



SHABBAT ZEST

Parshat Va'eira 1st Shevat 5777

Torah Reading / Haftara:

Artscroll – p.318/1149

Living Torah – p.280/1096

SHABBAT TIMES:

Candle Lighting:
4:22pm

Kabbalat Shabbat
Davening: 6:30pm

Shabbat Morning
Davening: 9:15am

Mincha: After Kiddush

Shabbat Ends 5:36pm

NEXT SHABBAT
Bo

CANDLE LIGHTING
@ 4:34 PM

Parsha In a Nutshell

Exodus 6:2-9:35

G-d reveals Himself to Moses. Employing the “four expressions of redemption,” He promises to take out the Children of Israel from Egypt, deliver them from their enslavement, redeem them, and acquire them as His own chosen people at Mount Sinai; He will then bring them to the land He promised to the Patriarchs as their eternal heritage.

Moses and Aaron repeatedly come before Pharaoh to demand in the name of G-d, “Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness.” Pharaoh repeatedly refuses. Aaron’s staff turns into a snake and swallows the magic sticks of the Egyptian sorcerers. G-d then sends a series of plagues upon the Egyptians. The waters of the Nile turn to blood; swarms of frogs overrun the land; lice infest all men and beasts. Hordes of wild animals invade the cities; pestilence kills the domestic animals; painful boils afflict the Egyptians. For the seventh plague, fire and ice combine to descend from the skies as a devastating hail. Still, “the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he would not let the children of Israel go, as G-d had said to Moses.”

Haftarah

Ezekiel 28:25-29:21

This week's Haftarah begins with a mention of the ingathering of the exiles, echoing G-d's promise mentioned in the Torah portion: "I will take you out of the suffering of Egypt." The prophet then goes on to discuss the decimation of Pharaoh and Egypt, reminiscent of the primary theme of the Torah portion--the devastation G-d wrought upon Egypt.

Ezekiel begins with a description of what will occur during the ingathering of the exiles. "When I gather in the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they have been scattered, and I have been sanctified through them in the eyes of the nations, then shall they dwell on their land that I gave to My servant, to Jacob. And they shall dwell upon it securely..."

The prophet then proceeds to convey a prophecy regarding Pharaoh and Egypt, foretelling the fall of the Egyptian empire. Egypt merited this punishment for two reasons: a) They had reneged on their promise to come to Israel's aid against the attacking Babylonians. b) They had incredible arrogance, considering themselves un-reliant on G-d, instead attributing their success to the bounty their deified Nile afforded them. Therefore, Ezekiel warns: "And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and in ruins, and they shall know that I am the Lord!

Because he [Pharaoh] said, "The river is mine, and I have made it." G-d warns that the land of Egypt will be empty and desolate for forty years, after which G-d will return the people to the land to reinhabit it, but it will no longer be an important nation to be reckoned with. The Haftarah ends with another prophecy wherein G-d informs Ezekiel that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, will be the one to conquer Egypt and take its spoils. This as a reward for his effort in defeating the wicked nation of Tyre.

UPCOMING EVENTS

29th January 2017 - The return of Shir. The fabulous klezmer band are coming back for an encore. Reserve Tickets with the Office now.

31st January – Shiur 8pm 1 Alderton Mews ‘Tefillin – What’s in them and why wear them?’

8th February: Israel Advocacy Evening. Talk given by David Olesker founder and Director of JCCAT. £5 per ticket. Book through Shul Office

12th February: Sunday Shacharit 8:45am

12th March: Purim including 9am Shacharit, 10am Breakfast, 10:30am Megillah reading followed by Purim Party

21st March – Ladies Guild Lunch – Guest Speaker film and documentary producer Pamela Wagman

11th May: AGM

Recurring Events

Cheder OPEN

Mummy and Me Running

Yahrzeits for the coming week 1st – 7th Shevat:

3. Ian Levene – Mother
5. Blanche Shaw – Son
5. Philip Shaw – Brother
5. Warren Shaw – Brother
6. Sandra Lorraine – Mother
6. Avril Trainis – Father-in-law
6. Geoffrey Wrightman – Mother
7. Norma Kashket – Father

A Little Deeper – Animal Rights

"And He said (G-d to Moses), Do not come any closer, remove your shoes from off your feet, for the place upon which you stand" And God said to Moses, Speak to Aharon, Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt... And they shall become blood..."

Rashi: "Since the river protected Moses when he was thrown into it, therefore it was not struck by him... but was struck by Aharon."

(Exodus 7:19)

Some years ago I was on a plane sitting next to a nice chap who told me he was an animal rights activist. I asked him "Tell me do you have any animals?" He told me he had a cat, so I asked him "What do you feed your cat?" at which point he looked at me as though he had taken my question as a full frontal attack of his values. Seeing as most cat food includes animals, how does a true 'believer' feed their cat?

There is clearly a different morality of animal rights and what is often called a humanist. No moral person is at peace with the genocides of Darfur, Bosnia, or Rwanda. We may not feel motivated to march on their behalf, but we still think something should be done to prevent such tragedies.

Yet mention the wanton butchering of the Serengeti gazelles, or the massacre of the King George Island Penguins and you will have even a PETA member scratching his head - "Did I miss that one?" Yes you did. That's because the gazelles suffered their fate at the hand (paws) of the Serengeti lions and the Penguins met their end with the leopard seal. You might say it's a circle of life thing, but it doesn't matter how many birds eat worms, cats eat the mice, or alligators chomp on wild hogs, nobody is calling for a cessation of violence here.

Fundamentally, animal rights has nothing to do with any concern for animals. Just like Moses didn't want to hit the water, but if he really cared about the water, he wouldn't have let Aharon hit it either. So too, if anyone really cared about cattle, they wouldn't just protest their slaughter in a third world abattoir, they would also save them from dismemberment by the mountain lions. It's not the animals we are trying to protect, they can eat each other for as long as National Geographic has film in their cameras. It's humans Green Peace is really trying to protect.

There is a real difference between how a human kills a cow and how a lion performs that same act. No member of the animal rights movement is calling for a worldwide sanctuary for sheep, mice, penguins, or even worms, free from lions, cats, seals and the early morning bird. That's because, that's what cats do, and that was actually the answer my fellow passenger responded with.

And humans don't. Why? Because when humans do, it's not the animal that suffers the most, it's the human. Many people are familiar with the famous Jewish tradition to cover the bread as we make the Shabbat blessing on wine. During the week, bread is usually blessed first, and so that it shouldn't see it's deferral to second place, we cover it up. Obviously, being eaten is not such a problem.

But again, all these rich and elaborate traditions point to the overall emphasis that Judaism is trying to imbue on us all, empathy. When I think of all the war films I have seen, I really think I could pilot a plane. However, such confidence is soon dispelled in the cockpit of a flight simulator - and that's the reason they have such devices, as reality is always more difficult than the fiction we create in our minds.

Just as we need a flight simulator for flying we also need one for marriage, children, neighbours, friends, well really for all our personal interactions. Before we let you express yourself to another person, practice on some life simulators. Animals, bread and water. Wherever we can, practice, practice and practice. This involves killing animals in the most sensitive manner possible, eating bread in ways that show understanding of what it is like to be ignored, and even smite water to bring out your sense of gratitude. And when you get that right, then you are ready to get married, have children and be part of human society.

Wishing you all shabbat shalom.