

Revelation Time

“²³ Now it came about over the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. Bnei-Yisrael groaned because of their slavery. They cried out and their cry from slavery went up to God. ²⁴ God heard (VaYishma) their sobbing and remembered (VaYiskor) His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ²⁵ God saw (VaYareh) Bnei-Yisrael, and He was concerned (knew, VaYeda) about them” (Ex. 2:24-25).

The Book of Exodus (*Shemot*) starts to tell us one of the most famous stories of all human history – the story of the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. God has offered a helpful outline for all of students of Scripture with the words which He provided to Moses in Ex. 2:24-25. The book of *Shemot* (literally, names) has 40 chapters. *Shemot* is both the title for a new *Torah* portion and the second book of the *Torah*. The Hebrew title for the book follows the widespread ancient Near Eastern practice of naming a literary work by its opening word or phrase. Thus, *Shemot* is shortened for the phrase, 've-eleh *Shemot*,' meaning 'And these are the names...'

As we progress through the Torah, we will observe the history of the Children of Israel's progress from being a family of seventy who descended into Egypt, to becoming a nation of about three million strong. The themes of exile and redemption come to the forefront. We learn that the first few generations of Israelites to live in Egypt died and after nearly 400 years “⁸ Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.” How many of us remember the events of 1712 (about 400 years ago)? {There is a musical work called the 1712 Overture by P.D.Q. Bach, which is a *Parody of the 1812 Overture by Tchaikovsky*}. This 'king' put the children of Israel under harsh servitude. This was done in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham when He said that He was going to take his descendants down to Egypt: “Then He said to Abram, “¹³ Know for certain that your seed will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will be enslaved and **oppressed** 400 years” (Gen. 15:13).

Revelation time has come. It is clear from our key Scripture above that not only did *Adonai* know it was time for Him to raise up a deliverer, but it was also time to reveal Himself to His people. Why a burning bush? There are many possible places from which *Adonai* could have spoken—such as from a high mountain or from the highest heavens in a glorious cloud. Why did *Adonai* choose to make a major revelation from the midst of a bush, and to be more accurate in translation, a burning thorn bush? This question has sparked a host of different comments from various sources. Commentator *Neshama Leibowitz* has a most appropriate answer. She cites a *Midrash* that interprets the thorn bush as *something that symbolizes one of the attributes of Adonai*: “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.” She continues: “The Almighty is pictured as suffering anguish, in order to impress on the Torah scholar that He Who has decreed persecution and suffering on the seed of Abraham, and hid His face from them, for centuries, is not a cruel deity, arbitrarily abusing His creation. Rather He is a father chastising His children for their good.” Out of the midst of the thorn bush and not out of the midst of any other tree, bearing out the text: “I shall be with him in trouble.”

If this explanation is correct it paints a beautiful portrait of the kind of *Adonai* who, in fact, did reveal Himself to Moses, to the Children of Israel and to the rest of mankind. For it pictures Deity who would not let mankind continue to suffer indefinitely in his own sin. He, in some way, shape or form – almost inexplicably – allowed Himself to become, “... a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53) [when He] ... “²¹ He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Indeed, in *Yeshua*: “¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. We looked upon His glory, the glory of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The same *Adonai* who showed His compassion and willingness to feel and sense in a real way the suffering of the Children of Israel in Exodus chapter three, is the same One who sent Messiah to identify with the suffering of sinful man in order to redeem us from slavery to sin and to bring us to Himself.

Not only do we see that the whole history of Israel is foreshadowed in these words: *Adonai* heard, *Adonai* remembered, *Adonai* looked upon, and *Adonai* knew them, but the whole history of the new creation is also summarized in the same manner. *Adonai* heard us, He remembered His promise to save us, He looked upon us with pity, and He knew us, that is, He entered into a personal relationship with us. Shabbat Shalom!