



Welcome to **Va'era (And He Appeared)**, this week's Parasha (Torah Portion).

Shabbat Shalom Hans!

Please read along with us as we make our way through the Torah portion that will be read in synagogues around the world during this week's Shabbat (Saturday) service. Enjoy!

VA'ERA (And I Appeared)

Exodus 6:2–9:35; Ezekiel 28:25 - 29:21; Revelation 15:1–16:20

"And I appeared [**Va'era**] to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaacov as El Shaddai [שדי אל] but by My name, YHVH [יהוה], I did not make Myself known to them." (*Exodus 6:2–3*)



Reading the Torah with a yad (pointer)

In last week's Torah study, God appeared to Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai in a burning bush, instructing him to lead the Israelites out of Pharaoh's bondage. Because Moses perceived himself to be slow of speech, God appointed his brother Aaron to be his spokesperson.

When the brothers went before Pharaoh, he refused to let the Israelites go. Instead of making the situation better, **the Israelites' enslavement became more oppressive**. Pharaoh required them to gather their own straw (whereas previously it had been provided for them) and still produce the same quota of bricks.

Of course, the children of Israel complained to Moses, so he brought their suffering before God, who reassured him that things would turn around. God told him that He would not only save the Israelites with a mighty deliverance, but Pharaoh would drive them from Egypt.



God Appears to Moses in the Burning Bush, by Eugene Pluchart

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God Redeems Israel Past, Present and Future

In this *Parasha*, God promises Moses that He will accomplish four redemptive acts: He would **bring out** the Israelites from their suffering in Egypt, **rescue** them from slavery, **redeem** them from their oppression with His outstretched arm, and **take** them as His own **nation (am)**.

These four promises are called the Four Expressions of Redemption, and they are traditionally commemorated during the Passover Seder (ritual meal) with four cups of wine.

For each of these acts of deliverance written in *Exodus 6:6–7*, God used the following Hebrew words:

- **Hotzeiti (הוֹצֵאתִי)**, which means **I will bring out**;
- **Hitzalti (הִצַּלְתִּי)**, which means **I will rescue**;
- **Ga'alti (גָּאַלְתִּי)**, which means **I will redeem**; and
- **Lakachti (לִקְחָתִי)**, which means **I will take**.



Jewish men wearing tallitot (prayer shawls) pray with tefillin (phylacteries) and siddurim (Jewish prayer books).

God also makes a fifth expression of redemption. He promises He **will bring (הֵבֵיטִי heveiti)** His people back into their own land.

“And I will bring [heveiti] you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.” (*Exodus 6:8*)

Two thousand years ago, when the Jewish People lived in the Promised Land, this fifth expression may have been commemorated during the Seder with a fifth cup of wine.

Although God has been rescuing the Jewish people from their exile and bringing them back into the Land, the fifth cup is considered to represent a complete Redemption through Messiah.

This fifth cup at the Passover Seder, therefore, is called the Cup of Elijah, which is left untouched for the Prophet Elijah, who is expected to return to earth to herald the coming of the Messiah and His Messianic reign.



Five shiny, decorative silver cups filled to the brim with red wine during a Passover Seder, a ritual meal commemorating the Exodus. The largest cup is the Cup of Elijah, which remains untouched throughout the meal.

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When God speaks a Word, it will be done as He has said, despite how circumstances appear in the natural.

Still, we live in a fallen world. Many of us suffer from spiritual myopia (short-sightedness) caused by focusing on our own suffering and loss.

The Israelites were no different. **They were so downtrodden and grieved in spirit that they simply could not believe what Moses said the Lord would do for them.** They couldn't even listen to his words of hope.

"Moses reported this [promise of the Lord] to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labor." (*Exodus 6:9*)

This tendency in human nature should remind us to be patient and merciful as we minister to people.

Even today, there are those whose bondage is so cruel and whose spirit so broken that they also cannot hear those who preach the Good News of Yeshua (Jesus). Sometimes, they must watch us walk in the power of God, seeing signs and wonders before they will listen and believe.

Sometimes, we must faithfully sow seeds, patiently waiting as God grows them.

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow." *(1 Corinthians 3:6)*



Harvesting wheat in Israel

As God had commanded them, Moses and his brother Aaron (Aharon) returned to Pharaoh over and over again, demanding that he let God's people go so that they may serve Him in the wilderness.

This whole account of God's redemption of Israel from Egypt has a spiritual parallel in our salvation from the kingdom of darkness, ruled by haSatan (literally, the Adversary) and the Kingdom of Light, ruled by the LORD.

We are delivered from haSatan through faith in Yeshua, the Passover Lamb, not simply to walk away and "do our own thing." As it was for the Israelites, the purpose of our freedom is to serve the living God.

"For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." *(Colossians 1:13-14)*



The Nile River runs through Cairo. This important river was the location of the first of ten plagues: blood.

Pharaoh Remains Proudful Despite Marvels and Wonders

God gave Moses and Aaron a special sign to show Pharaoh. In Hebrew the sign is called a **mofet**, which means a **marvel** or **wonder**. Aaron was to throw his stick down before Pharaoh, and it would be transformed. In most English translations, we read that the stick became a serpent; but in the Hebrew, the word used is **tannin**.

However, Pharaoh, as God foreknew, still refused to let the people go; therefore, God sent His judgment on Egypt in the form of the Ten Plagues.

“Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring My hosts, My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment.” (*Exodus 7:4*)

These plagues are remembered each year at the Passover Seder during the second cup of wine. One drop is removed from the cup for each of the plagues, while the leader recites the list of judgments in Hebrew.

The idea behind this custom is that our cup (which represents joy) cannot be full while others are suffering.

First, the waters of the Nile River were turned to **blood (dam)**, **making it undrinkable**. Then **frogs (tzfardeim)** swarmed the land, and then an infestation of **lice (kinim)** tormented man and beast.



Jewish men wearing tallitot (prayer shawls) listen while the Torah is read at the Western (Wailing) Wall in Jerusalem.

Please give a Tithe this Shabbat

Until the plague of **lice (kinim)**, the Egyptian magicians and sorcerers were able to duplicate the plagues but, with this plague, they could not. Therefore, they recognized this to be the finger of God.

“Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh: 'This is the finger of God'; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken.” (*Exodus 8:19*)

Pharaoh had hardened his heart and would not listen to the voice of reason—one of the surest signs of pride. **A humble man will receive correction willingly, but a person with pride immediately becomes defensive and will not listen to others.** This can bring about his downfall.

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (*Proverbs 16:18*)

Note the contrast between Pharaoh and Moses, who even today is considered to be the most humble man to walk the earth. When Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, corrected him on his approach to settling disputes between the Israelites in the wilderness, Moses listened and took heed.

“So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.” (*Exodus 18:24*)



Israeli cattle farm

Although Pharaoh promised to let the Jewish People go after the plague of lice, he hardened his heart and reneged on his promise. As a result, God sent swarms of **flies (arov)** that covered the land, then a **disease (dever)** that killed all the cattle.

God made a distinction between Israel and Egypt. While all the cattle of Egypt died, not even one of Israel's cattle fell to the disease. (*Exodus 9:4*)

This underlines the importance and reliability of being in a covenantal relationship with the Almighty God. None of Egypt's best sorcerers and masters of the occult could save them from the hand of God.

In the sixth plague, when God turned dust into painful **boils (shechin)** upon man and beast, even the magicians suffered, and they could not stand before Moses because of them. (*Exodus 9:9–11*)

This week's Parasha ends with the seventh plague of **hail (barad)**.

God sent thunder, fire and a grievous hail that destroyed anything and everything in the field—man and beast and all vegetation. **Only in Goshen where the Israelites lived was there no hail.** (*Exodus 9:26*)



While Scripture promises that the natural cycle of winter and summer will not end (*Genesis 8:22*), it does say that God will intervene in Earth's weather, turning the wilderness green in Israel and blessing Israel with the early and latter rains (*Joel 2:21*). It also states that there will be extreme weather events in the last days (*Revelation 16:8–9*). In the above photo, a woman holds a handful of hail that fell in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Like Egypt, Like the World

We know from the book of Revelation that many of these plagues will again strike the inhabitants of the earth in the end times. **These events that happened in Egypt foreshadow what is to come—possibly on a global scale—in the final days.**

In his vision, the Apostle John describes the seven last plagues on the earth:

“I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.” (*Revelation 15:1*)

As God pours out the full bowl of His wrath upon the earth, loathsome sores appear on all those who have taken the mark of the beast and worship his image (*Revelation 16:2*). Then, just like in Egypt, the waters turn to blood (*Revelation 16:3–6*). Other plagues also bombard the earth, such as darkness, scorching fire, and destructive hail.

“From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.” (*Revelation 16:21*)

May we be ever mindful that we are living in the end times; and while we remain safe in the security of our holy covenant with Elohim, let us patiently share the Good News and diligently pray for mercy upon those who stubbornly continue to rebel against God.



In these troubled, difficult last days, please pray for the salvation of the Jewish People and help us bring the Good News of Yeshua to the Holy Land.

"You will again have compassion on us; **You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.**" (*Micah 7:19*)

"Hear the word of the LORD, you nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over His flock like a shepherd.'" (*Jeremiah 31:10*)

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