

## #14 Va'era Exodus 6:2-9:35

By Moshe Schwab

While Praying:

- \* Don't just live a good earthly pattern for life, but be open to God and the life He wants for you.
- \* Hear God and what He has to say. Don't trust in darkness.
- \* Put God's light into your life. Change the picture of your life into a heavenly pattern.
- \* Be careful to put on truth and don't be enticed to think wrong things; they will hinder your growth.

Va'era means, "and I appeared." This portion begins with God telling Moshe (Moses) **that He (Yehováh, יהוה) appeared** to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov) as El Shaddai and made a covenant with them that He would give them the land of Cana'an (Canaan) and now He is going to set them free from their oppressive bondage in Egypt so they can return to Cana'an. God had promised to give the land of Cana'an to their forefathers and God has heard the groaning of the people of Israel who the Egyptians are oppressing and using as slaves. Moshe had told the people that God would deliver them from their oppression and that they would be His people. Moshe tells them again, but this time the people wouldn't listen to him because they were discouraged. Pharaoh would not listen to Moshe and Pharaoh instead made them work harder.

God told Moshe and Aharon (Aaron) to go tell Pharaoh to let Israel go in spite of what was going on. Then some genealogy is given in the portion. God then tells Moshe that he will be like god to Pharaoh and Aharon will be like Moshe's prophet. God will harden Pharaoh's heart and he will not let the people go, but God will bring them out with great judgments. Moshe was 80 and Aharon were 83 at this time.

When they first talk to Pharaoh, Aharon throws down his staff and it turns into a snake, but so does the staffs of Pharaoh's magicians. Aharon's staff eats the other snakes. Pharaoh wouldn't listen to them though. Next Moshe turns the river and even water in buckets into blood and it stinks and the fish die. The magicians also did the same and Pharaoh wouldn't listen. Pharaoh would also not let Israel go after the frogs covered the land. This time Pharaoh asked them to ask Yehovah for the frogs to go, but when they were gone, he still wouldn't let Israel go.

Then the Lord covered the land with lice and the magicians told Pharaoh it was the "finger of God." Again, Pharaoh would not listen so God sent swarms of insects only on the Egyptians. Pharaoh then said they could go, but when God took away the swarms, Pharaoh changed his mind again. Next God slew all the cattle of Egypt only, but Pharaoh would not let them go. Then Moshe and Aharon threw dust in the air before Pharaoh and sores appeared on men and animals, but Pharaoh still would not listen. Then God brought hail which destroyed their crops, but when Moshe stopped the hail, Pharaoh still would not let Israel go. There are three more plagues to occur in the next portion: locusts, darkness, and the death of the first born.

We learn both in the Torah portion and Haftarah that it is God's intention to give the land of Canaan to Israel. In the Tanakh it says that it will eventually be given in perpetuity. In the Haftarah for today, Ezekiel who lived around 600 BC tells us that Israel's presence in the land is a witness to the nations that He is God. All that God is doing to bring Israel out of Egypt was and is a witness to the world that God will accomplish His will. That is a good thing for those of us who believe in God. We can trust that God will do what He says He will do.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to believers in the Messiah Yeshua and is a witness to those who listen to the Holy Spirit, and give up their wrong behaviors and keep God's commandments with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Pharaoh should have believed after he saw the power of God, but didn't. The Holy Spirit which is given to believers testifies to who God is. God expects those who receive the Holy Spirit to respond to Him. It says in Hebrews 10:29 NKJV, "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will

he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" Let us not be like Pharaoh who wouldn't listen to God.

The Haftaráh for Va'era is Ezekiel 28:25-29:2. Previous to this portion, Ezekiel prophesies against the King of Tyre (a far southern Lebanon port city) for his pride and thinking he is like God. He compares him to the fallen cherub that we know as Satan. Then he prophesies against Sidon (a port city about 40 miles north of Tyre in Lebanon). God says there will come a time when the people around Israel will not bother them.

Verse 25 begins with God saying Israel will be allowed to return home from around the nations including Babylon and live safely. God will execute judgment on the nations around them that hate them. This is proof that God is who He says he is.

Then he gives a grievous prophecy against Egypt and says God will make the land desolate. God will bring back the Egyptians after 40 years, but Egypt will be a lowly nation. Then Ezekiel reports that Tyre has fallen to Babylon and Egypt is next.

Just as God returned Israel from Egypt, He returned them to their land of promise as predicted by Ezekiel. We should take the land promises to Israel seriously. The Bible says that God has given them the land and it is a testimony to the nations that He is God. No matter what happens, Israel will eventually have the land in perpetuity (forever).

Ezekiel 28:25-26 CJB reads, "Adonai ELOHIM says, 'Once I have gathered the house of Isra'el from the peoples among whom they are scattered, once I have shown my holiness in them as the Goyim watch, then they will live in their own land, which I gave to my servant Ya'akov. They will have security when they live there, building houses and planting vineyards; yes, they will live in safety, once I have executed judgments against all their contemptuous neighbors. Then they will know that I am ADONAI their God.'" Thank you Yehovah; we trust in you.

We all develop patterns for our everyday life. It's great to develop good habits and patterns for how we live. We are to put God first in our life; this requires that we be open to how God wants us to live our lives. Deuteronomy 6:5 NKJV says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

How can we apply this scripture to our life? Think about your day. Do you allow time for God during the day? Morning is an important time to start your day with God. We need to, at the very least, start our day with some prayer. The most important thing for me in the morning is to dedicate my life to God. Then, some part of our day should be committed to prayer and reading the scriptures as well as spending spiritual time with our family. Forming regular patterns are important for making sure we put God in His proper place in our lives. The Jews brought the knowledge of God with them to Egypt and saved Egypt from disaster. Because Pharaoh wouldn't listen to God this time though, he instead brings disaster on Egypt. We need to regulate how we use our day so we make God an integral part of our day.

We work, eat, relax, and of course, don't forget to work God into our daily routine. The ancient Jews would take time to pray at the times of prayer which included both morning and evening prayer. These things don't have to be burdensome and you don't have to follow a specified way to do this – as Messianic believers we don't want to make up extra unneeded commandments (Matthew 15:9). We are commanded to love God; we are not commanded to pray every morning for an hour in a particular way like some think

they have to. Just try to make God a priority and develop a regular pattern for your day. That is part of growing up spiritually.

For example, I start my day with prayer and pray frequently during the day. Some days I finish my prayer or study later in the day. I keep track of what I do every day to hold myself accountable. I simply put a "p" by the date in my journal to let me know I got my prayer done for the day; I used to take notes for what I studied. It's up to you how you want to do it. I make up prayer lists to help me pray for everything I want to pray for. That way I don't miss important things that I want to pray for. It often takes me about an hour to go through my regular prayers. When you develop a habit of prayer and study, it becomes easier to get it done and it becomes a focus for your day. When I can't get my prayer done in the morning, I will pray first later in the day before I relax. We schedule family time after dinner to do a short study and pray.

Praying and studying is only the first thing we need to do to love God. God also wants us to do what He has to say. The Bible are God's words. Shaul (Paul) said about the Old Testament portion in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." There was no New Testament at the time and the context is about the Old Testament.

We need to know what to believe (doctrine). Sometimes while we're studying, we realize what we're reading about is something we are not doing. For example, God rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day and set it apart at the very beginning of His creation (Genesis 2:3). So, when the Bible says we are to keep Shabbat, and we haven't been doing that, we ask God for forgiveness and begin keeping Shabbat. It says in James 1:21-22, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." We are to get rid of the wrongdoing in our lives and receive God's commandments. His ways will help us. The verse says we aren't to just listen, but also do what God wants us to do.

We are to get rid of any wicked behavior in our life. Don't trust in darkness. I don't know how anyone could trust in evil, but there are people who will try to get away with whatever they can get away with. If they get caught, their lives may be ruined. Sometimes they die as a result of their sin. If they don't get caught, they will have to stand before God for what they did. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God;" 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV. It says thieves will not be in the new kingdom. So, if you think it is okay to steal, think again. God knows what you have done even if others don't know. Yeshua said, "For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known;" Matthew 10:26 NKJV. Have a pure heart. Don't trust in evil. Get with the program.

Put God's light into your life. Psalm 37:4-6 NKJV, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday." Doing things God's way brings good into your life not only because you are doing good, but because God will bless you for doing what is right. I am a witness to God giving me the desires of my heart in miraculous ways. Without any thought for getting what I wanted, I kept faithful to God and God would just bring things into my life that I had thought about. It was truly a miracle. I was being blessed by the good I was doing and then on top of that, God blessed me.

Change the picture of your life into a heavenly pattern. Wouldn't you like your life to shine like the noonday? To me that is a picture of beauty, of power and strength, and blessing. Wouldn't you like the right you do (righteousness) be a light like that to others? Don't we all need goodness and blessing in our lives? Doesn't this world need people who do what is right instead of bring evil into it?

So be careful to put on truth. Saul said in Ephesians 4:17-24:

"No longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

Don't live like others who have useless understandings and evil in their blind and ignorant hearts. They are separated from God because their lives are filled with sin and greed. We need to get rid of the wrong desires and look like the person we were created to be, and live right and be separate from evil. We become what we think; we need to start thinking right and controlling our thoughts. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life;" Proverbs 4:23 NKJV. Don't be enticed to think wrong and sinful thoughts that will keep from growing spiritually.

Watch what you think and what you keep in your innermost being. It will influence your life. Yeshua said in Luke 6:45 NKJV, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." It's our choice. Will we be a good treasure to this world? Pharaoh because of his evil heart refused to listen to the true God and brought disaster on Egypt.

No doubt Pharaoh had a hard heart. He refused to do what is right and refused to listen to God. He had developed patterns of pride that he wasn't going to let go of. Don't be like Pharaoh who refused to give God a place in His life. He ended up bringing tremendous sorrow and anguish into the lives of His people. Form regular spiritual habits of prayer and study. Listen to how God tells you to live so that you will bring light and goodness into the world instead of darkness, pain, and evil. Change your life so that you shine like the light like the noonday sun (Psalm 37:4-6 NKJV). Don't live like others who lack understanding and are filled with sin and greed. Be a good person who brings good into this world.