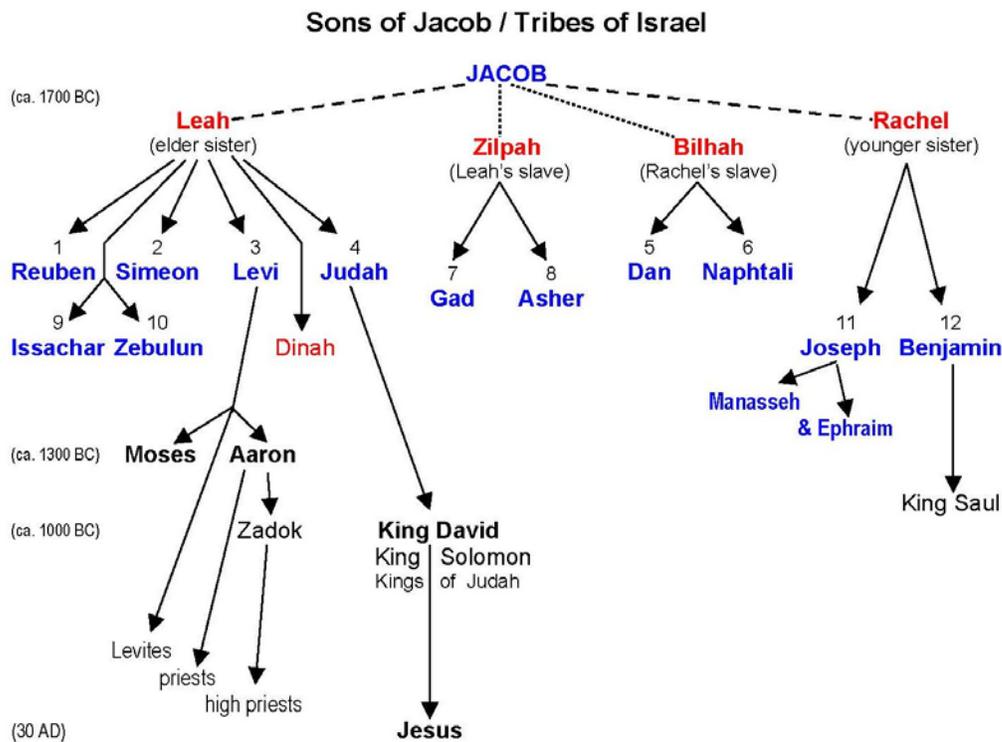
**14** These *are* the heads **אֲבֹתָם** of their father's houses: The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel; Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi: these *are* the families of Reuben. **15** And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul, the son of a Canaanitish woman: these *are* the families of Simeon. **16** And these *are* the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations; Gershon and Kohath and Merari: Levi was 137 years old. **17** The sons of Gershon; Libni and Shimi, according to their families. **18** And the sons of Kohath; Amram and Izhar and Hebron and Uzziel: Kohath was 133 years old. **19** And the sons of Merari; Mahali and Mushi: these *are* the families of Levi according to their generations. **20** And took Amram **אֶת** Jochebed his father's sister for a wife; and she gave birth to him **אֶת** Aaron **וְאֶת** and Moses: Amram was 137 years old. **21** And the sons of Izhar; Korah and Nepheg and Zichri. **22** And the sons of Uzziel; Mishael and Elzaphan and Zithri. **23** And took Aaron **אֶת** Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, **אֶת** sister of Naashon, as a wife; and she gave birth to him **אֶת** Nadab **וְאֶת** and Abihu, **אֶת** Eleazar **וְאֶת** and Ithamar.

**Question:** What can we learn from this: “took Aaron את־ Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, זַחֵוֹת sister of Naashon, as a wife”? From here we learn that one who contemplates taking a wife must first investigate her brothers to see if they are righteous. (Chumash)

**24 And the sons of Korah; Assir and Elkanah and Abiasaph: these are the families of the Korhites. 25 And Eleazar, Aaron’s son, took one of the daughters of Putiel as a wife; and she gave birth to him את־ Phinehas: these are the heads of the אֲבוֹת fathers of the Levites according to their families.**

**Question:** How do we know that Phinehas was special to יהוה? The list of the generations of the Levites start in Ex 6:16 and in Ex 6:25 we see the first mention of someone who will be very special את־ Phinehas is born. The next time we will see Phinehas name is in Num 24:7 when he does a very brave act and stops a plague against the את Children of Israel and his reward is that את enters into a everlasting את Covenant of Peace with he and his descendants (Num 25:12).

**Question:** Why were the wives mentioned in these verses? Only three cases does the Torah mention the wives of the leaders. In all three cases the reason is to show that the offspring of the great people descended not only from distinguished fathers, but also from distinguished mothers. (Chumash)



**26 These are the same Aaron and Moses to whom יהוה says, Bring out את־ Children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies.**

**Question:** Why was the genealogy listed for Aaron and Moses? Moses and Aaron were produced from such outstanding ancestors that it is understandable that such men were chosen for this tremendous task. (Chumash)

**Question:** Why is Aaron mentioned before Moses in many places in scriptures? This teaches that both were equally great in יהוה's eyes, even though Moses was the greatest prophet who ever lived.

**Question:** Why was Aaron described as equal to Moses?

- 1) Aaron's participation was indispensable to Moses' success.
- 2) Aaron achieved the absolute maximum of his potential just as Moses did. In יהוה's scales, achievement is measured by how well one fulfills one's personal mission (Chumash)

**Question:** Moses was a very humble man and used his talents to serve יהוה. 'Everything is from יהוה except for the recognition of יהוה in our lives.' How do you understand this statement and how does it affect our level of humility? יהוה has put us in the world with our particular life situation - with our looks, our family, our strengths and weaknesses, etc. All of these form the setting or backdrop for our lives and in the ultimate sense is not something we control. What is in our control is to what degree we are going to remember and acknowledge that these things are from יהוה, that He has given them to us for our best good and He wants us to choose to use them in the most positive way we can. Forgetting this can cause us to become conceited and feel we are better than someone else. But remembering this will keep us humble no matter how much we achieve.

**Question:** Are we doing anything wrong by not using our talents and abilities as long as we are not harming anyone? When we don't use our abilities we *are* harming someone - ourselves. The abilities יהוה gave us are those we need to accomplish in life what we need for our best happiness and we will only feel truly fulfilled when we use the abilities He gave us. In a deeper sense, when we don't use our abilities, we also harm the world. Each of us is a 'piece' in יהוה's cosmic puzzle needed to better the world. We play our cosmic role when we discover our abilities and channel them in a positive way that is consistent with our values.

**Question:** How many of us can be truly great? The Torah's answer is: everyone! But how can this be, since Moses was the greatest prophet who ever lived? As long as we live up to 100% of our full potential, then we can be great too! **We may feel that success is based on how much we accomplish, but true success is, rather, based on how hard we try and how much we fulfill our potential as we surrender to the will of יהוה.**

**Question:** Why do you think fulfilling one's potential is a true measure of greatness? Most of the talents and abilities we have, such as intelligence, good looks, or athletic talent, are gifts from יהוה - things for which we never had to work. While these can be positive, they don't define greatness. Greatness comes from the effort we put in to make the most of our abilities, be they large or small.

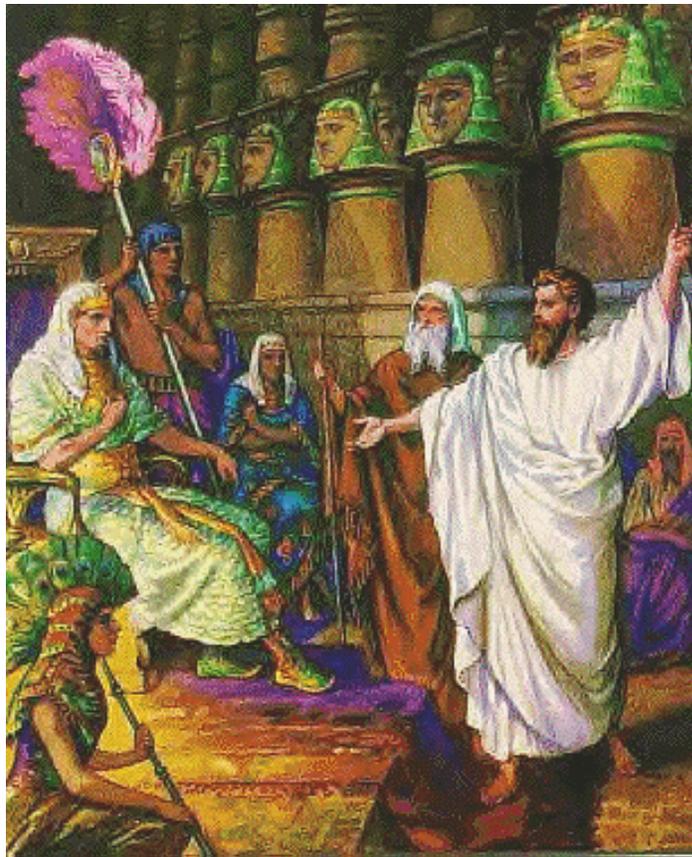
**Spiritual Exercise:** Are you living up to your full potential? How much effort are you using to obtain the goals that יהוה has for you?

**27** *These are the same* Moses and Aaron who spoke to Pharaoh King of Egypt to bring out את Children of Israel from Egypt. **28** And it came to pass on the day when יהוה spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, **29** that יהוה spoke to Moses saying, I am יהוה: speak to Pharaoh King of Egypt את all that I say to you. **30** And Moses said before יהוה, I am of uncircumcised lips (*a poor speaker*). How will Pharaoh listen to me? Exodus 7:1 And יהוה said to Moses, I have made you as Elohim to Pharaoh: and Aaron your brother will be your prophet. **2** אתה You will speak את all that I command you: and Aaron your brother will speak to Pharaoh that he send את Children of Israel out of his land. **3** And I will harden את heart of Pharaoh and multiply את My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. **4** But Pharaoh will not listen to you, that I may lay את My hand upon Egypt and bring out את My armies and את My people the Children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. **5** And the Egyptians will know that I am יהוה when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt and bring out את Children of Israel from among them.

**Question:** How could the just יהוה who created man with freedom of choice-and who desires repentance, not death-prevent Pharaoh from exercising his right to repent? Egypt was punished only for the enslavement and the intense persecution that took place before Pharaoh's heart was hardened. Those were sins that Pharaoh and his people committed of their own free will. At some point, it was too late to repent because their sins were too many and they must be punished. (Chumash)

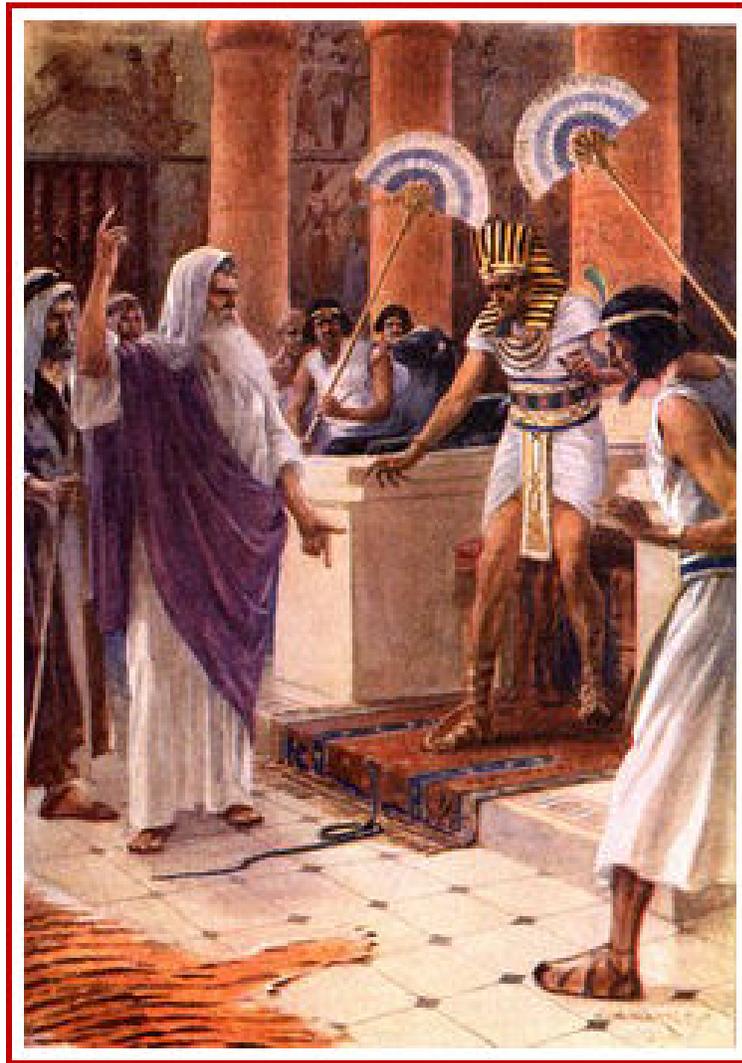
**Question:** Who hardened Pharaoh's heart? We see in Ex 7:3 that it is יהוה through את who hardens Pharaoh's heart so that את can multiply His signs and wonders upon the land of Egypt. In Ex 7:4 we see that it is יהוה speaking to Moses and laying His את hand upon Pharaoh and Egypt, consequently it appears to be את bringing forth the judgments of יהוה upon Egypt. This is a perfect picture of the Yah-head, יהוה works through את together as ONE and they work the same way today.

**6** And Moses and Aaron did as יהוה commanded אתם them. **7** And Moses was 80 years old and Aaron 83 years old when they spoke to Pharaoh. **8** And יהוה spoke to Moses and to Aaron saying, **9** When Pharaoh speaks to you asking you to show a miracle for him: ואמר and you say to Aaron, take את your rod and cast it before Pharaoh and it will become a serpent. **10** And Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and they did as יהוה had commanded: and cast down Aaron את his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants and it became a serpent.



Aaron's Rod Changed to a Serpent (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

**11 Then Pharaoh called the wise men and the sorcerers: the magicians of Egypt also did the *same* with their enchantments.**



Moses turns his staff into a snake

**Question:** Who were these sorcerers? The practitioners knew how to alter nature and foretell the future by utilizing power built into Creation. יהוה created the universe so that angels and other heavenly forces regulate earthly events. יהוה also provided that by the use of various sacred or profane incantations, people could harness these spiritual forces and thereby override the laws of nature. This is how the Egyptians magicians and others whose feats are related in scripture and they were able to perform miracles. It was because of their ability that false prophets were able to mislead people into believing in the power of idols. They also practiced communicating with demons in order to predict or influence the future. They used an incantation, which they uttered silently and in secret provoking acts of demons. (Chumash)



Pharaoh's sorcerers bring forth their snakes

**12 Every man cast down his rod and they became serpents: but swallowed up *the* rod of Aarons  $\text{וַתֵּשֶׁבֶת}$  their rods.**



The Rod of Aaron Devours the Other Rods (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

### **13 And He hardened Pharaoh's heart that he did not listen to them; as יהוה had said.**

**Question:** Pharaoh was very stubborn and would not let the people go. What do you think might be the relationship between stubbornness and humility? Many times we act stubbornly simply because we feel too conceited to admit to others or to ourselves, that we don't know something or have made a mistake. A truly humble person will easily admit these things and will not be stubborn over trivialities.

**Question:** Time after time, Pharaoh stubbornly refused to listen until he was struck with plague after plague that destroyed Egypt. Why do you think people sometimes act in a self-destructive manner, and do things they know are harmful? There are different levels of knowing. Sometimes we may "know" something intellectually in our minds, but still not really "know" it in a deep enough way to motivate us to change our actions. Genuine knowing also includes having in mind the likely future consequences of the choices that we make. If you drink too much alcohol knowing that this will cause you to become nauseated and sick, you are dismissing the potential consequences of your actions. Hopefully you will realize that it wasn't worth it, and this knowledge will motivate you to behave differently in the future.

**Question:** Can you think of any ways that a person who is naturally stubborn could put this trait to a positive use? Every character trait that יהוה gives a person has the potential for good. In the case of stubbornness, a person could use this trait to stand up for what is right, even when he's being pressured to do something wrong. He could also stubbornly refuse to give up when the going gets tough and reach goals that a less stubborn person would be unable to accomplish.

**Question:** Do you think you would more likely avoid unhealthy habits, if your body gave you immediate feedback by causing you pain every time you entered into the habit? If you don't feel the negative consequences of the actions right away, it would be much harder for you to stop the habit. Part of the great danger of cigarette smoking and other unhealthy habits are that we don't feel how they are harming us immediately. Often, by the time a person realizes it, it is too late. This also applies to a person's spiritual health. The choices we make concerning how we treat others and the values we choose to live by largely determine the type of person we will become, even if we don't always feel it happening.

**Question:** Many normal healthy people often find themselves falling into self-destructive behavior patterns. How do you think a person can best change such a pattern? A big step in the right direction comes when we are able to recognize any negative patterns which might exist. Once we admit to ourselves that something might need changing, we are well on the way toward changing it. A person who is sincerely dedicated to living a healthy and meaningful life will find the change well worth the effort.

**Spiritual Exercise:** Can you think of any self-destructive behavior that you are prone to doing? Use steps this week to stop this behavior and be free from its hold on you.

**Question:** A wise person is one who learns from everyone. What do you think this means? Wisdom doesn't mean 'knowing it all.' Wisdom means that a person values worthwhile knowledge so much that he's willing to do whatever is necessary to acquire more, and often that means being willing to ask and accept the advice of others.

**Question:** How long did Moses and Aaron wait before they went back to Pharaoh? **Jasher 80:** And at the end of two years, יהוה again sent Moses to Pharaoh to bring out the children of Israel, and to send them out of the land of Egypt. And Moses went and came to the house of Pharaoh, and he spoke to him the words of יהוה who had sent him, but Pharaoh would not listen to the voice of יהוה, and יהוה roused his might in Egypt upon Pharaoh and his subjects, and יהוה smote Pharaoh and his people with very great and deadly plagues.

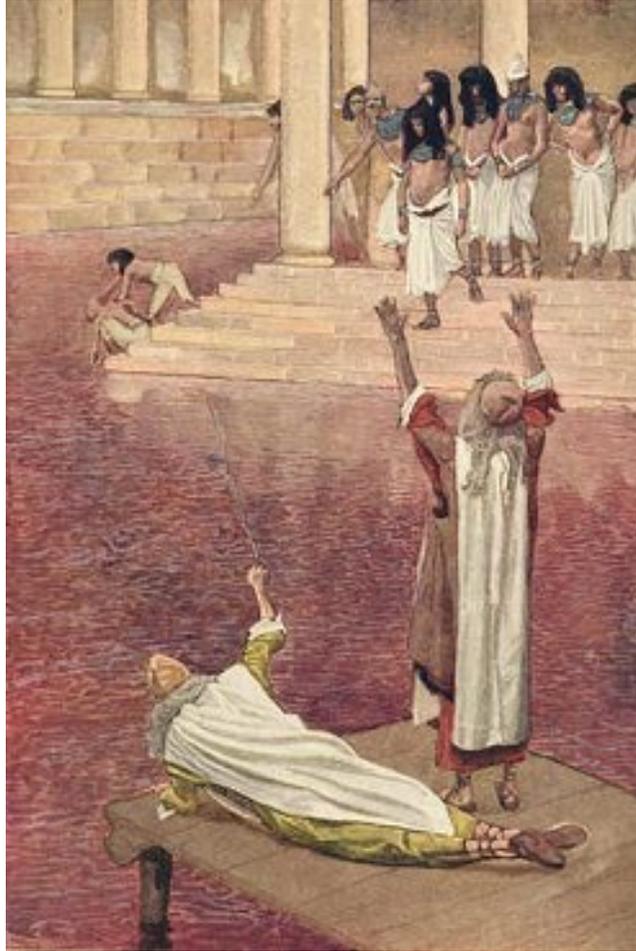
**14 And יהוה said to Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refused to let the people go.**

**Question:** How many plagues came upon Egypt? There were 10 plagues- 3 sets of 3 plagues each- followed by the Plague of the Firstborn, which was meant to break down Pharaoh's resistance and bring the release from Egypt. Within each group of three, only the first two were preceded by warnings to Pharaoh. When Pharaoh ignored them, the two plagues became "witnesses" that established the intended point that יהוה is unmatched by any power. The third plague in each series was not preceded by a warning, but came as a punishment to Pharaoh and his people for not listening to the message that had been delivered by Moses.

- 1) blood, frogs, lice
- 2) wild beasts, epidemic, boils
- 3) hail, locusts, darkness
- 4) death of firstborn (Chumash)

**15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning; when he goes out to the water; and you will stand by the rivers bank and wait לקראתו to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you will take in your hand. 16 ואמרת And you say to him, יהוה Elohim of the Hebrews has sent me to you saying, Let go of עַמִּי My people that they may serve Me in the wilderness: and until now you would not listen. 17 So יהוה says, בָּזאת in this you will know that I am יהוה: I will strike the rod that is in my hand upon the waters which are in the river and they will be turned to blood. 18 And the fish that are in the river will die and the river will stink; and the Egyptians will be unwilling to drink from the water of the river. 19 And יהוה spoke to Moses, Say to Aaron, Take your rod and stretch out your hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers and upon their ponds and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.**

**Question:** Why did יהוה turn the water into blood? Since there is no rainfall in Egypt, and the Nile ascends and waters the land, so the Egyptians worshipped the Nile. יהוה therefore defiled their god and afterwards He afflicted them. (Chumash)



The Plague of Blood painted by artist James Tissot in 1896.



All the Fish Died

**Question:** Did the Israelites have water to drink? If an Egyptian and an Israelite were in one house where there was a barrel full of water, and the Egyptian went to fill a pitcher, he would discover that it contained blood; but the Israelite would drink water from the same barrel. The plague did not touch the Israelites no matter where they were. (Chumash)



Aaron strikes the waters

**20** And Moses and Aaron did as יהוה commanded; and he lifted up the rod and struck את the waters that *were* in the river in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that *were* in the river were turned to blood. **21** And the fish that *were* in the river died; and the river stank and the Egyptians could not drink from the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. **22** And the magicians of Egypt did *the same* with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he listen to them; as יהוה had said. **23** And Pharaoh turned and went into his house and he did not concern his heart לזאת *for this*. **24** And all the Egyptians dug round the river *for water to drink; because they could not drink of the water from the river*. **25** And seven days were fulfilled after struck את יהוה the river.

**Question:** Who struck the water and turned it into blood? Ex 7:20-25 we see it is את who strikes the waters and turns them to blood for 7 days.



Israel in Egypt (1867 painting by [Edward Poynter](#))

**Question:** How long did each plague last? With each of the plagues, Moses would warn Pharaoh for 3 weeks and the plague itself would last seven days, which totaled a month. At the beginning of the next month, Moses would start warning Pharaoh about the next plague. Upon expiration of the seven days, each plague would cease automatically. There were times however when Pharaoh relented and asked Moses to pray for the end of a plague before the seven days were completed. (Chumash)

**Exodus 8:1** And יהוה spoke to Moses, go to Pharaoh וְאָמַרְתָּ *and you say to him*, יהוה says, Let go of אֶת־ My people that they may serve Me. 2 And if אָתָּה *you* refuse to let them go, I will strike אֶת־ all your borders with frogs:

**Question:** The plagues, which יהוה brought upon the Egyptians, also had the effect of establishing peace among them. How was this? There was a dispute between the Ethiopians and the Egyptians; the latter said: "Our borders extend till here" while the former claimed, "Our borders extend to here." But when the frogs came the dispute was resolved, because the plague only visited the Egyptian borders and thus the Ethiopians knew which was not theirs. (Chumash)

**Jasher 80:** And יהוה sent again and caused all their waters to bring out frogs, and all the frogs came into the houses of the Egyptians. And when the Egyptians drank, their bellies were filled with frogs and they danced in their bellies as they dance when in the river. (The frogs would go into their intestines and croak.)

**3** And the river will bring out frogs abundantly, which will go into your house and into your bedchamber and upon your bed and into the house of your servants and upon your people and into your ovens and into your kneading troughs: **4** And the frogs will come up *both* on you and upon your people and upon all your servants.



Plague of Frogs (for Miracles) by Jackie Morris

**5 And יהוה spoke to Moses, Say to Aaron, Stretch forth אֶת־ your hand with your rod over the streams, over the rivers and over the ponds and cause to come up אֶת־ frogs upon the land of Egypt. 6 And stretched out Aaron אֶת־ his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up and covered אֶת־ the land of Egypt. 7 And the magicians did so with their enchantments and brought up אֶת־ frogs upon the land of Egypt. 8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, Ask יהוה that He may take away the frogs from me and from My people; and I will let go אֶת־ the people that they may go sacrifice to ליהוה.**



Aaron stretched his hand over the waters





The Plague of Frogs (1670 engraving by Gerard Jollain)

**9** And Moses said to Pharaoh, *You will have the honor of naming the time* when I will ask for you and for your servants and for your people to destroy the frogs from you and your houses *that they may remain in only the river?*



**Question:** What was Moses saying to Pharaoh? Make a request that you feel I cannot fulfill, and if you are right, you will be able to claim that I failed your test! Tell me the moment when you want the frog-infestation to end. (Chumash)

**10** And he said, Tomorrow. And *Moses said, May it be according to your word: that you may know that *there is none* as כִּיהוָה our Elohim. **11** And the frogs will depart from you and from your houses and from your servants and from your people; they will remain in the river only. **12** And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried to יהוָה *concerning* the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh. **13** And יהוָה did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages and out of the fields. **14** And they gathered אֹתָם *them* together in heaps: and the land stank. **15** But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened אֶת־ his heart and did not listen to them; as יהוָה had said. **16** And יהוָה said to Moses, Say to Aaron, Stretch out אֶת־ your rod and strike אֶת־ *the* dust of the land that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.*



**17** And they did so; and stretched out Aaron אֶת־ his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth and it became lice on man and on beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. **18** And the magicians tried with their enchantments to bring forth אֶת־ lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man and upon beast.

**Question:** Why couldn't the magicians create lice? The magicians used demons to carry out their wishes, but demons have no power over creatures as tiny as lice. (Chumash)



Aaron struck the dust of the earth



Lice bites

**19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, This is the finger of Elohim: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened and he did not listen to them; as יהוה had said.**

**Question:** What were the magicians saying to Pharaoh? This plague is not through sorcery; it is from their Elohim.

20 And יהוה said to Moses, rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh; he will come to the water; וְאָמַרְתָּ *and you say to him*, יהוה says, let my people go that they may serve me. 21 Else, if you will not let אֶת־ My people go, behold, I will send *flies* upon you and upon your servants and upon your people and into your houses אֶת־ swarms: and shall be full of the houses of the Egyptians אֶת־ swarms *of flies* and also the ground where they are.

**Question:** Who brought the plagues upon the land of Egypt? Ex 8:6 we see it is אֵת hand that brings forth the plague of frogs and in Ex 8:16-18 it is אֵת hand that brings forth the plague of lice and again in verse 21 it is אֵת hand that brings forth the plague of swarms.

22 And I will sever in day that אֶת־ *the* land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms *of flies* shall be there; to the end you may know that I am יהוה in the midst of the earth. 23 And I will put a division between my people and your people: tomorrow will this הָאֵת *sign* come.



“Swarms” of insects?

**Question:** The original manuscript does not tell us what type of swarms was sent on Egypt. The King James Version uses the word flies or insects. Jasher tells us that the swarms were wild beasts. Which one was it? The fourth plague that יהוה brought upon the Egyptians is referred to as עֲרֹב "arov." What does this Hebrew word mean? There are a number of schools of thought in the traditional commentaries: The Midrash understands the word to mean a mixture.

**Question:** But a mixture of what? Rabbi Yehudah explains that it was a mixed assortment of wild animals—a punishment for the Egyptians who would have the Hebrews hunt wild animals with which their sadistic masters would then torture them. Rabbi Nehemia, on the other hand, explains arov to have been swarms of hornets or mosquitoes. The Midrash concludes that Scripture supports the view of Rabbi Yehudah. This is because after the plague of the frogs, we read how Egypt was piled high with stinking—and completely useless—dead frogs. On the other hand, regarding the end of the arov plague, we read that יהוה "removed the arov from Pharaoh and his servants, and not one remained." This was because dead animals have very valuable skins, which יהוה did not want to leave for the Egyptians. If the arov was a bunch of insects, why would יהוה not simply have them die and leave the remains as he did with the frogs? The vast majority of the great commentators (Rashi, Targum Yonatan, Ibn Ezra, et. al.) concur with Rabbi Yehudah and explain that the plague of arov was a mixture of wild animals. Alternatively, Rashbam understands the word to actually mean a wolf like beast that attacks at night. He explains that the word ערוב is related to ערב, the Hebrew word for **evening**.



**Question:** How did יהוה keep the wild beasts from harming the Israelites? יהוה kept the swarm from entering Goshen and the animals would not harm Hebrews anywhere, even if they were in the land of Egypt. That the animals did not enter Goshen was miraculous, because they came from far-off lands and were far more mobile than any of the previous plague, being fully capable of running to every part of the country. (Chumash)



Plague of wild beasts

24 And **יהוה** did so; and there came a grievous swarm of *insects* into the house of Pharaoh and into his servant's houses and on all the land of Egypt: the land was defiled by the swarm of *insects*.

**Question:** How did the wild beasts ruin the land? The animals stripped the trees, destroyed the crops, and even snatched infants from their cradles. (Chumash)



Engraved expressly for "Patriarchs and Prophets."

MOSES AND AARON BEFORE PHARAOH.

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**25 And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron and said, Go sacrifice to your Elohim in the land.**

**Question:** What was Moses saying to Pharaoh? The Egyptians worshiped sheep, which were the very animal that the Hebrew slaughtered in serving יהוה. Could the Egyptians tolerate such offerings without reacting violently? (Chumash)

**Jasher 80:** The anger of יהוה did not turn away, and his hand was still stretched out over Egypt. And יהוה sent all kinds of beasts of the field into Egypt, and they came and destroyed all Egypt, man and beast, and trees, and all things that were in Egypt. And יהוה sent fiery serpents, scorpions, mice, weasels, toads, together with others creeping in dust- flies, hornets, fleas, bugs and gnats, each swarm according to its kind. And all reptiles and winged animals according to their kind came to Egypt and grieved the Egyptians exceedingly. And the fleas and flies came into the eyes and ears of the Egyptians. And the hornet came upon them and drove them away, and they went into their inner rooms, and the animals pursued them. And when the Egyptians hid themselves on account of the swarm of animals, they locked their doors after them and it grieved them exceedingly.

**26 And Moses said, It is not meant for us to do this; because we will sacrifice אֶת־ the abomination of the Egyptians to ליהוה our Elohim: Will we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes and they not stone us? 27 We will go three days journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to ליהוה our Elohim as He has commanded us. 28 And Pharaoh said, I will let אֶתְכֶם you go that you may sacrifice to ליהוה your Elohim in the wilderness; only you will not go very far away: Pray for me. 29 And Moses said, When I leave you I will ask יהוה that the swarms will depart from Pharaoh, from his servants and from his people tomorrow: but do not let Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting go אֶת־ the people to sacrifice to ליהוה. 30 And Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to יהוה. 31 And יהוה did according to the word of Moses; and He removed the swarms from Pharaoh, from his servants and from his people; there remained not one. 32 And Pharaoh hardened אֶת־ his heart at הַזֹּאת this time also and would not let go of אֶת־ the people.**

**Question:** Pharaoh continued to break his promise to let the Israelites go. Why is it so important to keep our word? It's easy to take words lightly because we can't see them. But in reality our words are both real and powerful, and how we use them has a very tangible impact on ourselves and others. By taking what we say seriously and keeping our word, we infuse the positive energy of truth and stability into ourselves, our relationships and the world. Not keeping one's word does the opposite. **Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.**

**Question:** Is there a difference between merely saying we'll do something and actually promising? There are varying degrees of commitment, and a promise does make things more serious and binding. Some people even have the good habit of prefacing anything they say with a disclaimer that they aren't promising. However, the fact that we haven't promised doesn't give us license to take our words lightly, and promise or not we should always strive to say what we mean and mean what we say.

**Spiritual Exercise:** Stop and think before you speak! Do not promise anything that you cannot and do not want to keep.



**Exodus 9:1** Then יהוה said to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh and tell him, יהוה Elohim of the Hebrews said, Let go אֶת־ My people that they may serve Me.

**Question:** Did Moses and Aaron have any trouble getting in to see Pharaoh? Moses and Aaron were able to enter Pharaoh's private chamber without permission, even though the palace was very well guarded. (Chumash)

**2** If אַתָּה you refuse to let them go and hold them back, **3** the hand of יהוה will be upon your cattle which are in the field, upon the horses, upon the donkeys, upon the camels, upon the oxen and upon the sheep: there will be a very grievous pestilence.

**Question:** Why did Moses speak more harshly to Pharaoh than before? Moses delivered the warning with particular urgency, because once the epidemic killed the animals, it would be too late to remove the effects of the plague. In the case of all the other plagues, if Pharaoh wanted to repent, the plague could be removed as happened several times before. (Chumash)

**Question:** Why did Moses tell Pharaoh the exact time that the plague would begin? Moses informed Pharaoh of the exact time of the plague so that he would have time to reflect and repent so that it would be clear that the epidemic was Divinely ordained or so that Egyptians could bring their animals indoors or sell them to the Hebrews at distressed prices. (Chumash)

**Jasher 80:** And יהוה sent the pestilence, and the pestilence pervaded Egypt, in the horses and asses, and in the camels, in herds of oxen and sheep and in man. And when the Egyptians rose up early in the morning to take their cattle to pasture they found all their cattle dead. And there remained of the cattle of the Egyptians only one in ten, and of the cattle belonging to Israel in Goshen not one died.



**4** And יהוה will *set apart* the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and nothing will die of all *that is* the Children of Israel. **5** And יהוה appointed a set time *that* tomorrow יהוה will do this thing in the land. **6** And did יהוה אֶת־ that thing on the next day and all the cattle of Egypt died: but *from* the cattle of the Children of Israel not one died. **7** And Pharaoh *investigated* and there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he did not let go אֶת־ the people. **8** And יהוה said to Moses and to Aaron, Take handfuls of ashes from the furnace and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh. **9** And it will become small dust in all the land of Egypt and will become boils *bringing* sores upon man and upon beast throughout all the land of Egypt.



Boils



Moses throws the ashes upwards towards heaven

**10 And they took אֶת־ashes from the furnace and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled אֹתוֹ *it (him)* up toward the heavens; and it became a boil *bringing* sores upon man and upon beast.**

**Question:** Why was this a miracle? By causing the plague to occur by such a small amount of soot and it spread throughout the whole land of Egypt onto all the people showed יהוה's miraculous power. (Chumash)

**11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; because the boils were upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians.**

**Question:** Why couldn't the magicians stand before Moses? Stripped of their arrogance by the painful boils that they could not cure, the sorcerers were ashamed to appear before Moses. (Chumash)

**12 And hardened אֶת־יהוה the heart of Pharaoh and he did not listen to them; as יהוה had spoken to Moses.**

**Question:** Why did יהוה harden the heart of Pharaoh after the sixth plague? Following each of the first five plagues, it is written, "And Pharaoh hardened his heart"; regarding the sixth plague it says, "And יהוה hardened the heart of Pharaoh." When יהוה saw that Pharaoh did not repent after the first five plagues, He said: Even if Pharaoh now wished to repent, I will harden his heart, in order to exact full punishment from him. (Chumash)

**Discuss:** After a certain point of continued disobedience, will יהוה not accept repentance so your punishment can be paid in full?

**Jasher 80:** And יהוה sent a burning inflammation in the flesh of the Egyptians, which burst their skins, and it became a severe itch in all the Egyptians from the soles of their feet to the crowns of their heads. And many boils were in their flesh that their flesh wasted away until they became rotten and putrid.

**13** And יהוה said to Moses, Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh ואמרף and you say to him, יהוה Elohim of the Hebrews said, Let go את־ My people that they may serve Me. **14** I will at הזאת this time send all My plagues upon you and upon your servants and upon your people; that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth. **15** I will stretch out את־ My hand that I may strike אותך you ואת־ and your people with pestilence; and you will be cut off from the earth. **16** And in very deed for זאת this cause have I raised you up to show through you את־ My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth. **17** Since you continue to exalt yourself against My people and not let them go. **18** Tomorrow about this time I will cause a hailstorm so grievous, such as has not been in Egypt since the beginning of it until now. **19** Now send and gather את־ your cattle ואת and all that you have in the field; because upon every man and beast which is found in the field and not brought home, the hail will come down upon them and they will die.

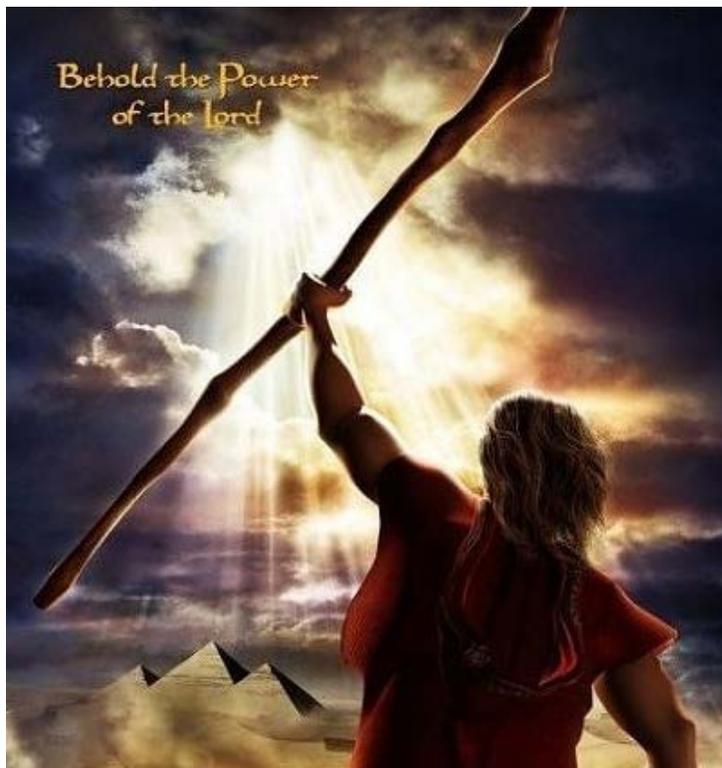


The Seventh Plague (1823 painting by [John Martin](#))

**Question:** Why did Moses send a warning to the Egyptians to stay inside their houses? The hail would kill any man or beast that was outside. יהוה showed His mercy even on the Egyptians by warning them of what was coming upon them. (Chumash)

**Jasher 80:** And יהוה sent a very heavy hail, which killed their vines and broke their fruit trees and dried them up that they fell upon them. Also every green herb became dry and perished, for a mingling fire descended within the hail, therefore the hail and the fire consumed all things. Also men and beasts that were found abroad perished from the flames of fire and of the hail, and all the young lions were exhausted.

**20** He that feared את־ the word of יהוה among the servants of Pharaoh made flee את־ his servants וְאֶת־ and his cattle into their houses: **21** And he that did not consider the word of יהוה left את־ his servants וְאֶת־ and his cattle in the field.



Stretch your hand towards heaven

**22** And יהוה said to Moses, Stretch forth את־ your hand toward heavens that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt upon man and upon beast and upon every herb of the field throughout the land of Egypt. **23** And stretched forth Moses את־ his rod toward heavens: and יהוה sent voices (*thunderings*) and hail and fire ran *down to the ground*; and יהוה rained hail *upon* the land of Egypt. **24** There were hail and fire mixed with the hail, *it was terrible* and there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.





John Martin Plague of Hail

**26 Only in the land of Goshen where *the Children of Israel were*, was there no hail. 27 And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said to them, *יהוה I sinned this time: יהוה is righteous and I and my people are wicked.* 28 Ask *יהוה that there be no more mighty voices (thunderings) and hail for it is enough; and I will let אַתְּכֶם you go and you will stay no longer.* 29 And Moses said to him, As soon as I am gone out of *אֶת־ the city*, I will spread out *אֶת־ my hands* to *ליהוה*; and the voices (*thunderings*) will cease, neither will there be any more hail; that you may know that the earth *is יהוה*.**

**Question:** What was more frightening to the Egyptians the thunder or the hail? The mighty thundering was mentioned before the hail, because it was the thunder that terrorized the Egyptians more than the hail. Rain was rare in Egypt and there had never been thunder or hail in Egypt before. (Chumash)

**Question:** Why did *יהוה* send a plague of hail upon the Egyptians? Their hearts were hard like hail. (Chumash)

**Question:** Why did Moses want to leave the city before he prayed? Moses did not pray in the city because it was filled with idols. (Chumash)

**30 וְאַתָּה And you and your servants, I know that you do not fear יהוה our Elohim yet. 31 And the flax and the barley were ruined: because the barley was ripe and the flax was in bud. 32 But the wheat and the spelt were not ruined: because they come up later.**

**Question:** How did *יהוה* have mercy on the Egyptians? Their food was gone for now, but *יהוה* spared the wheat and spelt which were still in the ground but would begin to grow soon. (Chumash)

**33 And Moses left Pharaoh and *אֶת־ the city* and spread out his hands to *יהוה*: and the thunders and hail ceased and the rain was not poured upon the earth. 34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned *even more and hardened his heart, he and his servants.* 35 And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and neither would he let go *אֶת־ Children of Israel*; as *יהוה had spoken by Moses.***

**Question:** When did Pharaoh beg Moses to remove the plagues? When the plague was life-threatening Pharaoh begged Moses to take away the plague.

- 1) Blood-the plague was not life threatening, because the Egyptians could buy water from the Hebrews or find their own water by digging new wells.
- 2) Frogs-the frogs actually crept into the innards of the Egyptians and threatened their lives.
- 3) Lice-the plague was uncomfortable but not dangerous.
- 4) "Swarms"-Pharaoh feared for his life when surrounded by beasts of the wild.
- 5) Epidemic-only animals died, not people
- 6) Boils-the plague caused extreme discomfort, but killed no one.
- 7) Hail-the loud thunder and flames from heaven terrified everyone, making them fear that they would suffer the same total destruction as Sodom had in Abraham's time.
- 8) Locusts-Pharaoh said explicitly, remove this death from me.

- 9) Darkness-during the first 3 days of the plague the Egyptians could have used lanterns, thereafter, they could not move. This plague was not life threatening.
- 10) First-born-Pharaoh's resistance broke down completely; for he was also a firstborn. (Chumash)



## The Ten Plagues



**Question:** Was יהוה unjust in using Pharaoh to bring destruction to Egypt? **Rom 9:14** What then will we say? Is יהוה unjust? Not at all! **15** For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." **16** It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on יהוה's mercy. **17** For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." **18** Therefore יהוה has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

**Question:** יהוה called his people to come out of Egypt. How can we apply this message to our lives today? **2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Yahshua and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of יהוה and idols? For we are the temple of the living יהוה. As יהוה has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their יהוה, and they will be my people." 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says יהוה. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says יהוה Almighty." 7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for יהוה.**

**Spiritual Exercise:** What are some unclean things in your life that keep you connected to the world? This week work on ridding yourself of one thing that makes you unclean. Purify yourself and see how יהוה will bless you.

### Do you know?

1. Aaron's staff turns into a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In the first plague the Nile turned into \_\_\_\_\_.
3. In the second plague, \_\_\_\_\_ were jumping everywhere.
4. In the third plague, Aaron hit the dust of the ground and it became \_\_\_\_\_.
5. In the fourth plague, "swarms" of \_\_\_\_\_ invaded the cities.
6. In the fifth plague, pestilence made all the \_\_\_\_\_ die.
7. In the sixth plague, Moses threw up ashes from the furnace and it became \_\_\_\_\_ on all the people.
8. In the seventh plague, \_\_\_\_\_ came raining down.
9. In the seventh plague, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ were mixed with the hail.
10. In the land of \_\_\_\_\_ where the Israelites lived, there were no plagues.

Answers:

1. Snake
2. Blood
3. Frogs
4. Lice
5. Beasts or insects
6. Cattle
7. Boils
8. Hail
9. Thunder, fire
10. Goshen

## Haftorah

This week's Haftorah begins with a mention of the ingathering of the exiles, echoing יהוה's promise mentioned in the Torah portion: "I will take you out of the suffering of Egypt." The prophet then goes on to discuss the decimation of Pharaoh and Egypt, reminiscent of the primary theme of the Torah portion--the devastation יהוה wrought upon Egypt. Ezekiel begins with a description of what will occur during the ingathering of the exiles. The prophet then proceeds to convey a prophecy regarding Pharaoh and Egypt, foretelling the fall of the Egyptian empire. Egypt merited this punishment for two reasons: a) They had reneged on their promise to come to Israel's aid against the attacking Babylonians. b) They had incredible arrogance and considered themselves not reliant on יהוה, instead attributing their success to the bounty their deified Nile afforded them. Therefore, Ezekiel warns: "And the land of Egypt will be desolate and in ruins, and they will know that I am יהוה! Because he [Pharaoh] said, 'The river is mine, and I have made it.'" יהוה warns that the land of Egypt will be empty and desolate for forty years, after which יהוה will return the people to the land to live in it again, but it will no longer be an important nation to be reckoned with. The *Haftorah* ends with another prophecy wherein יהוה informs Ezekiel that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, will be the one to conquer Egypt and take its spoils, as a reward for his effort in defeating the wicked nation of Tyre.



Ezekiel (painting by Michelangelo)

**Ezekiel 28:25** So said Adonai יהוה; When I have gathered אֶת־ House of Israel from the people *among* whom they are scattered and will be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then will they live in their land that I have given to My servant Jacob.

26 And they will live safely in it and will build houses and plant vineyards; yea, they will live with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise אַתֶּם *them* round about; and they will know that I *am* יהוה their Elohim. Ezekiel 29:1 In the tenth year, in the tenth *month*, in *the twelfth day* of the month, the word of יהוה came to me, saying, 2 Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh King of Egypt and prophesy against him and against all Egypt: 3 Speak וְאָמַרְתָּ *and you say*, So said Adonai יהוה; See, I *am* against you, Pharaoh King of Egypt, the great dragon that lie in the midst of his rivers, which said my river *is* my own and I have made it for myself. 4 But I will put hooks in your jaws and I will cause the fish of your rivers to stick to your scales and I will bring you up out of the midst of your rivers וְאָתָּה *and all the fish of your rivers will stick to your scales*. 5 And I will leave you *thrown into* the wilderness, וְאָתָּה אֶרְצָה *you אֶרְצָה and all the fish of your rivers: you will fall upon the open fields; you will not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given you for meat to the beasts of the field and to the birds of the heaven*. 6 And all the inhabitants of Egypt will know that I *am* יהוה, because they have been a staff *made* of reed to *the* House of Israel. 7 When they took hold of you by your hand, you did break and rend all their shoulder and when they leaned upon you, you broke and made all their loins quake. 8 Therefore, so said Adonai יהוה; see, I will bring a sword upon you and cut off man and beast out of you. 9 And the land of Egypt will be desolate and waste; and they will know that I *am* יהוה: because he said the river *is* mine and I have made *it*. 10 See, therefore, I *am* against you and against your rivers and I will make אֶת־הָאָרֶץ the land of Egypt utterly waste *and* desolate, from the tower of Syene even to the border of Ethiopia. 11 No foot of man will pass through it, nor foot of beast will pass through it, neither will it be inhabited forty years. 12 And I will make אֶת־הָאָרֶץ land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries *that are* desolate and her cities among the cities *that are* laid waste will be desolate forty years: and I will scatter אֶת־הָעִיִּיִם *the Egyptians among the nations and will disperse them through the countries*. 13 Yet so said Adonai יהוה; At the end of forty years will I gather אֶת־הָעִיִּיִם *the Egyptians from the people where they were scattered*: 14 And I will bring again אֶת־הָעִיִּיִם *captivity of Egypt and will cause אַתֶּם them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation and they will be there a base kingdom*. 15 It will be the basest of the kingdoms; neither will it exalt itself anymore above the nations: for I will diminish them that they will no more rule over the nations. 16 And it will be no more the confidence of *the* House of Israel, which brings *their* iniquity to remembrance, when they will look after them but they will know that I *am* Adonai יהוה. 17 And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, the word of יהוה came to me, saying, 18 Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused to serve אֶת־הָאָרֶץ his army a great service against Tyrus: every head *was* made bald and every shoulder *was* peeled: yet he had no wages, neither his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: 19 Therefore, so said Adonai יהוה; See I will give to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon אֶת־הָאָרֶץ *land of Egypt and he will take her multitude and take her spoil and take her prey and that will be the wages for his army*. 20 I have given him אֶת־הָאָרֶץ *land of Egypt for his labor with which he served against it because they worked for Me, said Adonai יהוה*. 21 In that day will I cause the horn of *the* House of Israel to bud forth and אֶתֶּן *I will give you the opening of the mouth in the midst of them and they will know that I am יהוה*.

## Overcoming Weaknesses

Question: What do we do when we are forced into a situation where our weakness will become obvious? Nobody was made perfect. We all have something about ourselves that we don't feel good about. יהוה appears to Moses and told him that he must go and speak to the Hebrew people and Moses refused. He tells יהוה, "I am *orel sfatayim*", which means, "I have a speech defect." Moses refused another time, but יהוה insisted that he is the man for the job. In the end, יהוה sent Moses' brother Aaron to help him, but Moses is still called upon to address the people on many different occasions, and succeeds, despite his defect. When we keep a positive attitude, and trust that יהוה can give us the strength to overcome our weaknesses, we can accomplish more than we could have ever thought possible.

### "THE LONGEST JUMP"

"Mommy," said Miriam, as she put her school bag down on the kitchen table. "In two weeks we're supposed to be having our physical fitness exams in gym."

"Oh?" said Mrs. Siegel. She knew this was a sore spot for her daughter and so waited to hear what she would say next.

"We have to do everything: chin-ups, sit-ups, push-ups, and the hardest - a broad jump. And we have to do everything in front of the whole class. Mommy, I can't do any of those things. What am I going to do?"

Mrs. Siegel looked thoughtfully at her daughter. At age 10, her height had not quite caught up to her weight yet, and the effect was sometimes very disheartening, especially when it came to her daughter's number one obstacle: gym class. Mrs. Siegel always knew it was gym day, when Miriam would wake up complaining of a stomachache or sore throat. If that didn't work, she'd somehow manage to stub her toe on the way out the door ... anything for a legitimate excuse to miss gym. Now Miriam was trapped because she had to pass this test to graduate.

"Here you go, Miriam. Why don't you sit down and eat lunch, and meanwhile we'll try to figure out what to do."

But the girl balked. "Mom, if you don't mind, I think I'm just going up to my room for a little while." When she felt like this, Miriam just couldn't talk to anyone, not even her mother. She felt miserable. "Why do I have to have this stupid body that doesn't do what I want it to? Why am I always the slowest and the last one to be picked for anything? It's not fair." She threw herself on her bed and stared hard at the ceiling.

Suddenly she felt her eyes being pulled toward a photo in a small frame on her bookcase. There she was with her arm swung around the shoulders of her best cousin, Karen, whom she loved dearly. Karen was the happiest, most life-loving person she knew, even though ever since the illness that changed her life, Karen had plenty of good excuses not to be.

Miriam sat up in her bed and took a deep breath. She felt like יהוה had shown her that picture to send her just the message she needed. Her mind was made up.

The next day, Miriam began "Operation: Shape-up."

She forced herself to do sit-ups, push-ups, and even the seemingly impossible chin-ups. The girl bravely approached the daunting looking chin-up bar that her brother had recently put over his door, and climbed onto a chair. But even standing on the chair, she only managed to pull herself up about half an inch. How would she ever manage from the floor?

But her biggest challenge was the broad jump. Each year it was the hardest and most embarrassing moment of the whole test. She took her father's yardstick, and chalk-marked the minimum length of the required broad jump. Miriam first tried jumping off a stool to try to get the hang of it, and even then, she fell a good several feet short. Success looked very far away.

In school, all the kids were talking about how far they had jumped and how many sit-ups and push-ups they were able to do. Paula, the best athlete, sidled up to Miriam more than once with her amazing progress reports. "Miriam, I did 100 sit-ups and 75 push-ups." Her circle of friends around her oohed and aahed. "How about you?"

Miriam would just walk away, half hurt, and half determined.

The next week, things had improved somewhat. She'd managed five chin-ups (still standing on a chair), seven sit-ups and 10 push-ups. She's gained about a foot in the broad jump, but she was still plenty short of the line.

"Miriam, doll, I have good news!" Mrs. Siegel couldn't wait until Miriam sat down at the supper table. "Karen's coming for a visit this weekend! Her parents are going away and asked if we'd mind if she came. Isn't that exciting?"

Miriam panicked. "This weekend?" Her gym test was the following Monday. "Isn't there anywhere else she could go?" Miriam wanted to spend the time practicing, but now, with Karen coming, that would be impossible.

Mrs. Siegel understood immediately. "Miriam," she said softly. "I think Karen being here will only help you."

As she was making up the bed for Karen, Miriam thought of her mother's words. "She's probably right. I know she's right, but how am I going to be able to pass the test now?"

Still, Miriam was excited to see her cousin. She'd known Karen since they were little girls. They did everything together, that is ... until everything changed. She stood at the doorway as the van pulled up in the driveway. Karen's dad jumped out, smiled and waved, and ran to the back and pulled something out. It was Karen's wheelchair, a permanent fixture since Karen got sick.

As the girls chatted, Miriam revealed her anxiety about the coming gym test. As usual, Karen responded with enthusiasm. "I'm so glad I came this weekend! I'm sure you'll do great, especially with me encouraging you every second. Come, show me what you can do already and we'll take it from there..."

That was Karen. Nothing stopped her from enjoying life, even if it meant encouraging others to do what she herself could not. Little by little, as the girls worked together, Miriam felt not only her muscles growing, but also her confidence, inspired by her special cousin.

The day of the test arrived. Miriam stood nervously in line to take her turn at the broad jump. Finally she reached the front of the line. As she swung her arms and prepared to jump, she felt scared, but then she thought of Karen, and how much she had accomplished in spite of her challenges. Maybe she could too!

The girl bent her knees and gave it her all. As Miriam touched down, way past the marker line, all the kids who had been watching her gasped. She heard Paula's voice in the background. "Did you see Miriam Siegel's broad jump? I can't believe it! She jumped the furthest from the whole class. I just can't believe it!"

Miriam whispered a quiet thanks to יהוה, and smiled a secret smile. There were all kinds of weaknesses, she realized. **But the worst one is believing that they can't be overcome.**

**Question:** How did Karen help Miriam to succeed? Miriam found Karen to be an inspiring role model. Here was a girl with a much bigger challenge than Miriam herself had, yet she had persevered and managed to live a happy and fulfilled life. This helped give Miriam the confidence that she could also overcome her challenges - and she did!

**Question:** Do you think that limitations are more the product of a situation, or an attitude? There are certainly situations that lend themselves to being more limiting than others. If Miriam were 6'2", trim and athletic, she probably wouldn't be sweating the broad jump as much. But then that Miriam would have other limitations to overcome. Limitations are, more than anything else, products of our minds' attitudes. Some people have much more ability in a given area, but their feelings of inadequacy hold them back from accomplishing as much as others who have much less to work with.

A positive, can-do attitude is often the most crucial factor needed to make things happen. And realizing יהוה is always there to help enables us oftentimes to achieve what we didn't think was achievable.

**Resources:**

*The Stone Edition of The Chumash*

*The Complete Messianic Aleph Tav Scriptures C-MATS* [www.AlephTavScriptures.com](http://www.AlephTavScriptures.com)

“Weekly Torah Portion” from [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com)

*Book of Jasher or Book of the Just Man*

**Josh 10:13** And the Sun stood still and the Moon stayed, until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies. *Is not this written in the book of Jasher? And the Sun stayed in the midst of heaven and delayed not going down about a whole day.*

**2 Sam 1:18** And he bade them teach the Children of Judah *the song of the bow*: surely, it is written in the book of Jashar:

(The Septuagint translation renders *sefer hayashar* in both cases as 'Book of the Just'. The reference to the bow is here missing, so that the text reads: And he gave orders to teach it the sons of louda: behold it is written in the Book of the Just.)