

Va'eira
"And I appeared"

Torah Reading: Exodus 6:2-9:35

Haftarah Reading: Ezekiel 28:25-29:21

Study Questions

1. How do you think the patriarchs understood the different names through which God revealed Himself: El, Elohim, and El Shaddai? In what way did they not understand the full impact of the name Lord (YHVH)?
2. Why was Moshe hesitant to appear before Pharaoh? What excuses did he give?
3. How would you answer the question: How can God fairly judge Pharaoh when this portion suggest that He hardened Pharaoh's heart? How would Saul of Tarsus have answered the question according to Romans chapter nine?
4. In what way was Moshe a "god" to Pharaoh and Aaron, Moshe's prophet in Shemot 7:1?
5. Why do you think Pharaoh was reluctant to let the people go?
6. Why do you think the Lord chose to inflict Egypt with plagues instead of just setting the children of Israel free miraculously all at once?
7. What affect do you think the plagues had on Pharaoh's court, especially the magicians? Do you think this was really a show of God's power verses the power of Egypt's gods?
8. What were the plagues in this parasha and what gods of Egypt did they affect?
9. Compare this portion with Romans 9. How are we to understand the nature of Pharaoh's calling according to Romans 9?

Study Notes

Outline

- I Shall Take You Out - Sanctification
- I Shall Rescue You - Salvation
- I Shall Redeem You - Redemption
- I Shall Take You to Me - Acceptance

What's His Name?

- God gave Moshe an important task to perform, and all Moshe did was object to it.
- In Shemot 6:2-4, God again is trying to communicate to Moshe that if he will only understand who his commissioner is, he will have no fear in doing what He says.
- He appeared to the patriarchs as El Shaddai. Now, He says, He is describing His name to Moshe as YHVH, a name by which the patriarchs did not call Him.
- However, in Genesis 15:7 and 28:13, we see that God referred to Himself as YHVH to Abraham and Jacob respectively. How does this resolve.

- In their culture a name signifies an attribute(s). We see God stating that He is about to fulfill many of the promises to the patriarchs. He is going to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and give them the promised land. This is a further revealing of the meaning of YHWH. The God who keeps His promises.

The Holy Ones

- The first cup of the Passover Seder is called the “Cup of Sanctification”.
- Not only does it signify that Passover is a special night, even more so, it reminds us that God told Israel through Moshe that He was going to set Israel apart from Egypt, and make them special.
- The concept of setting apart is called sanctification or “making one holy”. In this Torah portion it relates to “to bring out”. (Shemot 8:19)
- We see it clearly stated that the children of Israel did not experience the fourth or subsequent plagues. It was God’s intention to make Israel separate and different from the rest of the nations.
- Sanctification does not refer to some kind of elevated ethereal religious state. It merely means to be separate from everything else in order to be wholly given over to God for Him to use.
- Not only people were sanctified but the implements for the Tabernacle were as well.
- Through this we see the Lord painting a picture of what it would be like for both us as individual believers and the covenant community as a whole to be separate from the rest of the world.

The Situation in Egypt

- Remember that the Hebrews probably numbered around 2 million. It should be no wonder that Pharaoh was not willing to let them go. Besides the cheap workforce, a freed people of this number could pose a threat to him and his rule.
- While God could deliver the Hebrews immediately He had another plan in mind. Moshe and Aaron would need credentials and a way to persuade Pharaoh to listen to them.
- In Shemot 7:1-13 we read the rod became a snake. The Hebrew word here translated snake really means “crocodile.” Through this beginning act God began to show His power.

Deliverance

- The second cup of wine is the “Cup of Deliverance”. It is a reminder of the dramatic rescue from Egypt.
- Who was the deliverance for? Was it just Israel? No, Egypt was in bondage as well. Not physically but spiritually.
- In sending the plagues God was showing His power over the Egyptian gods and therefore giving the Egyptians a reason to turn to Him.
- Each affliction from God has a demonstrable connection with Egyptian customs and superstitions.

The Troublemakers

- What were some of the gods which El Shaddai came against through plagues?
 - a. Nile River (Hapi) - was a major god. Changing it to blood made it loathsome to its worshippers.
 - b. Frogs (Heqt) - god of fruitfulness and of resurrection. The multiplication of frogs seems to show God's humor. "You want fruitfulness? I'll make you fruitful in frogs!"
 - c. Gnats - Some Egyptians considered the earth to be "the father of the gods." By striking the earth and afflicting the people with gnats God was mocking this belief.
 - d. Animal disease - While we do not know the exact nature of this plague we know that Egypt worshipped at least three animals as gods: Hathor - a mother goddess in the form of a cow, Apis - a bull god (fertility), and Mnevis - the sacred bull of Heliopolis.
 - e. Boils - the best translation is "hemorrhoids." Naturally these were not worshipped but since they could not cure themselves, the god Imhotep - the god of medicine, was rendered a fraud.
 - f. Hail - Nut (the sky goddess) and Seth (the protector of crops) were affected by this plague.

Hardness of Heart

- All the plagues came in mercy rather than judgement; for each one was an opportunity for Pharaoh to repent. (Cole)
- Compare (Romans 1:24,26; Exodus 9:34).
- Compare this whole process with Romans 9.
- Everything that God does, He does to demonstrate His own glory in order that sinful human beings can see it and repent.

Redemption

- Redemption is the major theme for next week so we will discuss the third cup then.

There's Going to be a Wedding

- The phrase, "I shall take you to Me" provides the name of the fourth cup of the Passover Seder, "The Cup of Acceptance." It also introduces one of the most beautiful themes in the Bible - the theme of marriage between God and His people.
- The Hebrew word translated "shall take" in Shemot 6:7 is also used in reference to a man taking a bride for himself. (Bereshit 4:19, 6:2, 11:29, and 12:19, just to name a few).
- To develop this theme some more:
 - a. The Lord first promises to separate Israel from all the others in the world (Shemot 6:6)

- b. His bride is held in bondage so He frees her.
- c. God leads His bride to the wedding at Mount Sinai.
- d. He even gives her a ring - Shabbat (Shemot 31:13).
- e. However, not all of His bride is ready. He is still adding on. The wedding is consummated in the Book of Revelation and is highlighted by a gigantic banquet (Revelation 19:9).

“I Promise...”

- The marriage process begins here in Shemot 6:7. We see that God fulfills His promises.
- Therefore, if God promises to be a husband to Israel, He will keep that promise.
- While this relationship has been rocky God has assured Israel (in Hosea 1-3) that no matter how unfaithful Israel would be as a bride (or betrothed one) He would always remain faithful and keep His beloved one as His own. (Romans 8:28-29).