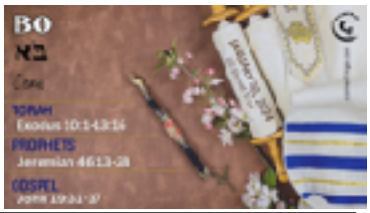
Sabbath Sermon: Fight the Good Fight
Andrew J. Manuse, Pastor — 1/20/2024
First Fruits Ministries, an affiliate of Corner Fringe Ministries
Torah Portion: Bo (Come): Exodus 10:1-13:16; Jeremiah 46:13-28; John 19:31-37; Romans 9:14-29; Revelation 16: http://tinyurl.com/yckb538h



Shabbat Shalom, brothers and sisters. As we come today before the throne of grace, join me and bow your heads in prayer, and let us pray, “Lord Yeshua, please have mercy on us, for we are sinners,” for by our confession we are cleansed from sin and granted the righteousness of God. Join me today by boldly declaring that it is Yeshua’s righteousness alone that justifies us and frees us from sin, for it was His blood spread on the doorpost between Heaven and Earth that freed us from the bondage to sin and the curse of death, and it is by His restorative power—the same power that raised Him from the dead—that we can continue to walk boldly in liberty today. We do not have boldness toward God, but complete humility, for “all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Luke 18:9b-14). It is in humility that we recognize our indebtedness to the LORD who has paid our ransom, and it is because of this eternal gift of grace that we strive with all our heart to follow Him and keep His commandments according to His will. We cannot share in His redemptive power that grants us freedom if our heart remains in rebellion against Him, but we can thrive among His people when we humble ourselves to seek after Him with all of our hearts, souls, minds and strength. It is humility to do the things He has asked of us, an expression of thanksgiving and praise! Yet these things don’t save us. We have to keep our eyes on Yeshua, the Lamb who was slain but now stands before the throne of God (Revelation 5:6), and never again look back at our former lives.

In preparation for the humble service the LORD has called us to—to preach this good news, to teach His Truth, both when it is in season or out of season, and to cast down every argument against Him whether in the earth or in the spirit, whether in our own minds or in our experience going out among others, we must align our heart in total agreement with the LORD’s will, surrendering to the grace and mercy He has given us, because He is the one who has all authority in Heaven and on Earth (Matthew 28:18-20, 2 Timothy 4:2, 2 Corinthians 10:5).

Remember the words of Job: “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives” (Job 19:25)—a salvational acknowledgement—for it is by confessing with our mouth that Yeshua, our Redeemer, is Yahweh, and believing in our heart that the power of God has raised Him from the dead, that we are justified (Romans 10:9). And we must also remember, and acknowledge that Yeshua is the vine that sends us living water, and we are the branches that bear His fruit, and apart from Him we can do nothing” (John 15:5). It is His very Holy Spirit that helps us to keep His commandments, which we will do if we love Him (John 14:15-18). This is the agreement with God that we must possess within us to be freed from bondage and to walk in liberty, standing boldly against the enemy. If we have agreement with any other spirit or with any sin in our lives that we refuse to walk away from, we cannot and will not be free. But we can and ought to be free through our faithful obedience to the LORD and rejection of the desires of the world or the ways of the flesh. Our freedom begins and endures through prayer. Pray with me, and please remember these words so that you can pray them with me daily: “Examine me, [O] God, and know my heart; test me [Father], and know my thoughts. See if there is any hurtful way [in me], and lead me in the eternal way” (Psalm 139:23-24). Lord, if there is anything not pleasing to you, bring it to light. Let your light cast down any darkness in me. Take away any pride in me. I surrender it all to you! Take my own will and help me to fully yield to your Holy Spirit. Help me to love the way you love, LORD. Please give me Your heart! Let your love fully envelop me and flow through my every word and deed. Amein.

This prayer reflects the humble heart that God is seeking in us, and it is in this humility, in this acknowledgment of and gratitude for the LORD’s supreme authority that He has given us “authority to trample on serpents and scorpions.” It is by our praise to the name of Yeshua, and faith in His death on the cross that He gives us a portion

of His power “over all the power of the enemy.” When we abide in Him, trust in Him, and look to Him to guide us in everything we do, every battle we fight, whether spiritual or corporal, “nothing shall by any means hurt [us].” Remember: “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this world’s darkness, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). I want you to be equipped for victory, brothers and sisters, and this is the formula; namely, the Word of God. It is by the Word who became flesh, the Lamb of God who was slain but now lives forever, with the shield of faith, that we can walk boldly to the altar of God as the enemy sends his flaming arrows in our direction (Ephesians 6:10-18). And there at the altar, we ought to bow down in all humility and sing glory, glory to God in the Highest! Halleluyah! “Great and marvelous are your works, Yahweh God Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the Saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You [Yeshua]. For Your judgments have been manifested” (Revelation 15:3-4). The LORD inhabits the praises of His people, and it is in praising the LORD and trusting in Him and following Him, without looking back, that we will be victorious in Him as we endure in this life and ultimately enter His rest at the appointed time.

We read a similar exhortation in Hebrews 4:11-16, which I present to you next. We must be diligent not to find ourselves as disobedient or rebellious children like Israel in the wilderness, stories we’ll get to in the coming weeks, but rather we must remain faithful and always humble before Him, praying with all trust in His Word. Let’s read: “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Yeshua the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Like Yeshua faced Satan in the wilderness Himself and overcame the attacks of the Devil by wielding the Word of God (Matthew 4:1-11), which He Himself spoke with His own voice, so too must we yield the sword of the Spirit against the enemy every single time He comes after us. The Word of God also helps us become vulnerable before our Father; it discerns the thoughts and intents of our hearts, it helps us remain humble before the LORD, and it is life to us in this way. The Word shows us what is sin, so we can flee from it. It shows us what is righteousness, so we can cling to it. It convicts us, it exhorts us, it corrects us, and it encourages us. And when we are in that most humble state, where we can sit back and acknowledge the great power of God; when we are acting in agreement with the authority given to us by the LORD, this is when we can wield that “sword of the spirit” (Ephesians 6:10-18) as Yeshua did, to trample on serpents and scorpions, and overcome all the power of the enemy in our lives, in our homes, and in the lives of all of the ones we love.

Our agreement with the LORD or not—in other words, the side of the Spiritual battle line that we choose to stand on—this is what determines whether we will overcome any spiritual battle in our lives. Paul writes in Romans 6:16, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” We are indebted to Yeshua, Paul wrote in Romans 8:12, because He has freed us from the bondage to sin by His blood, to serve Him through the Spirit, and in our service to Him we become the sons and daughters of God, free to defeat the enemy in our lives according to the will of Yeshua. We must not become proud in our freedom; rather, we must remain humble. It is only when we agree with God that the blood of the Lamb will free us from bondage, and when we are free and filled with His power by His Holy Spirit we can begin to fight against the enemy and win. We must also endure in our agreement with God as the enemy rails against us, looking to Messiah Yeshua for His guidance at every step, for only in this endurance can we defeat the enemy in our lives.

These truths are prophetically represented in the Exodus story that we’ve been covering over the past few weeks, and I want to focus in on this as we continue in today’s message. God had certainly shown His power and glory

over Egypt and achieved epic victory over the nation's pagan gods through the nine plagues that led up to the last one, but it wasn't until God commanded Israel to paint the blood of the lamb on their doorposts, and they obeyed Him, that God freed the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt through His servant Moses. We'll get to this, but first I think it's relevant to point out, per our discussion thus far, that "Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth," according to Numbers 12:3. And this is where we started today. We MUST be humble before the LORD, and the LORD will use those of us who have such a heart for His purposes, just as He did Moses. We can see Moses's humility on display in Exodus 3 and 4 when he initially resisted the LORD's call for Him in Exodus 3:7-10 to "behold the cry of Israel" that had risen up to Heaven's throne room on account of the "the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them." The LORD said, "Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." What an amazing honor! But Moses wasn't quite ready to jump on such a challenging mission—he didn't think he had it in Him to do it. Importantly: He was right. Without the LORD, not a single one of us can stand up against the enemy, but with the LORD, all things are possible (Luke 1:37). We covered this in more detail two weeks ago, but the LORD tolerated Moses's humility to a certain point. When Moses said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send," this is when "the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses." We must not mistake fear or doubt with humility. We must be careful not to talk ourselves out of obeying the voice of the LORD. Faith leads to obedience, or else that faith is dead. The Apostle James leaves no room for ambiguity on this point when he writes, "But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:20). He also wrote, "lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:21-22). In other words, when the LORD, through His Word, whether written or implanted on your heart by His Holy Spirit, commands us to do something, we had better do it, for in fact this obedience is a sign of humility. With the LORD's anger, Moses got the point and headed off toward Egypt. Moses's ultimate obedience aligns with Yeshua's parable in Matthew 21:28-31a, where we read: "A man with two sons told the older boy, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' The son answered, 'No, I won't go,' but later he changed his mind and went anyway. Then the father told the other son, 'You go,' and he said, 'Yes, sir, I will.' But he didn't go. 'Which of the two obeyed his father?' They replied, 'The first.'" And they replied rightly.

When Moses first presented the LORD's Word to the people of Israel in Egypt, they listened at first, but then the going got tough and they rejected him. You may recall from Exodus 5 how Pharaoh increased the Israelites' workload when Moses first explained the LORD's command to "let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness" (Exodus 5:1). The people didn't deny the LORD, but they absolutely denied that Moses was His messenger, when they said, "Let the LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us" (Exodus 5:21). Even when the LORD gave Moses a prophetic message from the LORD, explaining that He would deliver them with "an outstretched arm," prophetic for the Messiah Yeshua's mission in the world, they denied him because of their anguish of spirit and cruel bondage. Despite rejection by the majority of people—a people who claimed to know the LORD, mind you—the prophet persisted in his calling, but first he turned to prayer. When Yahweh confirmed His mission for Moses to stand up against Pharaoh, Moses replied, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh heed me?" This was not false humility, and in fact this very word was repeated by prophet after prophet in Scripture. One of the more powerful examples of this is found in Isaiah 6:5-7, where we read the prophet respond to the LORD's call on his life: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." Subsequently, the LORD sent a Seraphim to Isaiah and touched his lips with a glowing coal, saying "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your guilt is taken away and atonement is made for your sin." We need atonement before we can go to battle for the LORD, and our atonement begins with humility. Even Yeshua began His ministry saying, "repent and hear the good news." In order to repent, one has to stop what they're doing, confess it as sin, and go the other direction. Moses did this very thing and we must also remember to do this thing, even in the midst of a mission the LORD has sent

us on. We ought to have a heart of repentance each and every day. When we go before the LORD with this type of humility, He's going to reaffirm the mission He has for us and encourage us to keep going.

This was the case for Moses. The LORD said to him, "Behold, I have made you as a God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you … but Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them." When we understand the spiritual lessons that the LORD is teaching us here, we can align this verse with what Yeshua said for our benefit. Remember from earlier, we read: "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you." (Luke 10:19). It may read like doubt when Moses returned to the LORD to ask Him about his next steps, but that is not what is going on. Rather, it's a lesson for us, it's good modeling for how we ought to continuously approach the LORD's altar with humility and praise. Yes, the LORD may have sent us on a mission, He may have called us to preach, to evangelize, to lead worship, to lead set-up, to go up against the spiritual hosts of wickedness, to participate in any other type of ministry, and this calling was authentic, just as it was for Moses. But along the way, the enemy will come in and try to take us off course—this isn't a maybe; it is going to happen—it's guaranteed. He will present obstacles we don't expect. He will try to discourage us, frighten us, even make our mission from the LORD seem impossible to fulfill. This is the time when we ought to double-down in prayer and return to the LORD, saying, "Yeshua, I am a man of unclean lips. How can I possibly do this thing for you. I can't go unless you come with me." And this is precisely what the LORD did for Moses. He'll do the same for us, especially when we respond to His affirmative answer to our prayers with obedience. Yeshua said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." The next thing we read concerning Moses is this: "Then Moses and Aaron did so; just as the Lord commanded them, so they did." We know everything we need to know from this simple verse. The power of the LORD would be displayed through Moses and Aaron on account of their faith, and so too will the LORD work through us when we show agreement with His will in this very same way.

The rest of the story can be broken into two pieces: First, the faithful execution of Yahweh's plan by Moses and Aaron, which exposed Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt as inferior impostors and Yahweh as the Most High God who created all things and rules over all the Heavens and the Earth. And second, the growing faith of Israel and even some of the people of Egypt, which culminated in their own obedience to God and their subsequent freedom from bondage through the blood of the lamb. The Apostle Paul explained what was happening here in a powerful summary that I couldn't possibly replicate. In Romans 1:16-19, He wrote: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of the Messiah, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them." The LORD was making Himself clear to Israel and to Egypt through the faith of Moses and Aaron, which led to the faith of the Israelites and ultimately the faith of many in Egypt. God's wrath fell upon Pharaoh and his supporters who suppressed the Truth, which is the Word of God that was spoken by His prophets. And ultimately, the blood of the lamb displayed the power of God for salvation to everyone who believed, for the Israelite first and also for the Egyptian. The faith of every actor from Moses and Aaron to the million plus men, women and children who left Egypt ultimately led to the faith of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, and his sons, to Rahab the harlot in Jericho, and the Gibeonites who sold themselves in servitude to Joshua, among many others who came to know the LORD. The story made Yahweh's name famous throughout the whole world, and it all started with Moses's faith to God's glory.

Let's tackle the first part of the equation; namely, the faithful execution of Yahweh's plan by Moses and Aaron, which exposed Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt as inferior impostors and Yahweh as the Most High God. I could give a whole sermon series on this, but that would require much more research. I mentioned this topic briefly last week

and today I'm going to give it a little more explanation, but I'm still not going to go as deep into this as I could, because a lot of it comes from extra-Biblical sources and I want to be careful about citing such sources without sound exegesis. In brief summary, consider for a moment that the LORD confused the languages of men at the tower of Babel because the men said, according to Genesis 11:4, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." Nimrod had led this direct rebellion against the LORD's command to Noah and his sons to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" in Genesis 9:1, a command that was intended to be a blessing for mankind, to be co-creators and stewards of the Earth in partnership with God. The men incorrectly interpreted God's commandment as a curse, instead, and this led to judgment upon them. Just as Eve had help coming to a similar conclusion in the Garden of Eden, when Nachash (the serpent) tricked her into thinking she would not die by eating the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3, it's understood by many that the men at Babel also had help from divine beings who were in rebellion against God and in league with the enemy. The tower whose top was "in the heavens" may have been a type of portal into the spiritual realm. Based on this interpretation, we might conclude that the LORD confused men's languages into 70 forms (Genesis 10) specifically to ensure His commandment was fulfilled, but also to upset the plan for man to rebel against him in agreement with some of His rebellious spiritual beings. God disowned the nations at this point, later calling Abraham and his chosen descendants out from them to create a nation of people for Himself through Isaac and then Jacob. This is confirmed in Deuteronomy 32:7-9, where we read: "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you: when the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance." The LORD also condemned the divine beings that He had appointed to oversee the 70 nations, because of their rebellion. We can see this play out in Psalm 82 where God explained that He would kill these "gods" like men specifically because they showed partiality to the wicked, making the foundations of the earth unstable. Further, in the same Psalm, we also read the LORD foretell His final act: the risen Messiah would arise to judge the Earth and restore all of the nations to Himself. For its part, Egypt, or Mizraim in Hebrew, had been founded by a descendant of Ham, the cursed child of Noah. The descendants of Ham had created their own mythology based on the original stories purportedly invented in Babel, as all nations had done. These stories seem to have very similar themes, which represent an inverse of the true story of Creation and the flood account and its aftermath that is explained in Scripture. One of those myths made its way into Egypt, and that brings us back to Exodus. According to this interpretation, Moses, as a prophetic template for the coming Messiah, would begin the process of overthrowing and humiliating these divine beings that had risen up in Egypt against the LORD.

I think we can see the LORD's attitude about this rebellion as well as His solution displayed quite descriptively in Psalm 2, where we read: "Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.' He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: 'Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.' I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him." Though written by David well after the Exodus story, this Psalm gives an excellent description of the way God viewed the rebellion of all of the nations against Him as well as the attitude of Pharaoh and the nation of Egypt. It also foretells God's solution for bringing all of the people back to Him; namely, through Yeshua, who would inherit all of the nations through His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. He commands us to "kiss the Son," to worship Him, for those who trust in Him will be blessed. Yes, when we

put our trust in the Lamb, who was slain but then made alive, we are brought into the camp of God Most High and we take His side of the battle line. The next step is to endure in this faith.

In the Exodus story, God's ultimate victory over the whole world would be symbolized by the blood of the lamb in Egypt, a prophetic microcosm of the whole story, if you will. Before that final plague, the LORD would display His glory in Egypt by literally showing everyone with eyes to see how every single "god" they looked up to was as good as dead when put up against the power of the Most High. And this is also where I'm going to only summarize the ideas, for I do want to return to our main theme for today's message. I've put a chart from Barnes' Bible Charts up on the screen so we can go through this quickly. Consider Exodus 7:14-25, when God instructed Moses to change the water of the Nile into blood, the LORD was declaring His supremacy over the Egyptian god Khnum, the purported guardian of the river's source, Hapi, the imagined Spirit of the Nile, and Osiris, who supposedly used the Nile as his bloodstream. When the LORD commanded Moses to bring forth frogs in Exodus 8:1-15, He expressed supremacy over Hapi, the supposed frog goddess. God covered Egypt with lice in Exodus 8:16-19 using the dust of the earth, overcoming Seb, the Egyptian god of the earth. The LORD brought flies in Exodus 8:20-32, overpowering the lord of the flies called Uatchit in Egypt. Through Moses, God affected the herds in Egypt with pestilence in Exodus 9:1-7, humbling Ptah, Hathor, Mnevis and Amon, the supposed gods associated with bulls and cows. The boils brought forth in Exodus 9:8-12 overpowered Sekhmet, the spirit of epidemics and humiliated Serapis and Imhotep, the purported gods of healing. The hail mixed with fire from Exodus 9:13-35 might have disgraced Nut the Egyptian sky goddess and Shu the god of the atmosphere. The locusts of Exodus 10:1-20 took on Serapia, who did not have the power to fulfill his assignment protecting Egypt from locusts when facing up against the Creator of locusts. The thick darkness of Exodus 10:21-29 showed Yahweh's supremacy over Ra, Amon-re, Aten, Atum and Horus, the Egyptian sun gods as well as Thoth the moon god. And finally, with the death of the first born identified in Exodus 12:29-36, Yahweh brought final judgment on all of Egypt's gods, including Pharaoh himself, who considered himself to be the son of Ra, the sun god. He also may have been bringing vengeance on Pharaoh for his father's move to drown the Israelite baby boys in the Nile.

And so, as we get into the final plague today, consider Exodus 20:12, which ties in everything we've just talked about. There we read the LORD's declaration of judgment against Pharaoh. The LORD said: "I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am Yahweh." This was a total defeat against Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt, a devastation of Egypt because the people had elevated these created, rebellious spiritual beings to the same level as the Most High Creator. Yahweh was not going to let these demons win; but rather He would bring them to complete defeat, a foreshadow for what He would do with the rest of the divine beings that rebelled on the Last Day. We can see that God had finally broken Pharaoh down; this self-proclaimed but counterfeit god-man could no longer hold the people of Israel in bondage, lest he die. He and his "gods" were powerless against Yahweh, who is God Most High, who has dominion over all of the heavens and all of the earth: In Exodus 12, we read: "Then [Pharaoh] called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, 'Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the Lord as you have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also. … Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children. A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock." Israel was free from bondage and even some of the Egyptians had been freed from the hold of their false gods; they could walk out as brothers and sisters of Israel, following after the One True God. Later, after Israel had crossed the Sea of Reeds and caught up with Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, we can see that the fame of Yahweh was spreading to all of the lands on account of what He did in Egypt. We read a bit later in Exodus 18:10-11: "And Jethro said, 'Blessed be Yahweh, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them." This is a realization of the principle we read about toward the beginning of today's message; namely, "those

who humble themselves will be exalted, and those who exalt themselves will be humbled." We can see that playing out in the Exodus story here.

I want to finish today's message with some themes we started with. God didn't just strike the firstborn sons of the Egyptians to break Israel free of bondage, but He also delivered the firstborn sons of Israel, and this is where we'll get into the second of my last two points; namely, the growing faith of Israel and even some of the people of Egypt culminated in their own obedience to God and their subsequent freedom from bondage through the blood of the lamb. This faith was something that God worked into them through their observation of the nine other plagues against the Egyptians, most of which Israel did not experience. If you recall from earlier, Pharaoh acted aggressively against Israel by increasing their work load when Moses first asked him to let the people of Israel go, and the people did not listen to him because of the anguish of spirit and cruel bondage they were under. Even still, Moses persisted in his own faithfulness to God by going before Pharaoh and announcing all of the plagues we just covered. Ultimately, Moses's faithfulness to God paid off and rubbed off on others. Following the plague of lice, the Egyptian sorcerers admitted the "finger of God" was at work. When God forecast hail and brimstone, some of the Egyptians who "feared the Word of the LORD" brought their servants and animals under cover and were spared from the devastation, while those who didn't believe in the Word of God lost everything. As Moses was bringing news of the plague of locusts, Pharaoh's servants had had enough, saying, "How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the Lord their God. Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?" They weren't ready to repent themselves, but they had seen enough that they knew it was best to fear the LORD. The enemies of the LORD in the Last Days won't be as humble as this, for they will harden their hearts and blaspheme God to the very end, even while He brings total destruction upon them, according to Revelation 16. Apparently, they will have the hearts of Pharaoh himself, even mounting up battle arrays against the Son of God and His army.

But Israel shows the most remarkable faith of all, which I want to explore next. We know that Moses had explained to Pharaoh that he would lose his firstborn son, and God brought that very judgment to pass, causing Pharaoh to break down and allow the Israelites to go, as if he had a choice, but what follows is the reason why Pharaoh broke down and freed the people of God: In Exodus 12:21-28, we read: "Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you. And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. It will come to pass when you come to the land which the Lord will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' So the people bowed their heads and worshiped. Then the children of Israel went away and did so; just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did." (Exodus 12:21-28) The Passover convocation, an everlasting ordinance, is coming up this year as the sun goes down on April 22, so we will discuss the ins and outs of this most important memorial at that time, especially as we prepare to celebrate it. For today's purposes, I want to point out a few simple concepts: When the Israelites had heard what the LORD expected them to do, they first bowed their heads and worshipped Him, and then they did exactly what He commanded them to do. They had faith, and it was followed up with obedience, and that led to their freedom. They had seen enough to know that the LORD was going to do what He promised, and they believed Him. Their faith became the POWER of God when they didn't just believe in what the LORD had said or promised, but actually took action in agreement with His Word. It is my bold assertion that this is what it takes to experience the power of God in this life. It is not enough to believe in the LORD, if our life doesn't change in any way to show that we truly believe Him, but we also ought to worship Him in thanksgiving for what He has done and then do what He has said because we believe in what He has said. Our hearts ought to reflect an authentic transformation, that we are becoming more like Him and less like we used to be.

We need to give up our old pagan ways, and as Yeshua said Himself, "don't look back, like Lot's wife" looked back toward Sodom and was struck dead instantly, solidified into a pillar of salt. We can't put our hand to the plow and look back. It won't end well. When Israel obeyed God, and spread the blood of the lamb on their doorposts, the LORD moved to bring Pharaoh, the enemy of God and His people, to his knees. When we believe in the blood of Yeshua for our redemption from sin and move to follow His example of righteousness because of this great gift of grace He has given us, the LORD moves to bring Satan, His enemy, to his knees. And when we obey the LORD by repenting of sin in all humility, and asking for His guidance in our lives, Yeshua will come with us by His Holy Spirit to help us in our efforts to cast the enemy down to the abyss where he belongs. We will be mired in failure if we don't endure in this faithfulness, but thankfully, that is not today's example from Exodus.

Within the final instructions to Israel before the people left Egypt, the LORD explained the important details of remembering the Passover because it would remind Israel of God's power to encourage them in future battles and point toward the future redemptive work of the cross, and still, the cross would not end the celebration. The Passover seder is followed by the seven-day feast of Unleavened Bread, which starts in the evening on April 22 this year and culminates on Monday, April 29. The LORD described this celebration in Exodus 12:18-20, where we read: “In the first month [of Aviv/Nisan], on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.’” This feast applies to us, for Yeshua who kept the Passover on the night He was betrayed, said, “Do this in memory of me” (Luke 22:19). He also said, “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes,” pointing forward to Passover celebrations even into the age to come. When we keep the feast, we remember the LORD’s deliverance of Israel in Egypt and we remember Yeshua’s deliverance of all His followers from sin and death, and both salvations were based in the blood of the lamb, but we also look forward to the Promised Kingdom that He has said He will bring us into when we follow Him in all of His ways. He will drink the cup with us at that time, this time not in suffering, but in celebration of the Kingdom.

The Apostle Paul, exhorting his Gentile disciples, after listing a whole host of sins, said in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8: “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” This passage brings the whole concept together. Yeshua, our Passover Lamb, our Unleavened Bread, served as the sinless sacrifice on our behalf so that we can be freed from the curse, which is bondage to sin and death. This is a free gift of grace that we cannot earn. We now celebrate the feast in memory of Him, by introspectively removing any sin within us so that we can sincerely abide in His Truth, which is defined by His righteous law. As we move to keep the feast, it’s not enough for us to remove leavening agents from our homes—and this we should certainly do—but we also ought to remove any sin from our hearts, for “a little leaven, leavens the whole lump,” Paul explained in Galatians 5:9. This is akin to James’ statement, “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:8-10). Thanks be to God for His grace, which saves us, and not our works, so that none of us can boast. Nor does our knowledge or understanding save us, but our love toward God and one another. In another iteration of Paul’s statement in Galatians, he exclaims in 1 Corinthians 5:6, “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” In context, He’s referring to those Christians in Corinth who were showing too much grace toward a man who was committing sexual immorality, for we cannot “turn the grace of God into lewdness.” And so we ought to be mindful of this delicate balance in our faith between the severity of God that punishes sin and the mercy of God that forgives those who truly repent and come with humility before His altar—there is a narrow path toward Messiah Yeshua that sits between legalism and lawlessness. When we walk it, keeping our eyes on Messiah, depending on His righteousness defined by His law and understood by His Spirit, which convicts us and guides us;

when are are looking to daily build upon our growing relationship with our Creator who redeemed us by His blood and circumcised our hearts by His Spirit, then the power of God will help us to defeat the enemy in our lives. He is the victor, and in Him we too can be victorious.

As we close, I want to encourage you to endure in life's battles, for the enemy wants us to quit—that's His goal. He wants us to preach "peace and safety," so destruction will come upon us suddenly (1 Thessalonians 5:3), but it is our duty to preach the Truth in love. Our salvation through faith is the beginning of the Way Messiah Yeshua has prepared for us, just as Israel's Exodus from Egypt was the beginning of their long road to the Promised Land. Salvation doesn't mean that we will no longer have to face the evils of this world; rather it means that we are now equipped to face evil with the victor on our side, so long as we stand in faith. Salvation doesn't mean that we are fully developed and need nothing more, for we are to "work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling." If you remember from the Exodus story, Pharaoh changed his mind and chased after Israel as they were leaving Egypt, trying to bring them back into bondage, and only by the miracle of the Sea of Reeds crossing does God fully deliver Israel from Pharaoh. We may get to that next week. And yet, this symbolic baptism doesn't end the troubles for the children of Jacob. New enemies face them in the wilderness, which is analogous to the Christian life in this world. Sometimes our own worst enemy stares at us in the mirror, sometimes the enemy appears as sheep when they are really ravenous wolves, or angels of light, and sometimes we get lucky and the enemy comes at us head on, fangs and all. Don't be afraid, but stand strong in your faith. Don't be discouraged, but hope in the LORD. We have to be humble, recognizing that the walk is long and arduous, but also full of peace and joy despite the hardship when we are following after our Savior without grumbling. Contentment and gratitude are some of the better weapons of our warfare, and God literally dwells in our thanksgiving and praise. The enemy stands no chance if we embrace the Word of God and use it lawfully against the forces of wickedness. It's my job to teach you and exhort you in this way, but I am by no means perfect in doing so, and so I encourage you to read the Word and pray on your own while viewing me as a steward for the LORD—I'm merely at your service encouraging you with the Truth of God's Word so that you can be better equipped to "Fight the good fight of faith [and] lay hold on eternal life." We were all called to the Kingdom of God by the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1 Timothy 6:12), and I pray we are all walking toward His Kingdom together, following the One True Lamb wherever He may lead us. Let me know when I can help. Shabbat shalom.