

פרשת שמות Parashat Shemot

*Shemot / Exodus 1:1-6:1, Isaiah 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23
Luke 5:12-39*

What does it mean to have Evil mixed with Good

In the opening chapter of the book of Shemot / Exodus we read, *1:11 So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. 1:12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. 1:13 The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously;* **יא וַיְשִׁימוּ עָלָיו שָׂרֵי מִסִּים לְמַעַן עַנּוֹתוֹ בְּסִבְלָתָם וַיְבִן עָרֵי מִסְכָּנוֹת (NASB, לְפָרְעָה אֶת-פְּתָתָם וְאֶת-רַעְמֵסֶס: יב וַיִּבְנוּ אֶת-פִּתּוֹם וְאֶת-רַעְמֵסֶס: יג וַיִּקְצְצוּ מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: יד וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפָרֹךְ:** The people were oppressed with labor, they were forced into slavery yet they prospered and the Lord was with them. This teaches us when persecution occurs, we are given a testimony of the Lord working in our lives, just as the people became very prosperous by God increasing their numbers under the burden of the Egyptians. Even in the midst of their forced labor, they could say *“look at how the Lord God has blessed us by fulfilling his word to Jacob our Father!”* Chizkuni commentary on *Shemot / Exodus 1:12* Part 1 states the following, *“כֵּן, יִרְבֶּה וְכֵן יִפְרוּץ, “so it would increase even more and multiply even more.” This was in line with G-d’s promise to Yaakov that his descen-*

dants would greatly multiply in Egypt.” The increase of the people, their population, was a fulfillment of God’s promise to Jacob that He would multiply his children to great numbers. In the Zohar (זהר) the second volume on Kohelet 8:9 there is an explanation on the Lord God which states, וכאשר יענו אותו כן ירבה, “*The more they oppressed them the more they increased.*” The Scriptures from *Kohelet / Ecclesiastes 8:9* states, “*All this I have seen and applied my mind to every deed that has been done under the sun wherein a man has exercised authority over another man to his hurt.*” (NASB, ט אָת-כָּל-יָזָה רְאִיתִי, וְנִתְּוֵן אֶת-לְבִי לְכָל-מַעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם עֵת אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַט הָאָדָם: (בְּאָדָם לְרַע לוֹ: In Ecclesiastes, king Solomon stated “*there is a time when one man rules over another to his hurt.*” The Zohar explains one must endure persecutions and troubles. This is described as the good that is mixed with the evil. In this case, evil is mixed with things in our lives that are good. This is drawn out when Solomon states, לְרַע לוֹ, where in the Torah portion we find something very similar, the persecution of the people led to their prosperity and increase in numbers. (There is also a parallel to the understanding on the Yetzer Hara and the Yetzer Hatov that God created within a man.) Great evil was brought against the people and God used it for good to increase their numbers. The more the people were persecuted, the more “good” was released from the suffering. This is the concept of Israel being placed in a crucible as a refiners fire with the character of the people being forged in Egypt. Similar to what Solomon wrote in *Mishley / Proverbs 17:3* *The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the LORD tests hearts.* (NASB) There are many Scriptures that make reference to this sort of thing going on.

Zechariah 13:9

13:9 And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’” (ESV)

1 Peter 1:7

So that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (ESV)

Isaiah 48:10

Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. (ESV)

Malachi 3:3

He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord. (ESV)

These Scriptures suggest there is a need for the refiner's fire in our lives. Many times we do not repent unless there is some sort of persecution or hardship brought that causes us to examine our ways. This is the idea of evil being mixed with good, and the famous references to the "*iron crucible*" in which the character of the people of Israel was forged in Egypt. In a similar manner, when we are placed into the iron crucible, our character is forged, crafted, and molded into the image God wants for us, after the likeness of His Son Yeshua the Messiah.

The Scriptures we are looking at this week are from *Shemot / Exodus 1:1-22*.

Shemot / Exodus 1:1-22

1:1 Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household: 1:2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; 1:3 Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; 1:4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 1:5 All the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt. 1:6 Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. 1:7 But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multi-

plied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them. 1:8 Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 1:9 He said to his people, 'Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. 1:10 'Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land.' 1:11 So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. 1:12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. 1:13 The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; 1:14 and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them. 1:15 Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah; 1:16 and he said, 'When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live.' 1:17 But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. 1:18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, 'Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?' 1:19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them.' 1:20 So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. 1:21 Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them. 1:22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, 'Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to

keep alive. (NASB)

א ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה את יעקב
 איש וביתו באו: ב ראובן שמעון לוי ויהודה: ג יששכר
 זבולן ובנימן: ד דן ונפתלי גד ואשר: ה ויהי כל-נפש
 יצאי ירד-יעקב שבעים נפש ויוסף היה במצרים: ו וימת
 יוסף וכל-אחיו וכל הדור ההוא: ז ובני ישראל פרו
 וישרצו וירבו ויעצמו במאד מאד ותמלא הארץ אתם: פ
 ח ויקם מלך-חדש על-מצרים אשר לא-ידע את-יוסף:
 ט ויאמר אל-עמו הנה עם בני ישראל רב ועצום ממנו:
 י הבה נתחכמה לו פן-ירבה והיה כפי-תקראנה מלחמה
 ונוסף גם-הוא על-שנאינו ונלחם-בנו ועלה מן-הארץ:
 יא וישמו עליו שרי מסים למען ענתו בסבלתם ויכן
 ערי מסכנות לפרעה את-פתם ואת-רעמסס: יב וכאשר
 יענו אתו פן ירבה וכן יפרץ ויקצו מפני בני ישראל: יג
 ויעבדו מצרים את-בני ישראל בפרך: יד וימררו את-
 חייהם בעבדה קשה בחמר ובלבנים ובכל-עבדה בשדה
 את כל-עבדתם אשר-עבדו בהם בפרך: טו ויאמר מלך
 מצרים למילדת העברית אשר שם האחת שפרה ושם
 השנית פועה: טז ויאמר בילדכן את-העבריות וראיתן
 על-האבנים אם-בן הוא והמתן אתו ואם-בת הוא וחתיה:
 יז ותיראן המילדת את-האלהים ולא עשו כאשר דבר
 אליהן מלך מצרים ותחיון את-הילדים: [שני] יח ויקרא
 מלך-מצרים למילדת ויאמר להן מדוע עשיתן הדבר הנה
 ותחיון את-הילדים: יט ותאמרן המילדת אל-פרעה כי
 לא כנשים המצרית העברית כפי-חיות הנה בטורם תבוא
 אלהן המילדת וילדו: כ וייטב אלהים למילדת וירב העם
 ויעצמו מאד: כא ויהי כפי-יראו המילדת את-האלהים
 ויעש להם בתים: כב ויצו פרעה לכל-עמו לאמר כל-הבן
 הילוד היארה תשליכהו וכל-הבת תחיון:

In the opening Scriptures to this week's Torah portion (Parashat Shemot) we are presented with the idea of evil being mixed with good.

The purpose of which was to draw us to Teshuvah (Repentance), turning from our sins, and drawing near to the Lord God Almighty seeking God's help. Consider the following Scriptures with this in mind, *"Evil being mixed with Good."*

Matthew 5:11

5:11 'Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. (NASB)

Matthew 10:22

10:22 'You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. (NASB)

Matthew 10:39

10:39 "He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it. (NASB)

Matthew 19:29

19:29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. (NASB)

John 15:18-25

15:18 'If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 15:19 'If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. 15:20 'Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 15:21 'But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. 15:22 'If I had not come and spoken to

them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 15:23 'He who hates Me hates My Father also. 15:24 'If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. 15:25 'But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.' (NASB)

Acts 5:41

So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Hebrews 11:23-26

11:23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. 11:24 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 11:25 choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 11:26 considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. (NASB)

Philippians 1:29

1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, (NASB)

Based upon these Scriptures, a very similar principle is being revealed to us here in the Apostolic Writings, that evil is combined with good which draws out the glory of God in the lives of those who are faithful! Notice how the Torah is teaching us about these things and provides us with a future expectation for suffering in our service to the Lord and how the Torah is connected to the NT Scriptures. Yeshua taught

about a future time when we will be persecuted on behalf of holding to the testimony of His Name (*Matthew 10*), that the world will hate us for His Name sake (*John 15*), and that we who join ourselves with the people of God, to those who are faithful, we will be treated badly (evil), and we do so being led by example of both Moshe and Yeshua, to not enjoy the passing pleasures of sin (*Hebrews 11*). When we hold onto the testimony of God believing in His promises, the plans of the enemy backfire. This is similar to what the Jewish commentators draw out in their commentaries in the Torah portion.

Rashbam on Shemot / Exodus 1:12 Part 1

כִּן יִרְבֶּה; *the measures the Egyptians took to slow down the Jewish birthrate not only did not work but backfired.*

Rashbam on Shemot / Exodus 1:12 Part 2

וַיִּקְוֹצוּ, *they became frustrated with their own lives when watching the development of the Israelites. This expression for frustration with one's own life has already been used when Rivkah could not bear thinking about Yaakov marrying a Canaanite girl. (Genesis 27,46) It also occurs in a similar sense in Isaiah 7,16.*

Rashi on Shemot / Exodus 1:12 Part 1

וְכַאֲשֶׁר יֵעֲנוּ אֹתוֹ AND AS THEY AFFLICTED THEM — In whatsoever matter it was that they set their hearts upon afflicting them so was the heart of the Holy One, blessed be He, set upon multiplying them and making them grow apace.

Rashbam states that the Egyptians tried to slow down the Jewish birthrate but it backfired. God had placed in the hearts of the midwives to not kill the children. The Egyptians were frustrated by their prosperity. To summarize Rashi, he states as much as the evil one wanted to afflict God's people, the Lord God wants to prosper them and to do even more so. This is what happens to us when the enemy comes against us with the desire to destroy us.

Rashi on Shemot / Exodus 1:12 Part 2

כֵּן יִרְבֶּה signifies: so they multiplied and so they grew apace (i. e. God's determination was carried out, the imperfect tenses of the verbs denoting the continuance of the increase and growth). This is the real meaning; but there is a Midrashic explanation of these imperfect tenses: The Holy spirit (God) said this: You say כֵּן יִרְבֶּה, "lest they increase", but "I" say כֵּן יִרְבֶּה, "thus will they assuredly increase" (Sotah 11a).

Rashi on Exodus 1:12:3

וּיקצוּ the word means, THEY WERE WEARY OF THEIR LIVES. Our Rabbis explained that it means that they were as thorns (קוצים) in their eyes (cf. Sotah 11a).

The question is how did they become abhorrent to the Egyptians? Rashi answers the question saying the Egyptians came to loath Israel *מפני בני ישראל* (literally means: *"in the presence of the children of Israel"*). Something to note, the children of Israel were not with the Egyptians, they were in the land of Goshen located some distance from the Egyptians. Rashi explains that they became thorns in their eyes, meaning that their own lives became abhorrent to them. These things describe what happens of the world in the presence of the righteous.

This week's Torah portion speaks of life and death. When we consider the commandments of God in the Torah, life and death are a big deal. These words cover all of human existence, we come into existence (we are born alive), and we go out of existence, when we die. Moshe put the Torah in front of the people in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 30* saying, *"Choose life"* and saying *"I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life."* The apostle Paul used this analogy saying, to live is to attain the resurrection, eternal life, the world to come, heaven, and to die is to die without hope of the world to come with only the dread of judgment. The Pharisaic inter-

pretations of this verse from the Torah enter into Yeshua's statement when he said *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and anyone who lives and believes in me will never die."* (John 11:25-26) There is a connection here to the commandments of God and Moshe's statement in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 30*, maintaining our faith in Yeshua, and God sending His Spirit into our hearts to empower us to overcome the world. In *Vayikra / Leviticus 18:5*, both the Pharisaic and apostolic interpretation of *"he shall live by them"* means *"a man may attain the resurrection from the dead and eternal life if he does them."* Rashi says something very similar when He explains the meaning of the phrase *"to live by them."*

Rashi on Vayikra / Leviticus 18:5 Part 2

וְחַי בָּהֶם means, *THAT HE SHALL LIVE THROUGH THEM in the world to come (eternal life). For if you say it means that he shall live in this world, is it not a fact that in the end he must die! (Sifra, Acharei Mot, Section 8 10; cf. also Targ. Onkelos)*

The rabbinic translation of the Torah in the Targumim interpret this verse in the following way:

Targum Onkelos on Vayikra / Leviticus 18:5

ה וְתִטְרוּן יֵת קִיָּמִי וְיֵת דִּינֵי דִּיעֵבֵד יִתְהוֹן אִינְשָׂא וְיֵחַי בְּהוֹן
בְּחַיֵּי עֲלָמָא אָנָּא יֵי: *And you shall keep my statutes and my judgments, which if a man do he shall live by them and have everlasting life.*

Targum Jonathan on Vayikra / Leviticus 18:5

וְתִטְרוּן יֵת קִיָּמִי וְיֵת סִדְרֵי דִּינֵי דְאִין יַעֲבֵד יִתְהוֹן אִינְשָׂא
וְיֵחַי בְּהוֹן בְּחַיֵּי עֲלָמָא וְחֹלְקִיָּה עִם צְדִיקֵיָּא אָנָּא יֵי *And you shall keep my statutes and the order of my judgments, which if a man do he shall live in them, in the life of eternity, and his position shall be with the just.*

Notice how the Aramaic Translation is consistent with this idea of keeping the commandments and eternal life. Remember the order here, these things are not being interpreted as a person keeping the commandments to save himself. These things speak of faith and faithfulness, and a man living by his faith in obedience to God's Word.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians he states the following:

Galatians 3:8-14

3:8 The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying 'All the nations will be blessed in you.' 3:9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer. 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.' 3:11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, 'The righteous man shall live by faith.' 3:12 However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.' 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree' 3:14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (NASB)

Notice how Paul speaks of bringing in the Gentiles into the faith, and of Abraham being preached the gospel beforehand such that all the nations would be blessed in you. The idea is that those who have faith are blessed with Abraham and are given God's Word to live by. Paul then speaks of the works of the Law and being under a curse, saying cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book to perform them. In *Galatians 3:11* he says no one is justified by the Law before God and then quotes "*The righteous man shall live by faith*" (*Habakkuk 2:4*) and then goes on in *Galatians 3:12* to say "*He who practices them shall live by them*" (*Devarim / Deuteronomy*

30). He argues that the works of the Law place a person under a curse and how Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law. This curse comes to those who are not able to keep all of the commandments. So there is a contrast between the blessing and the curse on whether or not a person keeps God's commandments. What we see here is how Paul is staying in line with the mainstream of Jewish interpretation by explaining *Vayikra / Leviticus 18:5* as saying that if a person keeps the commands he will attain eternal life by them. Paul is not pitting the Law and Grace as is the classical interpretation on these Scriptures from *Galatians 3*. Yeshua also quoted the same passage in *Luke 10:28*. Notice how the Talmud states something very similar.

Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 59a

Rabbi Meir used to say, "How do we know that even a Gentile who studies Torah is equivalent to the High Priest?" From Vayikra 18:5, where it says, "You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them." Meir says, "It does not say if a priest, a Levite, or an Israelite does them, he shall live by them. It says 'If a person' does them. You learn that even a non-Jew who studies Torah is equivalent to the High Priest."

Rabbi Meir interpreted this verse to mean that a person is not limited to ethnicity but all peoples may attain life through obedience, whether he is Jewish or not. Like Paul, Meir said both Jew and Gentile can attain life by obedience to God. This is a Talmudic example of the future expectation of how both Jew and Gentile may come together by faith and worship, serve, and praise God through the Messiah. Paul was not saying keeping God's commands is the opposite of faith. He was not putting faith and the Torah in antithesis in *Galatians 3:11-12*. Paul is saying that keeping God's commands is part of what it means to be a man of faith. It is this man of faith who is reckoned as righteous before God because *"it is not hearers of the Law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the Law who will be justified."* (*Romans 2:13*) This harmonizes what Yeshua meant when he spoke to those who believed in him and performed many miracles in

his name but were yet lawless (*Matthew 7*) and explains what Paul meant when he speaks of the Torah and faith in *Romans 2:11-13*. Paul teaches us that the righteous will live by faith, and this is the man who obey's God's commands and lives by them. Faith and faithfulness are two sides of the same coin since these are synonymous to faith and obedience. The immediate relevance for the Gentile believer is following *Vayikra / Leviticus 18* are prohibitions on sexual immorality and idolatry, which are the very things the Apostles forbid the Gentile believers from participating in according to *Acts 15*. These sins of sexual immorality and idolatry are the very sins that God had punished the Canaanites. These references to the rabbinic literature, the Torah, and the Apostolic Writings reveal to us how the Gentiles are required to keep the commandments found in the Torah. This is the Gospel Message that was spoken of to Abraham of all the nations being blessed in him. The point of the matter is no man is perfect in keeping God's Torah except one, Yeshua the Messiah. We need his substitutional atonement for our sins such that we may be justified before God. In this week's Torah portion, we learn how God blessed Israel in the midst of her persecutions and troubles. Israel was given a testimony before all nations of the blessing of God by increasing her numbers, where Israel at this time had become a mixed multitude of peoples. The Zohar explains how one must endure persecutions and troubles which is described as the good that is mixed with evil. In this case, evil is mixed with things in our lives that are good. In the midst of persecutions and hardships, we are to maintain the faith! We are to choose to walk in the good way, in the ways of righteousness, justice, holiness, and truth according to God's Word in the midst of what the world throws at us. With the help of the Messiah (Yeshua) our Father in heaven dwells in our hearts by His Spirit (Holy Spirit) and empowers us to be overcomers of this world. This week's Torah Portion (Parashat Shemot) teaches us about these things, and how the Torah is an integral part of the Gospel Message!