

Shemot "Names"

Torah Reading: Exodus 1:1-6:1

Haftarah Reading: Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 9:22-23

Study Questions

1. In what ways did God prepare Israel for redemption?
2. What characteristics was Moshe displaying when he intervened and killed the Egyptian? Was it right for him to have done such a thing?
3. What are some things about dealing with people Moshe could have learned from being a shepherd?
4. What can we learn about God from the revelation of His name "I AM that I AM"?
5. Why did God get angry with Moshe in Shemot 4:14?
6. Why did the Lord seek to kill Moshe in verse 4:24?
7. What is the significance of the "firstborn" to God? Why do you think God brought up the issue of firstborn for the first time now in Shemot?
8. How do you think Moshe and Aaron felt after the increased work of the slaves? What would they have had to draw upon to encourage them?
9. What evidence do you see in this parasha that even though God was "silent" during most of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt, was He still actively carrying out His plan for them?

Study Notes

Outline

- God Heard Their Moaning
- God Remembered His Covenant
- God Saw the Children of Israel
- God Knew

Names for the book

- Shemot is short for "ve eileh shemot, una vktu" (And these are the names). The name is from the first words of the book following widespread ancient Near Eastern practice.
- Exodus is taken from the name given to the book by the Jews in Alexandria, Egypt during the translation of the Septuagint (LXX).
- Another ancient Hebrew name for this book is "homesh sheni" - The Second Fifth.
- Shemot starts with the word 'and' which indicates it was most likely a part of Bereshit originally.

Exile

- The slavery of the Hebrews in Egypt is fulfillment of the prophecy given to Abraham in Bereshit 15:12.

Assimilation

- Jacob and his family came because of famine. Why didn't their descendants leave when they had the opportunity?
- The Shemot Rabbah comments that after Joseph died they said "Let us be like the Egyptians."
- They were living in the most fertile land in all Egypt with lots of water and grazing land and they allowed this to tempt them from returning to the Promised Land.
- Throughout their history, every time Israel fell into the sin of assimilation, it always ended up in slavery. Assimilation invariably leads to moaning and groaning.
- In what ways can we detect and avoid our own assimilation in our culture?

Refining

- For the first time since the story of Adam we see the story focused on the whole of the people and their cries. Shemot tells how God prepares Israel for His redemption and for His planned nationhood for them.
- God used this time to refine the people. Israel is like gold and their harsh servitude is like the refining fire: "He brought you out of the iron furnace of Egypt to be His people" (Deut. 4:20).
- "Behold, I have refined you, not with silver, I have chosen you out of the furnace of affliction." Isaiah 48:10

Experience

- God also wanted to use this time to teach some "object lessons".
- One such lesson would be the concept of being a "stranger": "Do not wrong a stranger and do not oppress him, for strangers you were in the land of Egypt" (Shemot 22:20).
- Israel had a very good way to remember this lesson on strangers. There are many other such lessons throughout the Torah.

Redemption

- In this servitude and the preparations for redemption, God was beginning to paint a carefully crafted portrait of the person and work of Yeshua.

Covenant

- What did God do after He heard the moaning of the children of Israel? He "remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob".
- How blessed we are that our God is a covenant God!
- Not that God had forgotten, but that now the opportunity had come for the fulfillment of His merciful purposes.

- Notice here that there is nothing mentioned about the merit of Israel deserving God's intervention. It is by His covenant love for them. God, in essence, pledged His life (if it were possible - Bereshit 15) as a token of His promise to fulfill His promises.

God Saw

- "God saw the children of Israel" Exodus 2:25. He saw beyond what we could see.
- God saw the extent which sin and unbelief had dominated the children of Israel.
- God saw the real mess, the cruelty, and their miserable state.
- What God saw moved Him with compassion to do something about it.

God Knew

- The word in 2:25 for knew is the same word for knew in connection with a marriage relationship, specifically the sexual part of it.
- When we read that "God knew" we are to understand that there were some things about the situation of which only God had intimate knowledge.
- There is a 'vav consecutive' used to connect it with the previous thought. This means that whatever God saw, it prompted Him to know in an intimate way that certain actions were now ready to be performed.

Moshe

- God knew Moshe would need some specific training to carry out his task.
- He would need to know his enemy and how to interact with him. God allowed Moshe to be raised and trained in Pharaoh's household.
- He would need to know his own people. God allowed Moshe to be among the Hebrew slaves and see their misery. See Hebrews 11:25 for the affect this had on him.
- he would need to know himself. God allowed Moshe to see his own issues. His passion for justice was good but the murder of the Egyptian showed impulsive, uncontrolled emotion. Forty years as a shepherd probably gave some good time to dwell on these things.
- He would need to know God. God allowed Moshe to be part of one of the greatest revelations of all time, the revealing of God's personal name.

What's in a Name?

- To the Hebrew, "name" is shorthand for "character".
- When Moshe asked what the name is of the God who was sending him, in essence, he was asking, "Which of God's attributes would be manifested in the course of redeeming them from Egypt?"
- God responded by saying that not only is He the God of Moshe's forefathers, but that He is also the God who is in the 'eternal present'. He is always actively doing, loving, existing, caring, and empowering in the present; He is not a static God.
- Moshe will learn the meaning of His name from what He says and does.

Burning Bush

- Why would God reveal Himself through a burning bush? Since scripture does not directly say we will refrain from dogmatism but there is one interesting suggestion from a Midrash:
- “Don’t you feel that I suffer anguish when Israel does? Know, therefore, from the character of the place from which I am speaking to you, out of the thorn bush, that I, as it were, share their suffering.”
- This paints a beautiful picture of God who is willing to feel and sense in a real way the suffering of the children of Israel and the same One who sent Messiah to identify with the suffering of all mankind in order to redeem us from slavery to sin and to bring us to Himself.