

TORAHSCOPE: VaEra (And I appeared)

by Mark Huey posted 23 January, 2009 www.outreachisrael.net

Exodus 6:2-9:35
Ezekiel 28:25-29:21

“The Finger of God”

“God spoke further to Moses and said to him, ‘I am the LORD; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, **but by My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them.** And I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned’” (Exodus 6:2-4).

This week the Torah portion continues to focus on the great deliverance or exodus that is going to take place as the Holy One of Israel remembers His covenant with the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As we learned last week, the Almighty has once again chosen mere human vessels to be His agents to communicate to the world, and to the Pharaoh of Egypt specifically, that He is a covenant-keeping God. The promises made to Abraham regarding his descendants must be fulfilled or the God in whom we trust is *not* a God worth trusting:

“And God said to Abram, ‘**Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions**’” (Genesis 15:13-14).

The four hundred years of oppression and enslavement have come to an end and the judgment on Egypt and the deliverance of Israel is ready to begin:

“**And furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage; and I have remembered My covenant.** Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; **and you shall know that I am the LORD your God,** who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD.’ **So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of their despondency and cruel bondage**” (Exodus 6:5-9).

Interestingly, we discover that as the Lord is remembers His covenant and promises, the oppression and bondage is so cruel that the people of Israel turn a deaf ear to God’s agent Moses. Apparently, the lack of freedom and harsh treatment at the hands of the Egyptians had obliterated their hope of returning to the Promised Land. As we read through the narrative, Moses turns his attention to delivering the news of the soon coming plagues to Pharaoh and his court of counselors.

For the next few chapters the details of the first seven plagues are chronicled. Moses and Aaron perform their roles to communicate the successive judgments on the various gods of Egypt, while Pharaoh continues to harden his heart to the requests of “Let my people go!” Throughout the *parashah* the magnitude of the plagues and their specific objectives are discussed. But while reading and contemplating the implications of these horrific challenges for the people of Egypt, it becomes quite clear that the people of Israel are being separated as those who have the favor and protection of the Initiator of the plagues, God Himself.

By the time the third plague, gnats, arrives, after the turning of the Nile to blood and the frog attack, the magicians of the Egyptian court are not able to imitate the plague. Earlier, they were able to turn their staffs into snakes, turn water into blood, and bring frogs up from the river, but when the gnats were made from the dust of the ground, the secret arts of the sorcerers could not match the “finger of God”:

“Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, ‘This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said’” (Exodus 8:19).

From this point on through the narrative, the distinct separation of the Israelites from the Egyptians becomes crystal clear. The Lord is setting His people apart in order to communicate eternal principles to not only instruct them, but to the Egyptians and all who consider these events universally known as “the Exodus”:

“But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of insects will be there, in order that you may know that I, the LORD, am in the midst of the land. And I will put a division between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall occur” (Exodus 8:22-23).

At this juncture, the protective hand of the Almighty is now very present as the remaining plagues continue to pummel the Egyptians. The “**finger of God**” has been raised from the Heavenly realm to point out that there is a distinct difference between those who trust in the Holy One of Israel and the rest of the world. To use another figure of speech, it is almost like the Lord is drawing a line in the sands of Egypt with His finger to demarcate the difference between being under His wing of protection and the alternative.

A Powerful Stylus

As I read the passages regarding the different plagues, I was struck by the concept of the “**finger of God.**” After all, this is a powerful mental image of an anthropomorphic description of our Heavenly Father. Even the unbelieving Egyptian magicians were able to discern that the Almighty had used His power to create gnats from the dust of the ground. It was something that they were not able to duplicate. As I searched out any other incidences in the Scriptures when this term was used, I was intrigued with it being the term used to describe how the Lord actually inscribed the Decalogue that was given to Moses:

“And when He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18).

“The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them *were* all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly” (Deuteronomy 9:10).

Two additional times in the Torah, we see this used to describe how the “finger of God” wrote the very words that composed the Ten Commandments. This powerful image of God’s hand, and by extension His finger, actually touching the stone tablets and hewing out the Ten Words was a comforting thought. After all, as the Great Shepherd was guiding His people away from the plagues and devastation falling upon Egypt, His hand and now finger was visible. So much more intimacy can be achieved with a finger as opposed to a hand!

As we look at other times in the Torah that the finger is used, we find that it is a critical component of the examination and healing of lepers (Leviticus 14:2-57). The priests were to dip their fingers into the blood of various sacrifices in order to apply the atoning blood to the altar horns, or sprinkle it before the veil of offering (Leviticus 4). The finger is used when the sacrifice of the red heifer is used to purify the altar (Leviticus 19:2-22). Each of these things signifies an intimacy that is relegated to the finger of man, who is in each ritual an extension of God.

Yeshua’s Finger Pointing

As I considered the finger of God, I was drawn to the one statement that is recorded in the Gospels that refers to the use of this phrase. In Luke, we have the only recorded time that Yeshua Himself uses the term of the “**finger of God.**” If you will recall the context, Yeshua has given His Disciples some basic instruction about how to pray. After giving them what is referred to as the “Lord’s Prayer,” He then goes on to describe how giving and merciful our Heavenly Father is when we approach Him and ask for needed things. Then in an act of mercy, He casts out a dumb demon from one of those gathered to hear His words of hope.

At this point, some of the doubters began to test Him with questions about the power of Beelzebul to cast out demons. They try to hurl insults at Him to question His authority and ability to cast out demons. Yeshua responds with some excellent instruction about how the enemy uses

division to tear down kingdoms, and by extension, people, families, fellowships, congregations, and even nations:

“But He knew their thoughts, and said to them, **‘Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls.** And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Consequently they shall be your judges. **But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.** When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder. He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters” (Luke 11:17-23).

As I read these words of instruction and applied them to my own life and recent experiences, I was once again intrigued by how the study of the Torah is indeed a living Word that is so beneficial to consider on a consistent basis.

First, I thought about the concept of division and how the enemy uses all sorts of distortions to bring division, strife, and contention into our own hearts, or our families or different congregational groups. The Devil knows that if he can make an entity divide over an issue, he has a much better chance of creating havoc, chaos, and a lack of peace to a situation at odds. This can happen to a person, who has let some unclean spirit have access due to sin that has not been confessed and repented of. It can occur to families, as the enemy exploits lack of oneness and harmony in a marital relationship, or the frequent lack of honor for fathers and mothers. Wherever we willingly give the Devil an opening, as the Accuser of the brethren he is apt to take advantage of the opportunity to rob, steal, and destroy our joy and peace.

When it comes to groups of Believers, the variety of opinions and beliefs that are often present frequently complicate matters. Because we are all “works in progress” and “on the road to understanding”—with none of us truly having the intricacies of God fully understood—the possibilities for confusion are multiplied exponentially. This is particularly a problem when we need to be mindful of the words of Yeshua, and to utilize the sensitivity of casting out demons by the **“finger of God.”** In other words, just as the finger is more useful in cleaning out the burrs caught in the wool coats of sheep, or cleaning disease or debris from the tender eyes of new born lambs, so is it able to point out the errors of the human fold as we assemble and congregate. And yet, the Book of Proverbs tells us plainly that it is the “pointing of a finger” which is considered an attribute of a worthless and wicked man:

“A worthless person, a wicked man, is the one who walks with a false mouth, who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, **who points with his fingers;** who with perversity in his heart devises evil continually, **who spreads strife.** Therefore his calamity will come suddenly; instantly he will be broken, and there will be no healing” (Proverbs 6:12-15).

As you consider this admonition, you can conclude that it is finger pointers who are the ones who usually cause contention. In the immediate proverb following, the Lord lists the six things He hates and the seven things that are an abomination to Him:

“There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers” (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Is it possible that in the context of describing a wicked and worthless man who **“points his fingers,”** the six or seven things that are abominable to the Lord are often times traits of the finger pointer?

Instead of pointing with the finger and spreading strife and contention with the tongue, we see a few verses later that Proverbs actually describes a much better use for the fingers. Here in a passage that has been used in Judaism to help declare the need to wrap *tefillin* (phylacteries), the teacher suggests that instead of pointing with the fingers, the sons of Israel should bind the commandments upon their fingers:

“My son, keep my words, and treasure my commandments within you. Keep my commandments and live, **and my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart**” (Proverbs 7:1-3).

Here, one is instructed to keep God’s words and treasure His commandments in order to live in harmony. Are these words not the very words that were written centuries earlier by “**the very finger of God**”? Now the instruction is to keep these critical words as the “**apple of your eye,**” or to let those teachings be your filter through which you observe everything that you do in life. And, if it takes one going through the practice of binding *tefillin* on your fingers, do it so that you will be reminded to write them with your own fingers on your own heart.

The Finger of God and His Kingdom

When Yeshua made this statement about casting out demons with the “**finger of God,**” He was not choosing His words aimlessly. He knew that evidence of God’s creative ability was depicted by the use of His finger. He knew that the finger of God had been used to write the Ten Words on tablets of stone. He also knew that what the Book of Proverbs had to say about the misuse or abuse of the finger, as opposed to what we should be binding on the fingers in order to comply with the commandments of the Torah.

When Yeshua made the statement about the casting out of demons by the finger of God being evidence that the Kingdom of God had come, He was executing proper judgment by His use of the finger:

“But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed; but when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder. He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters” (Luke 11:18-23).

As He continues the instruction for His listeners, Yeshua goes on to make parallel remarks about the need for strong, properly equipped people of God to powerfully protect and guard their homesteads and possessions. These words can be understood on both spiritual and physical levels. As the children of the Most High, it is our responsibility to remain strong and vigilant to strongly protect ourselves, our families, and our congregations from the wiles of the enemy. We know that in the spiritual arena that we war not against flesh and blood, but against powers and principalities in high places. As the Apostle Paul later writes, he reveals some of the spiritual equipment available to maintain our strength and overcome the world forces of darkness:

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, **take up the full armor of God**, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having **girded your loins with truth**, and having put on **the breastplate of righteousness**, and having **shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace**; in addition to all, taking up the **shield of faith** with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take **the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**” (Ephesians 6:12-17).

This classic passage is excellent advice to the children of God who desire to have the best protection available for defending themselves from the attacks of the spiritual forces of wickedness. Taking up the full armor of God that includes girding oneself with the truth, putting on the breastplate of righteousness, preparing to declare the gospel, possessing the shield of faith, wearing the helmet of salvation, and arming oneself with the sword of the Spirit or the Word of God, are all critical elements of protection for the battles that loom. If we are not possessing each of these protective armaments, and even offensive weapons, then we are in a weak position that will allow the stronger enemy to come in and rob, steal, and destroy, liking a roaring lion seeking to devour its prey.

Yeshua makes His summary explanation to His followers and detractors, and says the following regarding loyalty:

“He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters” (Luke 11:23).

As He has compared how Beezebub or Satan explicitly divides and takes the opportunity to overwhelm those who are not protecting themselves from his attacks, the Lord clearly states, **“if you are not with Me, then you are against Me.”** And if you do not gather with the Messiah, then you are opposed to Him and are responsible for the inadvertent scattering of His flock. This is not a place where any of the seekers of the Holy One should want to be.

We should instead desire to be conformed to the image of Messiah Yeshua, with His understanding of the Word of God as written by the **finger of God**. This should be our heartbeat and a fervent desire of our spiritual journey. It is imperative that after you have had the demons cast out of your life by the **“finger of God,”** it is critical to let the same **“finger of God”** then write His words of truth onto your heart of flesh. Remember the continuing admonition from Yeshua as He explains the sad result of simply removing unclean spirits and not filling up the void with His Spirit:

“When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ **And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order.** Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; **and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first**” (Luke 11:24-26).

Here, the unclean spirit cast out into the dry places is looking for a place to occupy. Then when it returns to the “house” or person from which it was cast out, and discovers the place “swept and in order,” it goes and gets seven other spirits, more evil than itself, and returns to torment even more the one from whom it was cast. **This is a terrible fate, but lamentably the result of many who get delivered from demons, but then do not let the Word of God change the way they are conducting their lives.** Such individuals do not repent of the sin or close the open door to their soul that allows the demon and his evil friends to reenter. The person forgets or neglects to cry out and ask that he or she be filled up with the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) and His truth to fill the void.

This tragic oversight is primarily a byproduct of unbelief and a lack of faith. The great irony is that although people often witness the almost tangible deliverance power of the **finger of God** and get a glimpse of the Kingdom in action, they react like the Egyptians of millennia ago and harden their hearts to the requirements to cry out for mercy, repent of their evil ways, and fill up the void with faith in the God of Israel.

The Egyptian magicians were in awe when the finger of God created gnats from the dust of the ground. They knew that the God of the Hebrews was very powerful. Yet, they did not repent and cry out to Him for salvation and deliverance and they suffered the consequences of their hardened hearts.

Months later, that same finger wrote the Ten Words on tablets of stone that would frame the entire Torah, and help define the instructions for living a life that is pleasing to Him. Eventually, the Messiah helped clarify just how potent that creative finger can be when He makes the link between the powers of the Word to cast out demons, which evidences that the Kingdom of God has come.

May we in like manner bind our fingers with His Word and pray that the finger of God has written it upon our hearts of flesh. By so doing, perhaps He will continue to extend His mercy to us and beckon all of us closer to the work of His Kingdom, so that in short order in all of its fullness—the Kingdom will come!

Mark Huey (B.A., Vanderbilt University in History and Graduate Studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University) is the Director of Outreach Israel Ministries (www.outreachisrael.net). He is the author of several books, including: *TorahScope, Volumes I & II*, and *Counting the Omer: A Daily Devotional Toward Shavuot*. He is also co-author of *Hebraic Roots: An Introductory Study*.

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