



וַאֲרָא Va'era And I Appeared

[Exodus 6.2](#)—9.35 / [Ezekiel 28.25](#)—29.21 / [Mark 3](#)

Pharaoh's Challenge In [Exodus 5.2](#), Pharaoh has three challenges for **מִשֶׁה Moshe** Moses, which God answers in this portion and the next with the Ten Plagues:

1. “Who is **יהוה YHVH** the LORD?” Challenging God’s existence
2. “Why should I obey Him?” Challenging God’s authority
3. “Why should I let Israel go?” Challenging God’s ability to judge

	<p>“I AM יהוה”</p> <p>Exodus 7.17</p> <p>FATHER God’s Existence</p>	<p>“I AM יהוה” in the midst of the earth”</p> <p>Exodus 8.22</p> <p>SON God’s Providence</p>	<p>“There is none like Me in all the earth”</p> <p>Exodus 9.14</p> <p>HOLY SPIRIT God’s Omnipotence</p>
<p>Early Morning</p>	<p>1st Water into Blood Exodus 7.14-25 *Target: Hapi, god of the Nile *Pharaoh’s heart was hard</p> 	<p>4th Flies Exodus 8.16-28 *Target: Shty, god of the breath of life *Pharaoh hardened his heart</p> 	<p>7th Hail Exodus 9.13-35 *Target: Nut, god of heavens, protects man from the sky *Pharaoh hardened his heart</p> 
<p>“בא” “Come to Pharaoh”</p>	<p>2nd Frogs Exodus 7.26-8.11 *Target: Heght, frog/woman god of fertility/resurrection *Pharaoh hardened his heart</p> 	<p>5th Plague on Livestock Exodus 9.1-7 *Target: Apis, bull god, strength and fighting spirit *Pharaoh’s heart was stubborn</p> 	<p>8th Locusts Exodus 10.1-20 *Target: Min, god of harvest, vegetation, and fertility *God hardened Pharaoh’s heart</p> 
<p>No Warning</p>	<p>3rd Dust into Lice Exodus 8.12-15 *Target: Geb, god of the earth (earthquakes = Geb laughing) *Pharaoh’s heart was hard</p> 	<p>6th Boils Exodus 9.8-12 *Target: Heka, medicine and magic *God hardened Pharaoh’s heart</p> 	<p>9th Darkness Exodus 10.21-29 *Target: Ra, god of the sun (Ra in Hebrew = evil) *God hardened Pharaoh’s heart</p> 
		<p>10th Death of the Firstborn Exodus 11.1-12.36 *Target: Amon-Ra, creator of man *God hardened Pharaoh’s heart</p> 	

Does Pharaoh Have a Choice? A debate has raged in the Church for centuries: How much free will does man have? Here we see how Pharaoh hardens his own heart, and then four times God hardens Pharaoh's heart. Could Pharaoh have repented and changed the course of history, or was he destined to fail?

Two opposite views are held, generally called Calvinism and Arminianism. John Calvin believed God has total control. His theology was challenged by Jacob Arminius, who held to man's free will. The Synod of Dort, held in Holland from 1618-1619, settled the issue for the Dutch by declaring Arminianism a heresy and formulating the five points of Calvinism, which can be described with the acronym TULIP. See how these five points contrast with the views of Jacob Arminius in the chart. A political result of the Synod of Dort was the beheading of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the protector of Arminian Remonstrants, four days after the final meeting of the Synod. Arminianism was held by John Wesley in the 18th century and survives today as the popular view of many, if not most, believers.

Calvinism

Total Depravity: Man is an enemy of God and cannot seek Him, [Romans 3.9-18](#)
Unconditional Election: It's God's choice alone who is saved, [Romans 9.14-26](#)
Limited Atonement: Christ died only for the elect, His sheep, [John 10.14-15, 28](#)
Irresistible Grace: Once grace is extended, man can't resist, [John 6.37, 44-45](#), [Romans 9.14-26](#) again
Perseverance of the Saints: "Once saved, always saved," [John 5.24](#)

Arminianism

Natural Ability: When prodded by the Holy Spirit, man can seek God, [Revelation 3.20](#)
Election Based on Foreknowledge: God saves those whom He knows will accept, [Romans 8.28-30](#)
Unlimited Atonement: Christ died for the whole world, [John 3.16](#)
Prevenient (Anticipatory) Grace: Christ draws men to Him, but man can resist, [John 12.32](#)
Conditional Perseverance: Salvation can be lost, [Hebrews 6.4-6](#)

When I was a new believer, I joined the church of a staunch five-point Calvinist. I soaked it up. Later I spent 17 years in the church of a committed Arminian. In an effort to reconcile these contrasts, I developed my Calvinian Compromise, which will probably please some and aggravate others:

If I go to a movie, I will respond the way the producer, director, and cast desire. I will laugh at a comedy and probably cry at a chick flick. Although I have the free will to laugh at the drama and cry at the comedy, I won't. I will do exactly what the crew wants me to do.

If this can happen on a human level, how much more can God direct my world so that I respond as He desires?

I have the free will to respond any way I wish. And I will respond exactly as God wants me to.



Shvat This portion **וארא** usually occurs near the beginning of the biblical month of Shvat. The middle of Shvat, the full moon, is **ט"ו בשבט** *Tu B'Shvat* 15th of Shvat, also known as the New Year for Trees. In Hebrew, letters are used for counting. 15 would normally be written **י"ה** = י 10 + ה 5, but since **יה** is an abbreviation for the Name of God, **יהוה**, **יהוה**, 15 is written as **ט"ו** = ט 9 +



6. [Leviticus 19.23-25](#) says not to eat the fruit of a tree for the first three years, the fruit is holy in the fourth year, and it may be eaten in the fifth. So **ט"ו בשבט** is the cutoff date to determine a tree's age. Because the almond tree often blossoms near this time, symbolizing revival, **ט"ו בשבט** is often used as the dedication for a new building in **ישראל** *Yisra'el* Israel. For example, the cornerstone for Hebrew University of Jerusalem was laid on **ט"ו בשבט**, 1918.

Another significant event in this month is from [Zechariah 1](#). Starting in verse 7, on the 24th day of the 11th month, Shvat, the Word of **יהוה** comes to Zechariah. He sees a rider on a red horse with others following. **יהוה** sends these to go up and down through the earth. Beginning in [Zechariah 2](#) of the Hebrew Bible (1.18 of English Bibles), Zechariah sees four horns, which he is told are four craftsmen intent on dispersing Judah, so God has sent the horsemen against them and **יהוה** will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem to protect it. It's interesting that today we have the "Quartet on the Middle East," the United States, the United Nations, the European Union, and Russia.



The Quartet's goal is to reduce conflict in the Middle East. Their main way of pursuing this is by splitting **ישראל**, giving the bulk of the Land to the Palestinians, in other words to the terrorists Hamas and Hezbollah, whose stated goal is the destruction of **ישראל**.

Curiously, the European Union parliament building in Strasbourg, France, is designed after an uncompleted Tower of Babel. And the Greek version of the Two-Euro coin has a design of Europa riding Zeus, reminiscent of the woman riding the beast, [Revelation 17](#).



וארא And I Appeared The title for this portion comes from [Exodus 6.2](#), when God tells משה that He appeared also to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but was not known to them by His Name, יהוה. And in verse 5 God says that He remembers His covenant with them. What is this covenant God remembers?

- [Genesis 12.2-3](#) Bless Abraham and be blessed or curse and be cursed.
- [Genesis 12.7](#) יהוה says to Abram, “Unto thy seed will I give this Land.”
- [Genesis 15](#) יהוה confirms this gift in a solemn covenant with Abram.
- [Genesis 17.19](#) יהוה promises Abraham a son Isaac to carry the covenant.
- [Genesis 21.12](#) יהוה promises that Isaac’s line will be the line of blessing.
- [Genesis 22](#) Abraham obeys יהוה and יהוה confirms the covenant.
- [Genesis 26.24](#) יהוה confirms the covenant with Isaac.
- [Genesis 28.13-15](#) יהוה confirms the covenant with Jacob.



In confirming the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, יהוה excludes others, such as ישמעאל *Yishmael* Ishmael/God Will Hear, Isaac’s brother. God blesses ישמעאל with tremendous oil wealth. But to be part of the covenant, ישמעאל must call out to God and be grafted into ישראל like all Gentiles. A majority of sons of ישמעאל call on a god which in Hebrew is אלה *alah* swear/curse. But if a son of ישמעאל calls out to the true God, God will hear.

What does God mean that, though the patriarchs knew His Name, they did not know His Name? Consider a Dad, also a lifeguard, whose son grows up and knows he is a lifeguard. But until the son is drowning and Dad comes to rescue him, the son doesn’t really know Dad as his savior. יהוה is the merciful Name of God. Although the patriarchs know the name, they never experience the depth of love as this generation does.

In [Exodus 6.6-8](#), God says, “I am יהוה and I will...

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Bring you out from Egypt | 5. Be to you a God |
| 2. Deliver you | 6. Bring you into the Land |
| 3. Redeem you | 7. Give it to you for a heritage |
| 4. Take you to Me for a people | 8. I Am יהוה.” |

God in the “Old Testament” is the same God who loves us today.

Cup of Salvations [Psalm 116.13](#) says, כוס-ישועות אשא *kos-yeshuot esa* I will take the cup of salvations...and call upon the Name of יהוה. Salvations in this verse is usually translated in the singular, but the Hebrew is plural. The promises from Exodus 6.6-8 listed above can be compared to the cup of salvations in the Passover Seder, which commemorates God saving His people. [Luke 22.17-20](#) records ישוע *Yeshua* Jesus/salvation drinking two of the cups, probably the second and third. All four are:



1. Cup of Sanctification/Separation: “I will bring you out”

As ישראל was sanctified while slaves, [Romans 5.8](#) says that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.



2. Cup of Deliverance/Judgment: “I will deliver you”

As in [Exodus 7.16](#), when יהוה wants Pharaoh to know that His people are to be delivered to serve Him, we too are saved in order to serve God.



3. Cup of Redemption/Blessing: “I will redeem you”

The blood of the Passover lamb in Egypt is the redemption from the death of the firstborn. ישוע drinks this third cup with His disciples, the blood of the New Covenant, as the final Passover Lamb who redeems us from sin.

4. Cup of Acceptance/Praise: “I will take you to Me for a people”

God doesn't need a relationship with us, but He desires it. תורה is a set of guidelines on how to have a regular fellowship with God. Throwing out תורה is at worst saying we don't want a relationship with God and at best saying we'll have a relationship—on our terms, thank you.



After these salvations, God will be a God to them, bring them into the Land, and make the Land a heritage. God gives ישראל the Land. He hasn't given ישראל permission to give it away.



What Did Moses Aaron Get when He Threw Down His Staff?

- [Genesis 1.21](#) God creates the תנין *tanniyn* dragon/serpent/sea monster, translated whale in the KJV.
- [Exodus 4.3](#) The staff of משה becomes a נחש *nachash* serpent/snake.
- [Exodus 7.9](#) But as a sign for Pharaoh, משה will tell his brother Aaron to throw down his staff and it will become a תנין.
- [Exodus 7.10](#) Aaron does that, and his staff becomes a תנין.
- [Exodus 7.12](#) Each of Pharaoh's magicians' staffs also becomes a תנין, but Aaron's eats theirs.
- [Isaiah 27.1](#) God will punish the נחש and slay the תנין.
- [Ezekiel 29.3](#) Calls Pharaoh a תנין.
- [Revelation 20.2](#) An Angel throws the δράκων *drakōn* dragon/great serpent, that old ὄφις *ophis* serpent/snake, into the abyss for 1,000 years.

The terms נחש and תנין are interchangeable, though תנין seems to be bigger. תנין can be a serpent, dragon, sea monster, or whale. Since the Nile is full of crocodiles, maybe that's what Aaron got when he threw down his staff in front of Pharaoh, and then Aaron's crocodile ate all the others!

Pharaoh Hardens His Heart, God Strengthens It [Exodus 8.32](#) says that Pharaoh makes his heart כבד *kabad* heavy/weighty/grievous/hard. Later, [Exodus 9.12](#), God causes Pharaoh's heart to be חזק *chazaq* strengthened/strong/courageous/firm/resolute. What man could endure these ten plagues? Pharaoh, whom God strengthens, and then destroys. Again, a warning not to be כבד toward God. In [Exodus 14.4](#), God says that as ישראל flees Egypt, He will make Pharaoh's heart חזק, and then God will be כבד glorious/honored among Pharaoh and his host. כבד carries all these meanings, and this gives an idea how C.S. Lewis got the title for his book, *The Weight of Glory*.

Finger of God/Spirit of God/Law of God In [Exodus 8.19](#), the magicians warn Pharaoh that the plague of lice is the **אֲצַבֵּעַ** *etsba* Finger of God, but Pharaoh's heart is **קָהָן**. In [Luke 11.20](#), **יֵשׁוּעַ** says that he drives out demons by the Finger of God. His disciples would have immediately recalled this verse from Exodus. In the parallel passage of [Matthew 12.28](#), **יֵשׁוּעַ** says that he drives out demons by the Spirit of God. So Finger of God and Spirit of God are interchangeable.



This is an important point because [Exodus 31.18](#) says that God gives **מִשְׁנֵה** two tablets of stone, written with the **אֲצַבֵּעַ** of God. The Law is written with God's Finger/Spirit. There's an attitude in the Church that grace is good, but Law is bad. Since the Spirit of God, source of grace, wrote the Law, that can't be the case.

A Church that knows only the grace of God becomes lax and sinful.
 A Church that knows only the Law of God becomes critical and hopeless.
 God gives us both grace and Law and they don't contradict each other.

One way the Church gets the idea that Law is bad is from passages like [John 1.17](#):

“The Law is given through **מִשְׁנֵה**, grace and truth through **יֵשׁוּעַ**.”

We hear, “**מִשְׁנֵה**/Law/bad; **יֵשׁוּעַ**/grace and truth/good.”

A Jewish disciple in the time of **יֵשׁוּעַ** would more likely hear,

“God's love letter comes through **מִשְׁנֵה**, God's love comes through **יֵשׁוּעַ**.”

Law and grace are not opposites.

First we have the Written Word, and then God gives us the Living Word.

If we shun God's Law, we fall into the trap of those of whom God speaks in [Jeremiah 6.10](#), who consider the Word of **יְהוָה** a reproach, and find no delight in it.

A Big Impact God's plagues are remembered 40 years later as Joshua approaches Jericho, [Joshua 2.9-11](#), 400 years later as the Philistines dread **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, [1 Samuel 4.7-8](#), and 3,000 years later—we're still talking about it. But [Jeremiah 16.14-15](#) promises that what we are witnessing now, the return of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** from all over the earth, is a bigger miracle than the Exodus!

Glossary, in order of appearance:

וארא	<i>Va'era</i>	And I Appeared
משה	<i>Moshe</i>	Moses
יהוה	<i>YHVH</i>	the LORD/God's Holy Name
ט"ו בשבט	<i>Tu B'Shvat</i>	15 th of Shvat/ AKA "New Year for Trees"
ישראל	<i>Yisra'el</i>	Israel
ישמעאל	<i>Yishmael</i>	Ishmael/God Will Hear
אלה	<i>alah</i>	swear/curse
כוס-ישועות אשא	<i>kos-yeshuot esa</i>	I will take the cup of salvations
ישוע	<i>Yeshua</i>	Jesus/salvation (see it in the previous word?)
תנין	<i>tanniyn</i>	dragon/serpent/sea monster
נחש	<i>nachash</i>	serpent/snake
δράκων	<i>drakōn</i>	dragon/serpent
ὄφις	<i>ophis</i>	serpent/snake
כבד	<i>kabad</i>	heavy/weighty/grievous/honored/glorious
חזק	<i>chazaq</i>	strengthened/strong/courageous/firm
אצבע	<i>etsba</i>	finger