

The hiddenness of God

In this weeks reading, from Parashat Va'era (Shemot / Exodus 6:2-9:35), the Lord brings the plagues upon Egypt that leads to Pharaoh letting the Children of Israel go. According to Shemot / Exodus 7:5, the Lord declares יְהוָה בְּנִטְתִּי אֶת-יָדִי עַל-מִצְרַיִם וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם: 'The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.' (NASB) What is the importance of Egypt needing to know that He is God? According to the Scriptures, the Lord revealed Himself to Pharaoh and to Egypt by stretching out His hand against them. What is interesting about the Scripture reading for this week is the mystery in the way the Lord reveals Himself to the world. It seems that the Lord wants to reveal himself but yet he hides himself. Why do you think that is? According to the verse, the Lord will do all of these things so Egypt will know that He is God. How is the Lord revealing Himself to you today? Looking at biblical history, the Lord seems to have hid himself from the Gentile world for hundreds of years, they had no knowledge of the true God, they lived without him in the world, and whose times of ignorance God overlooked (Acts 17:30-31), and suffered them to walk in their own ways. In the Scriptures we even read that He is also a God that hides Himself from his own people at times, withdraws his gracious presence, and withholds the communication of his love and grace. In the story of God's deliverance of Israel, the Lord did not simply appear (show Himself) to Pharaoh, He chose to reveal Himself in a particular way, to weigh heavy upon Egypt, why do you think He chose to reveal Himself in that way?

<b>כתבי הקודש / The Holy Scriptures</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ספר שמות פרק ז</b></p> <p>א וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה רְאֵה נִתְמַלֵּךְ אֱלֹהִים לְפָרְעֹה וְאֶהְרֵן אַחֶיךָ יִהְיֶה נְבִיאָדָּ: ב אֵתָה תְדַבֵּר אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶךָ וְאֶהְרֵן אַחֶיךָ יְדַבֵּר אֶל-פְּרֹעֹה וְיִשְׁלַח אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: ג וְאֲנִי אֶקְשֶׁה אֶת-לֵב פְּרֹעֹה וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת-אֲתַמִּי וְאֶת-מוֹפְתֵי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם: ד וְלֹא-יִשְׁמַע אֲלֵכֶם פְּרֹעֹה וְנִתְמַלֵּךְ אֶת-יָדֵי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת-צְבָאָתִי אֶת-עַמִּי בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם בְּשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים: ה וְיִדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּנִטְתִּי אֶת-יָדִי עַל-מִצְרַיִם וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתּוֹכָם: ו יַעֲשֶׂה מֹשֶׁה וְאֶהְרֵן כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתָם כִּן עָשׂוּ:</p>	<p><b>Shemot / Exodus 7:1-6</b>  <i>7:1 Then the Lord said to Moses, 'See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. 7:2 'You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land. 7:3 'But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. 7:4 'When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. 7:5 'The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst.' 7:6 So Moses and Aaron did it; as the Lord commanded them, thus they did. (NASB)</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>תרגום אונקלוס ספר שמות פרק ז</b></p> <p>א וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ לְמֹשֶׁה חֲזִי דְמַנְיָתָךְ רַב לְפָרְעֹה וְאֶהְרֵן אַחֶיךָ יְהִי מְתוּרַגְמָנָךְ: ב אֵתָה תְמַלִּיל יַת כָּל דִּי אֶפְקֹדֶיךָ וְאֶהְרֵן אַחֶיךָ יְמַלִּיל עִם פְּרֹעֹה וְיִשְׁלַח יַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: ג וְאֲנָא אֶקְשִׁי יַת לְבָא דְפְרֹעֹה וְאֶסְגִּי יַת אַתְוֹתֵי וְיַת מוֹפְתֵי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: ד וְלֹא יִקְבַּל מִנְכוּן פְּרֹעֹה וְאֵתוּן יַת מַחַת גְּבוּרָתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וְאֶפְקִי יַת חִילִי יַת עַמִּי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּדִינֵין רַבְרַבִּין: ה וְיִדְעוּ מִצְרַיִם אֲרִי אֲנָא יְיָ כִּד אֲרִים יַת מַחַת גְּבוּרָתִי עַל מִצְרַיִם וְאֶפְקִי יַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבְּיַתְהוֹן: ו וְעַבְדֵּי מֹשֶׁה וְאֶהְרֵן כְּמָא דְפְקִידֵי יְיָ יַתְהוֹן כִּן עָבְדוּ:</p>	<p><b>Targum Onkelos, Shemot / Exodus 7:1-6</b>  <i>But the Lord said to Moshe, See, I have appointed thee a Master (rab) with Pharaoh, and Aharon shall be thy interpreter (methurgeman). Thou shalt speak all that I have commanded thee, and Aharon thy brother shall speak with Pharaoh to send away the sons of Israel from his land. And I will harden the heart of Pharaoh, and will multiply My signs and wonders in the land of Mizraim. But Pharaoh will not receive from you; and I will give forth the stroke of My power upon Mizraim, and will bring out My host, My people, the sons of Israel, from the land of Mizraim by great judgments. And the Mizraim shall know that I am the Lord when I uplift the stroke of My power upon Mizraim, and bring forth the sons of Israel from among them. And Moshe and Aharon did as the Lord commanded them, so did they.</i></p>

In addition to this, Yeshua also kept himself hidden from the people according to the Apostolic gospels. Yeshua only revealed himself to the disciples during the various stages of his ministry. Note that following His resurrection he began with Moshe and the prophets and expounded to His disciples the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27). These truths seemed to be hidden from them until "He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." (Luke 24:45) Also note the use of secrecy in Mark's Gospel; many scholars have attempted to explain Yeshua's commands to keep silent after performing miracles. Also, take note of the silencing of demons, and Yeshua commands that the disciples are not to make known his identity. Yeshua also spoke in parables (Mark 4:10-12) for the purpose of hiding his identity. The concept of the hidden Messiah was well established in Judaism of the first century. As a result, the concepts of the Messiah were projected into the future restoration and salvation of Israel. This hiddenness of God, in rabbinic thought, the Messiah took on the concept of being hidden with God in the sense that He is the One who is waiting for the moment when the Lord will send Him to accomplish Israel's salvation. According to the Scriptures the exile of Israel and the method of Salvation was predetermined by God (Bereshit / Genesis 15:13). And so, the hiddenness of the Messiah become a necessity and we learn that this was in fact God's plan all along to reveal the Messiah at the right time. But what is the purpose of hiding? This question is often asked in many ways and in many contexts. When prayers go unanswered, why is God silent? When suffering or tragedy strikes, why would the Lord allow this to happen? The reason I believe is the Lord seeks to grow our faith. The whole purpose is so that we spend our days examining our lives and seeking and drawing near to Him. Our own sins and disobedience may also hide us from God and keep us from seeing the Lord properly. It is only when we are broken and humbly seeking the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit in Yeshua's name that we will see even "greater things than these" and we will see, hear, and find what we are looking for, the Lord God Almighty!