

APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:

for **V'eira**

by Mark Huey posted 09 January, 2010 www.outreachisrael.net

Romans 9:14-17
2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

"Is God Discriminating?"

The account of Ancient Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery is rather universally known, because the traumatic events surrounding the Exodus are so dramatically moving! The Exodus is well known for *more reasons* than simply depicting the salvation available in the sacrificed Lamb of God, Messiah Yeshua, as important as this is. The Exodus has motivated people throughout history to oppose oppression, to promote liberty, and to help one's fellow human beings—even among those who do not accept the Bible's record as historically accurate. Even with debates among conservatives over the timing, route, or actual numbers of the Exodus—second to Yeshua's death and resurrection—it might be the most important event in Scripture. And we agree: **a large number of descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob really did escape Egypt in actual history sometime three millennia ago.**

One of the most intriguing, and perhaps perplexing aspects of the Exodus account, is the Lord's assertion that He was going to use the judgment upon Egypt to declare His power throughout the Earth. We know this has taken place because the Exodus is so well known, even to those who are not that familiar with the Scriptures. What might not be as well known to the average person—although it is quite debated among interpreters—is how the Sovereign God declares several times how He is going to harden Pharaoh's heart, along with Pharaoh hardening his own heart, in order to accomplish His will. In fact, we not only see the Lord hardening Pharaoh's heart, but also what the primary reason is for such a hardening:

"And the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not listen to them, just as the LORD had spoken to Moses. Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh and say to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For this time I will send all My plagues on you and your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth. For *if by* now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth'"'"' (Exodus 9:12-16).

The Holy One of Israel chose to make an example of the king of Ancient Egypt, and his actions, in order to declare who He is to the world. When the Israelites are led out of Egypt, the Canaanites are going to hear about the miracles their God has performed:

"In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; in Your strength You have guided *them* to Your holy habitation. The peoples have heard, they tremble; anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; the leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; until Your people pass over, O LORD, until the people pass over whom You have purchased" (Exodus 15:13-16).

The power of the Lord's deliverance of Ancient Israel, as we certainly know today, **has most definitely been used to proclaim who He is throughout the Earth** since the Exodus occurred 3,300 years ago. But as great as the Exodus was, it would not be great unless there had been a foe to defeat. While the destiny of the average Egyptian who endured the judgments of God can be debated, the destiny of the Egyptian Pharaoh cannot be. For some reason or another, the full brunt of God's judgment was directed toward the Pharaoh. Some think that since the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, that he was just a player in the larger scheme, and should have been exempt from any punishment. Yet at the same time, even theological traditions that emphasize the free

will of human beings more than God's sovereignty, may have to concede that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was an exception.

I have always taken great comfort as a Believer, in knowing that God is sovereign in the choices He has made. I have frequently looked to various statements made by the Apostle Paul in Romans chs. 9-11, to find support for this. Is God discriminating? *I think He is.* God chose to use Pharaoh to be an example of His judgment. Can God's mercy be shown to be mercy, without the example of what it means to not be shown mercy? Consider what the Apostle Paul says:

"What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, 'I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION' [Exodus 33:19]. So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH' [Exodus 9:16]. So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires" (Romans 9:14-18).

God is absolutely just in all that He has done and will ever do—because that is who He is and that is what His perfect character requires. And do keep in mind, God did not necessarily condemn the Egyptian Pharaoh by hardening His heart. The Egyptian Pharaoh believed himself to be a god, and the chance of him ever acknowledging a God of slaves as his superior, was quite impossible. God needed to use someone to judge, in order to proclaim His justice and goodness to the whole Earth, and the Egyptian Pharaoh was the best one to make an example of.

As Believers in Messiah Yeshua, who have partaken of God's mercy and salvation, we understandably want to focus more on His selection of vessels for whom He has shown mercy. This week as we read through *V'eira*, more attention will be given to the figure of Moses, who was selected by the Lord to be His carrier of deliverance for the Israelites. But remember, the reason Moses was selected, was because of his great humility (cf. Numbers 12:3). If you want to be used by God to be there in a time when He needs you—you must likewise be a humble servant.

Be one who can follow the example of Moses, and humbly submit to the will of the Father! Hardening your heart is an option, but as seen by the example of Pharaoh, **it is not at all the best choice.** Circumcise your heart, and be sensitive to God's purpose for your life:

"So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe" (Deuteronomy 10:16-17).

Our Creator does exercise His power on a discriminating basis: **some have definitely been chosen to be vessels worthy of His wrath.** At the same time, we might consider that the opposite has been true as well: **some have definitely been chosen to be vessels worthy of His mercy.** Whether these realities are the case for all people, as opposed to specific individuals in history, we will leave for another time. But we all must be united on how God's justice is without flaw and everlasting. Let us praise Him, and make sure that we are all vessels who receive His mercy!

Until the restoration of all things...

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