



Parsha Snapshot



Va'eirah

In Parshas Va'era, the Exodus actually begins. The Parsha starts with God's assurance to Moses that He indeed remembers His covenant with the Patriarchs, and is also attuned to the suffering of the enslaved Israelites - and He now intends to set in motion the process of redemption.

Moses and Aaron demonstrate their credentials to Pharaoh by turning Aaron's staff into a snake. Pharaoh, undaunted, has his magicians do the same - but then Aaron's staff swallows theirs. Nevertheless, Pharaoh is steadfast in his refusal to obey God's command.

God now instructs Moses to begin the Ten Plagues. The first seven of them are recounted in this week's Parsha. (According to the Oral Tradition, each plague lasted a week, with about three weeks of warning in between.)

- 1) Blood - the Nile River, worshipped by the Egyptians as their life-giving water source, turns to blood, along with all other available sources of drinking water.
- 2) Frogs - emerging from the Nile, these pests make life unbearable, invading the Egyptians' public and private spaces. Pharaoh agrees to let the Jews go, but reneges as soon as the plague is removed.
- 3) Lice - unlike the first two plagues, this phenomenon cannot be duplicated by Pharaoh's magicians, who concede that, "It is the finger of God'."
- 4) Assorted Wild Animals - rampaging through Egypt, they bring destruction and mayhem. Pharaoh agrees to let the Jews go, but again reneges once the plague is removed.
- 5) Death of Livestock - an economic calamity
- 6) Boils - a source of extreme physical discomfort
- 7) Hail - fire and ice fell from Heaven together, raining death on anyone caught outdoors, and destroying vegetation and crops. Pharaoh concedes, "God is the Righteous One, while I and my nation are wicked," but, once again, he changes his mind as soon as the plague is ended.



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