

Shemot	Names	Getting Ready to Leave Egypt
Torah:	Exodus 1:1-6:1 (5:26)	
Haftarah:	Isaiah 27:6-28:13; Jeremiah 1:1-2:3	
Brit Chadashah:	I Corinthians 14:13-25	
Reading:	Betty p. 161 & Ps.99. Jewish Hero: Abraham. Carrier Amos	

In this portion, we see the shift from the relatively small family of Jacob, to a mighty nation. The sons of Jacob who came into Egypt are named and the total number of persons is given as seventy. In Acts, Steven states that the number is 75 people. This is not a contradiction or a mistake, just a sign that our Bible is a very old book, written over a long period of time. If you add Joseph, Jacob and his three surviving wives, the number climbs from 70 to 75. In the Bible, 70 is the number of the nations and it is a way of saying that Israel is now a fully formed nation.

There is a regime change and the new dynasty does not acknowledge Joseph or the special privileges that Israel enjoyed under the old dynasty. The new rulers feel threatened by Israel and the impression is given that they are a foreign regime that does not have very many people. They use a figure of speech when they say the country was filling up with the House of Israel. They still lived in Goshen, in the Nile delta, but the new rulers are afraid Israel will grow more numerous than them and side with their enemies when a war came and then leave the country. The Jews never came close to outnumbering the native Egyptian population.

The people are enslaved and are required to undertake forced labour, working the fields and making bricks out of straw and clay. This would have been over and above their shepherding duties and the growing of their own food. However, the more they were persecuted, the more they grew in numbers. There is an attempted genocide of all the male babies, but the Jewish midwives feared G-d and disobeyed the killing order given by the Egyptians. Babies should not be killed, either inside the womb or outside the womb.

In chapter two we are introduced to Moses. His mother first hides him at home, but then makes a floating cradle and hides the baby in the reeds that grew at the edge of the river. This would only work until the baby could walk and the noise of the birds would disguise the noise of the baby crying. Moses' sister kept watch and would run and get her mother when the baby needed to be fed or changed.

The plan did not work when one of Pharaoh's daughters came down to bathe in the river with her maids (and likely some guards as well). Their presence silenced the birds and the baby was crying because it was likely time to feed him. He is discovered and is adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. He was returned to his mother until he was weaned and then was raised in the household of Pharaoh's daughter. Pharaoh likely had many wives and lots of sons and daughters, so Moses became part of the royal family, but was pretty low on the totem pole.

Next we have the first of two major time lapses and right after the scenario by the river, we next encounter Moses as a fully grown man. He goes out to see his people and murders an Egyptian who is beating a Hebrew. He has to flee for his life and ends up in Midian, which was not part of Egyptian held territory. He joins the household of a priest of Midian and marries one of his seven daughters. He becomes a shepherd and tends the flocks.

The next time lapse occurs and we learn that the Pharaoh who wanted to kill Moses is dead

and the L-rd decides it is time to set Israel's deliverance in motion. In the Middle East, shepherds would wander from place to place to find grazing for their sheep and Moses ends up in the Sinai peninsula among the mountains of Horeb. At the base of one of the mountains (Mount Sinai) he encounters a burning bush where the fire does not consume it.

He turns aside to investigate this phenomenon and receives the deliverance mandate from the L-RD and is told that he is to bring the people back to this same mountain. YHVH reveals His name to Moses so he can tell the people who is calling them out of Egypt. The promise of inheriting Canaan is given, as well as a brief outline of the Exodus. YHVH is going to strike the Egyptians with signs and then the people will be allowed to leave.

As they leave, YHVH says that they will be given treasures by the Egyptians, perhaps as an appeasement or a guilt offering. The treasures would have been used by the Egyptians in the worship of their soon to be defeated, false gods.

Moses is given three signs to perform for the elders of Israel. So, despite the intensity of persecution by the Egyptians, we learn that there is still an intact leadership among the Hebrews. Once he has received the signs, Moses tries to back out of going, saying he has a speech impediment. He tries again, even after the L-RD offers to heal his impediment.

The L-rd gets mad at Moses for the first time and Moses loses the priesthood to his older brother Aaron. YHVH shall speak to Moses and Moses shall speak to Aaron and Aaron shall be Moses' spokesman. We learn later that Aaron is instructed to come to the mountain of G-d (Sinai) and when they arrive in Egypt, it appears that Aaron performs all the signs which Moses was to have done.

He receives Jethro's blessing and he and his family head for Egypt. When they stop for the night, YHVH is again angry with Moshe because he has neglected to circumcise his son and the L-RD is prepared to kill him for this infraction. If the leader of the covenant people is so disobedient, how can he be an example to the people? His wife, Tzipora, performs the rite and tosses the bloody foreskin at Moses' feet. It was after this incident that Aaron joins them and they complete the journey back to Egypt.

Initially they are well received by the elders of Israel, but when they appear before Pharaoh, they get their first taste of resistance. He is not interested in letting his slave labourers go free and decides to increase their work load so that they will stop entertaining weird notions of freedom. He ceases providing the Jewish labourers with straw and they have to scatter across the country to collect it for themselves. They are told they have to produce the same quantity of bricks and their foremen are beaten when they do not meet their original quota.

The foremen complain to Moses and say that he has put a sword in Pharaoh's hand to kill them. Moses takes their complaint to the L-rd, asking YHVH why He has treated His people so badly. The L-RD encourages Moses and says that He is going to lay a heavy hand on Pharaoh until he lets the people go. In other words, this initial resistance is just the first encounter of the long battle ahead. Sometimes it has to get worse before it gets better, but with the L-RD on our side, He will deliver, heal and provide for all of our needs as we walk through this life on our way to our father's home in Glory. Hey Pharaoh, you ain't seen nothing yet! Your troubles are just beginning! You are messing with the wrong G-d!

**Sermon: Do We Pass the Test?**

**Passage: “The angel of the L-RD spoke to Abraham for a second time from the heavens and said: I swear it by Myself, Word of the L-RD! Because you have done this and have not refused your only son, I will bless you and I will multiply your posterity like the stars of heaven and like the grains of sand on the shores of the sea; and your posterity shall possess the door of their enemies. All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in your posterity because you have obeyed My voice.”** (Genesis 22:15-18)

Abraham left his homeland when he was already a childless, senior citizen. He was told by YHVH that he would become a great nation and that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in him. G-d was going to curse those who cursed him and bless those who blessed him. He settled in Canaan and waited until he was 100 years old before he had a son by his wife, Sarah. Hagar's child would be blessed, but the covenant blessing belonged to Sarah's child. He had to wait another 30 years in the land before the promised son showed up.

He had an amazing encounter with G-d, who walked between the sacrificial animals, sealing the promises as a binding covenant. He performed the rite of circumcision on himself and on all the males in his camp, probably several hundred individuals. He watched as the evil twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire from heaven. And as all this is happening, still no miracle baby.

When Isaac (yuk yuk) is born Abraham is instructed by the L-RD to take him to a special place and offer him up as a burnt offering. After he has bound his son and is prepared to impale him before burning his corpse, he is stopped from doing so by an angelic voice. He is directed to a ram caught by its horns in some brush and he offers up the ram in Isaac's place. There is definitely a connection between the ram who was offered in Isaac's place and the Ram of G-d who was offered up in your place and mine.

We may never understand totally why G-d would make such a horrible request of Abraham and why Isaac did not fight back or even struggle. Theologians have argued that Abraham knew that a substitute would be provided for his son, but if he did, wouldn't that defeat the whole purpose of the exercise? You all know the story of the murdered missionaries in my home country and how the L-rd asked me if I could stand to see my perfect baby son murdered in front of me in the service of our G-d.

When I surrendered my son to G-d, with much weeping and pain (he still is such a wonderful baby), G-d promised me that He would always look after my son because I had surrendered him to G-d with the possibility of watching him be murdered in front of me. I have claimed the same promise of protection and provision for my beautiful daughter and my amazing grandchildren (and their wonderful mother).

Abraham's faith had to be put to the test, both in the long 30 year wait for a son from Sarah and in the order to offer him up as a burnt offering to G-d. In our lives as believers, we are called to have faith in G-d as we walk with Him according to His Word, and more than once, our faith may be put to the test, so the L-rd can show us how deep and strong this saving faith needs to be. All that we have and all that we are, needs to be surrendered to the L-rd and considered to be a loss (dung, actually) because of the excellence of our faith in the Messiah and our total submission to His Word. He needs to be everything to us.

During the First World War, many soldier's faith was tested as they rotted in the trenches and

waited to be slaughtered in futile charges against their relentless enemy. They were shot at, gassed and had to endure frequent artillery shelling, while they often found themselves waist deep in mud. More people died in the second war, but more soldiers were slaughtered in the first war under horrible conditions.

It is said that many believers lost their faith during this trying time because they could not understand why G-d would let this happen to them. They lost so many friends and were ravaged by diseases like the Spanish flu, as they struggled to ward off gangrene in the most unhealthy of conditions. These believers could not understand why their faith did not protect them from such awful tribulations and they felt abandoned by G-d.

At the same time, many nonbelievers and atheists came to faith when they saw how fragile and cruel life could be. They came to believe that there was a purpose in their suffering and that purpose was to have faith in the G-d of the Bible. They realized that they had no control over what was happening to them and the only solution which made sense was to surrender their hearts and minds to G-d. They were not expecting any special privileges from G-d and did not think that they would escape from their current distress because they put their faith in G-d. They just needed to acknowledge a higher power in their lives.

They did not end up blaming G-d for all the horror and terror of that useless tribal warfare between European nations. They put their faith in the G-d of the Bible with no strings attached and we are called to do the same.

Throughout history, Jewish people have faced horrendous trials and many faithful people in the Bible were nearly obliterated by the mighty trials they faced. David had to spend years running away from Saul, just so he could avoid having to kill him. Jeremiah was thrown into a dry well for daring to tell the truth and he was taken hostage into Egypt by the same rebels who continued to refuse to listen to G-d.

Paul was beaten, robbed, shipwrecked and stoned because of his faith in the Messiah whose followers he had once persecuted. Peter was jailed and John, the author of the Revelation, was incarcerated on a prison island. As he traveled around the Mediterranean, Paul warned his converts that they had to go through much tribulation as they traveled towards their eventual entrance into the Father's Kingdom.

However through it all, Paul said that his slight troubles of the moment are not worth comparing to the eternal weight of Glory that is ours when the kingdom comes.

I would not be faithful to my calling as your rabbi, if I did not warn you that you will face many heartbreaking and confusing trials as you learn to walk with the L-rd and suffer your faith to be tried in order that it may become deeper and stronger.

Abraham passed the test and was willing to sacrifice the covenant bearing child when he was ordered to do so. If every there is ever anything or anyone we love more than the L-rd and which we are not ready to give up when the L-rd asks us to, then our faith is weak and fragile and will not give us the strength and the resolve not to let anything come between us and our faith in the G-d of the Bible. G-d does not hate us when we face soul crushing tribulation, He wants us to keep trusting in Him even as we breathe our final breath and watch our world crumble, even as we lose those we love more than life itself.

Several years ago, a crazed gun man broke into an Amish school and shot several children. It

was discovered later that some of the older children asked to be shot first, so that the younger ones would see they had nothing to fear. Once the gunman shot the children, he took his own life and his widow was not only welcome to attend the funeral of the children, she also road to the ceremony with some of the parents of the children her husband had shot.

The enemy of our souls hates us beyond measure and will try to use anything he can to separate us from our faith and from our obedience to the Word of our G-d. Remember the story of the rabbis waiting to be executed by the Nazis in one of their death camps? They were amazing men of faith, who held a lengthy debate to discover who was to blame for them being in that death camp.

After several weeks of arguing and discussing they reached a unanimous conclusion that it was G-d's fault and they condemned Him. Then one of them said it was time for prayer and they praised Him. In the midst of all his suffering Job made an amazing statement when he said that even if G-d were to kill him, he would still trust in Him.

There is an intense spiritual battle going on across the globe for the souls of all mankind. False religions and spiraling materialism compete with evolutionary atheism to win the allegiance of generations of men and women. The enemy of our souls is the inspiration behind the slaughter of innocent babies in their mother's womb. In Canada, we live in one of the safest countries of the world, but it is the exception and not the rule. Global epidemics still make it to our shores, as we watch terrorism and civil war ravage many parts of the world.

Recently we were horrified by the shooting down of a civilian aircraft by an Iranian missile. Many of the people on board may have been believers , but as we come to terms with the horror and stupidity which thrive in our world, we have to understand a very important, difficult lesson. Our faith will never let us be excluded from horrible trials and tribulations, it will sustain us as we pass through them and make sure we arrive safely in our Father's Home in Glory. A friend of mine once said he was not afraid of being electrocuted, because, instant death means instant glory.

I do not wish great and mighty tribulations on any of us and through it all, I still trust the L-rd and will always continue to wait patiently for the arrival of His coming Kingdom. This is the whole duty of every believer, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. How unshakable is your faith and confidence in the L-rd? Patti and I were pretty shaken up when we lost our third child in the second trimester of her pregnancy, but we know that Alexander is waiting for us when it is our turn to sleep in the dust.

We have seen some amazing answers to prayer and our hearts have been frequently broken by the cruelty and the stupidity of those who call themselves believers and it ain't over yet. He has promised us that He will never leave us nor forsake us, but He never promised that we would float to glory on a cloud of ease. While I was so sick, many people suspected I had done something wrong and just didn't have enough faith to be healed. I know many people who have not been healed and who suffer from mental and physical problems through no fault of their own. If the only thing we can offer these brave souls is a not too subtle condemnation, with the accusation that somehow they have done something to deserve the horror they are facing, then we are serving the accuser of our souls and not the Saviour of our souls. I believe in divine healing. I have experienced it and seen it. But it is G-d who heals, not me.

Abraham was asked to do a horrible thing and the whole experience must have been traumatic ,

both for him and for his son, but he did not waver in his faith or in his obedience to the voice of G-d. He had every intention of obeying the voice of the L-rd and He may have believed that the L-RD would bring his son back from the dead – but he received no assurance of a resurrection when he proceeded to offer his son as a burnt offering.

He would first have to impale his son – kill him and then set his dead body on fire. He may have been weeping. His son may have been screaming, but he was determined to obey the voice of G-d, no matter what the personal cost he would have to pay.

All that we have and all that we are, belongs to G-d and we do not own Him, He owns us. Job eventually came to the awful conclusion that, in His sovereignty, G-d could do whatever He liked to whoever He liked, as many times as He wanted to. Evil and suffering are two mysteries we will not always understand, but nothing and no one can ever tarnish the amazing goodness of G-d and His love for each one of us.

Our world is sinking quickly back into the global darkness that once covered the globe in the days of Noah and those who want to walk with the L-rd with integrity and according to His Word, will have more enemies than a camel has fleas and we will rarely be exempt from the trials and tribulations which believers are suffering across the globe.

On top of that, many of us will suffer personal tragedies and great loss through no fault of our own. We may see wonderful things happen to us, as we win great victories over the flesh, the world and the enemy. It does not depend on us or our abilities and connections. We may be martyred, blocking fleeing students with our bodies. We may be killed in action defending our country and the lives of those we love.

As long as we retain our faith in G-d and our confidence in His Word, then nothing else really matters in the bright light of eternity and the wonder and the glory of the coming kingdom. I will never consciously go looking for trouble and I will always pray for the safety of my family, friends and my flock. I will always look for providence and know that our Messiah always has our best interests at heart, no matter what He allows to come into our lives.

May we have the faith and the confidence of our father Abraham who did not hold back his only son, but was willing to offer him up to G-d when he was called to do so. Our G-d and the Father of our Messiah did follow through on offering His only begotten Son on the cross for all the nations and generations of mankind. That's how much He loves us.

What are you willing to give up if you are called to do so? Is there anything in your life more precious to you than your faith in our beloved Messiah and King? He is more precious than anything this feeble universe has to offer and He is more worthwhile than anything life can throw at us. The trials I have faced have taught me that as long as I respond with faith to all the happenstances of life, then I am alright in the long run. As long as I am Kingdom focused and Kingdom bound, then the details of the journey pale into insignificance because of the wonder and the glory of the destination. May you have a blessed week as you remain focused on the Saviour when the whatever's of life come knocking. May you pass the test.

Shabbat Shalom and Shavua Tov.