

The gods of the Ancient World

Monotheism

A Tale of Two Speeches

Good Morning saints!

SLIDE: One God? WON'T HE BE OUTNUMBERED? >

I chose this opening cartoon because today we're in Exodus Chapter 5 and Moses' first meeting with the Pharaoh. It is a meeting between two men with radically different worldviews. One has the monotheistic worldview – there is only One God the Creator of all and Who is supreme – and the other has a polytheistic worldview – there are many gods, each having a limited sphere of influence.

Here's what we'll be looking at today...

SLIDE: OVERVIEW

- The concept of Polytheism in the ancient world
- Moses and Aaron's first meeting with Pharaoh
 - Can you say awkward?
- A Tale of two Speeches
 - OK – try this one
- Relationship
 - Why does God want us to know about Monotheism?

SLIDE: SHAVOUT

Before we get into Exodus chapter 5, I want to note that today (June 4th 2017) is **PENTECOST SUNDAY**. You may have noted on the calendar for June that the festival of 'SHAVOUT' (which means *Weeks* in Hebrew) was just celebrated by the Jewish community. 'Shavout' is the 4th of the seven major feasts instituted by God in the Book of Leviticus^a.

Both the 3rd and 4th festivals were *agricultural festivals* at which the firstfruits of the current harvest were offered to God in the Temple. Shavout is the 4th festival and was held <click> seven complete weeks plus one day (i.e.; **50 days**) *after* the 3rd festival (named '**BIKKURIM**')^b. It so happened that the 3rd festival fell on Resurrection Sunday in that fateful year, so counting 50 days forward – you come to 'Shavout', the 4th festival. In the NT, we know this festival as '**PENTECOST**, which is the Greek for "fiftieth".¹ So, 'Pentecost' and 'Shavout' refer to the same festival.

Many Jews from around the world were in Jerusalem at that time^c because attendance at 'Shavout' was *mandatory* for all able-bodied Hebrew males.^d

The disciples were gathered in Jerusalem – not necessarily to attend the festival (although they probably participated) but there were there because that's what Jesus told them to do. They were just sitting around waiting to "*be baptized in the Holy Spirit*" – whatever that meant.

- It was early in the morning – they probably just finished breakfast and were in the midst of forming committees – a good "church thing" to do WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE the **POWER** of the Spirit operating in your midst.

^a Leviticus 23

^b The grain offering on this 1st "firstfruits" festival (Bikkurim), which occurred in the springtime, was from the barley harvest. The 2nd "firstfruits" festival (Shavout) was from the firstfruits of the wheat harvest.

^c Acts 2:5

^d Deuteronomy 16:16

And then the Holy Spirit fell. I doubt that the disciples had *any* expectation that things would break loose on Shavout – after all, this was an agricultural festival associated with the *old and familiar* order, and they were waiting for something new.

SLIDE: FIRSTFRUITS OF THE WHEAT HARVEST

As I said, 'Shavout' was originally an AGRICULTURAL festival to give thanks to God for a full wheat harvest. It HAD to be held at the Temple in Jerusalem. But the Temple was *destroyed* in 70 AD and many Jews were subsequently banned from Jerusalem both then and by a more comprehensive ban after a Jewish revolt in 132 AD. It was therefore *impossible* to celebrate this MANDATORY festival as originally intended, so creative-thinking rabbis decided to **REPURPOSE** THE FESTIVAL. In 140 AD, the *focus* of Shavuot was *switched* from being an agricultural festival of thanksgiving to a festival commemorating the **GIVING OF THE TORAH ON MT. SINAI**.² Shavuot became known as “*the Time of the Giving of Our Law.*”

SLIDE: Giving of the Law

And Jews today celebrate it as the anniversary of the **Giving of the Law** (Torah) by God on Mount Sinai^e.

So, while the Jews now celebrate Shavout/Pentecost as the day the Law written on TABLETS OF STONE, Christians celebrate it as the day when the Holy Spirit first wrote the Law on TABLES OF FLESH – on **PEOPLE'S HEARTS**.

Shavout was thus a foreshadowing of Pentecost.

^e The Torah doesn't specifically state that there is any *direct* relationship between the Giving of the Torah on Sinai and the bringing of the firstfruits at Shavuot. The association is asserted by Jewish tradition. <http://www.aish.com/tp/i/moha/48918652.html#6>

SLIDE: VIEWING PENTECOST IN CONTEXT

➤ Viewing Pentecost in Context –

In Luke 24:49, Jesus – just before His ascension – said to His disciples: “And behold, I am sending forth **the Promise of My FATHER** upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

- The passage contains a phrase that is easy to overlook. When He instructed His disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit, He spoke of the Spirit as **“the PROMISE OF THE FATHER”**.
- A similar statement by Jesus is made in Acts 1:4 “Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what **the Father had promised**, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”
- **Q: WHY** did Jesus *NOT* tell the disciples to wait for the Spirit **HE** promised?

Because our Lord wished the disciples to see that the **Coming of the Holy Spirit was the FULFILLMENT of the promise that was made *long before* He (Jesus) came.**

Joel 2:28–29 “And it shall come to pass afterward **that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.**”

Ezekiel 36:26–27 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the **heart of stone** out of your flesh and give you a **heart of flesh**. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. ”

- Here's my point – If the Holy Spirit was *promised* by **the Father**, then **the Holy Spirit was promised in the Old Testament**.
- Jesus therefore was only *reiterating* a promise already made, a Promise made by the Father.
 - Think about it – if we get something extraordinary in the mail (e.g.; a 17th century tool with which we are unfamiliar) and then find out that it was sent based upon a promise made by our great grandfather, we can appreciate the gift itself. However, we don't fully realize *why* the promise was made nor what its intended purpose was – and unless we know its intended purpose, we may likely *try* to employ it totally *contrary* to how it was designed to be used.
 - The action of the Holy Spirit today was predicted by the Old Testament prophets. The OT is a foundation for our understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit as depicted in the Gospels and the Epistles.
- So, Jesus FULFILLED the promise SENT the Holy Spirit, but the original Promise was MADE by the Father!

SLIDE: FIRST MEETING WITH PHARAOH

OK – on to Exodus. In the last session, we saw a reluctant Moses trudging down the road with his brother Aaron to confront the Pharaoh. God gave him three signs to perform in front of the Israelite elders in

order that they might believe that 'Y-H-V-H' has actually appeared to him and is guaranteeing that the Israelite nation will go free. Moses and Aaron meet with the Israelite elders and show the signs, and they believed what Moses said.

Today we'll look at their initial "MEET-AND-GREET" get-together with the Pharaoh. But first, look at the *overall context* in which this meeting occurred.

POLYTHEISM

SLIDE: POLYTHEISM

The worldview of the Egyptians, as was all ancient societies, was Polytheism.

- THEISM (*belief in existence of a Deity or many deities*)
- POLY (MANY)
- So: '*Poly-Theism*' is the belief in – or worship of – more than one god.
- **Mono** (ONE)-Theism is the belief of only One God.

The slide shows the lineup of the top ranking gods of the Sumerian pantheon – which were known as the *Sumerian Seven*³.

<click> When I came across this historical fact, I immediately thought of one of the all-time classic westerns – *The Magnificent Seven* (cast of Yule Brenner, Steve McQueen, Charles Bronson, James Colburn, Robert Vaughn...) – they all have died now, just like belief in these gods. Anyway...

<click> Today – we have the benefit of knowing that there is only One God, and He is the Creator, God of everything. But, in ancient times, it was considered common knowledge that there *many* gods, and that they were *territorial* – they operated within certain territories.

Like the land of Sumer, Egypt had its own gods – their sphere of authority was usually LIMITED to Egypt, the Egyptian people, and matters that concerned the land and affairs of Egypt.

- That was a principle of all the *Mystery Babylon* religions that existed then, and every society ever unearthed and studied generally believed the same way.

From time to time, as one nation or people would go to war, they each would take statues or representations of their respective gods with them. While the nations battle with each other in the *physical* realm, the gods would battle in the *spiritual* realm.

- And, it was believed that, according to whichever nation won the battle, the gods of that nation were therefore more powerful and clever than the gods of the vanquished nation. Sometimes, the defeated nation would even adopt the gods of the victorious nation because it was believed that those gods MUST be stronger than their own gods, so why have not have better gods?⁴

SLIDE: TERRITORIAL

I want you to consider a conversation between Yehovah God and the patriarch Jacob while Jacob is still living in Canaan. Jacob has been just invited by his long-lost son Joseph – the #2 authority in Egypt – to go down to live in Egypt:

God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." He said, "I am God, the God of your father; **do not be afraid to go down to Egypt**, for I will make you a great nation there. **"I will go down with you to Egypt**, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes."... Genesis 46:2-4

- Note that God said that He would ACCOMPANY Jacob when he goes down to Egypt.

It's easy to overlook what God is saying here, but think about the implication of this statement! WE today know that God is everywhere, but most ancient culture did not have a similar understanding. Gods were *territorial* and making such a journey into another god's territory was just not done in the normal course of events – when Yehovah says that He will go to Egypt WITH Jacob, *it was totally contrary to the standard protocol of gods in the ancient world.*

Now – Jacob obviously believed in Yehovah – he's conversing with Him right now.

- But even Jacob – one of the patriarchs of the Jewish people – had the lingering fear that Yehovah will stay in Canaan and he'll be on his own in Egypt in the middle of a bunch of SUPERNATURAL ENTITIES – be they gods or demons – that will not be too happy to see him.

If we think this is silly way of thinking, I would ask the following question to anyone here who has been to a FOREIGN COUNTRY that is primarily *not* Christian (e.g.; China, Saudi Arabia, etc.): When you first arrived, did you ever have a fleeting thought go thru your mind: ***"Is God here?"*** That's entirely normal, and you then made a mental decision based on Faith to say "Yes – God IS here". But, that's with *our* background

as Christians – suppose you grew up in a culture where polytheism and territorial gods were the norm?

Now, I know that this issue is a little bit scandalous – perhaps a bit unsettling to some (it was to me when I first read it) – but it’s the unvarnished truth: the concept of multiple gods did not get immediately cleansed from the thinking of the Israelites. They were not “*pure as the driven snow*” when it came to their everyday life – remember, while the Holy Spirit was active in the OT, His dwelling within a person only became possible 1400 years later at Pentecost.

While Yehovah was their God to Whom they gave allegiance, the existence of other “gods” was a real possibility to *many* of the Israelites.^f

- That’s why we find them so easily falling into idolatry later. It wasn’t that they didn’t believe in Yehovah, rather, it was many believed in “*the more the merrier*” when it came to short-term gratification.
- This is in spite of fact that the opening of the Torah – which was written by Moses when they were in the wilderness – specifically shows Yehovah as the Creator!

Of course, there **were** really no other gods, but rather because the demons that posed as deities to humans,

- **“They sacrificed to demons that were no gods, to gods they had never known.” Deuteronomy 32:17**
- **“Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who *by nature* are not gods.” Galatians 4:8**
- **“What pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God” (1 Cor. 10:20).**

^f This view is called *henotheism* - though many gods *may* exist, each has his own sphere of dominion (e.g.; your national god) and it is to him/her that you submit. It is a sort of halfway house between polytheism and monotheism.

Nicene creed “We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.” – but no need to fear, because Jesus was the maker of these beings so He has primacy....

I mention this so that you can put yourself into the minds of the ancient Israelites, as well as the Egyptians, in the upcoming battle between Moses and Pharaoh.

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Abraham understood monotheism –

Genesis 18:25 “Far be it from you to do such a thing--to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

SLIDE: MOSES AND AARON MEETS PHARAOH

Exodus Chapter 5

Ok – let’s get to the first meeting between Moses, Aaron and the Pharaoh. I’m reading from Exodus Chapter 5, starting at verse 1 – and I’m going to use the Name YHVH (Yehovah) rather than the title LORD in the passage because that’s what is in the Hebrew.

“Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what Yehovah, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.’”

2 Pharaoh said, “Who is Yehovah that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know Yehovah and I will not let Israel go.”

3 Then they said, “The Eloheim (generic word for “god”) of the Hebrews has met with us. Now please let us take a three-day journey into

the wilderness to offer sacrifices to Yehovah our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword."

4 But the king of Egypt said, "Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!" 5 Then Pharaoh said, "Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working."

6 That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: 7 "You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. 8 But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' 9 Make the work harder for the people so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies."

10 Then the slave drivers and the overseers went out and said to the people, "This is what Pharaoh says: 'I will not give you any more straw. 11 Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all.'" 12 So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw. 13 The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, "Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw." 14 And Pharaoh's slave drivers beat the Israelite overseers they had appointed, demanding, "Why haven't you met your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?"

15 Then the Israelite overseers went and appealed to Pharaoh: "Why have you treated your servants this way? 16 Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, 'Make bricks!' Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people."

17 Pharaoh said, "Lazy, that's what you are—lazy! That is why you keep saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.' 18 Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks."

19 The Israelite overseers realized they were in trouble when they were told, "You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day." 20 When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron

waiting to meet them, 21 and they said, “**May the Lord look on you and judge you!** You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

22 Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me? 23 Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.”

Skipping down to chapter 6, verse 10...

Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the sons of Israel go out of his land.” 12 But Moses spoke before the Lord, saying, “Behold, the sons of Israel have not listened to me; how then will Pharaoh listen to me, for I am unskilled in speech?”

– Amen –

“May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, (O) LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.” Psalm 19:14

So, you say that you want to be a Prophet of God, huh? Well, this was **not** the outcome that Moses was hoping for – **the Pharaoh laughs at him and the Israelite leaders want to skin him alive!**

Moses probably half-expected Pharaoh’s answer because God had previously told him that Pharaoh will not voluntarily let the people go free⁹. However, Moses *was* upset at both the Pharaoh’s action to increase the workload of the people by not giving them straw and at the people’s subsequent anger at him personally at this change of events. What started

⁹ Exodus 3:19-21

out for them as joy over the promise of freedom has turned into just more backbreaking work. And Moses blames himself for this also.

- Had he done something he was NOT supposed to do?
- Was there something he DIDN'T do that he SHOULD have done?

“Moses thinks it’s his words, how he *phrases* them, how he *pronounces* them, whether or not he appears *confident* and well prepared as he speaks to people, that is *the key* for them getting the message of deliverance. But Moses own abilities didn’t matter a whit.”⁵

- His adequacy was NEVER the issue.

EXAMPLE FOR US

Paul wrote: “For whatever was written in earlier times (i.e.: Old Testament) **was written for our instruction**, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have **hope**.” Romans 15:4

- This incident here is a **prime example** of why the OT was written – it was written for **our encouragement**.

How many times have you thought that God was leading you to do something, but after a while, you ran into a lot of opposition and saw very few positive results – if any? People encouraged you to forge ahead when you began, but not now. You get discouraged and think– “*Perhaps I didn’t really hear God*”. And there is a chorus of well-meaning people who confidently tell you that IF God was directing your activity, it should be *smooth sailing*. They convince you that you either *didn’t* hear God, that you’re not hearing it now, or that maybe you just don’t have *enough faith*.

- This is another of the **damnable** teachings of the Word of Faith movement that has caused so much hard to God's word. It is based on **ignorance** of the Scripture.

Look at Moses here – the greatest of the OT prophets – he certainly didn't experience clear sailing, and he was doing EXACTLY what God told him to do.

Moses concluded that the negative result was because *his* own inability to speak. But God doesn't pamper Moses – He tells him, in essence, "*I've got it all under control*" and orders him to go right back in to Pharaoh and begin to shake the polytheistic mindset to its core.

- Moses was a lot like us in many ways – he still mistakenly thinks that it is his job to win the day.

It's NOT our words or abilities that brings anyone to accept Christ; it's God changing their hearts. If the Holy Spirit has prepared the hearts of those to whom He has chosen for us to speak, our words cannot fail, *because our words were never the key*, anyway. Conversely, the most eloquent speech, or perfectly prepared presentation, cannot bring anyone to the accept Christ – it's a 100% work of God.

- And we may never see the outcome of obeying God – only occasionally does God – in His mercy – shows us.
 - What may look like an outright failure to us often is EXACTLY what the Sovereign God is doing at that precise moment.
- Discouragement with a last presentation but there was something from the Holy Spirit in it that gave me exactly what I needed for MY last presentation.

- Tom/Kathy/Peter example... (?)

A GREAT PRINCIPLE of the Christian life is laid down right here in Exodus. Moses WAS absolutely inadequate for the job God gave him.....and Moses KNEW it. You and I are absolutely inadequate for ANY of the tasks that God gives us. *But, it doesn't matter.* Because our job is to trust and obey God. If He says, “go”, we go; He'll do the rest. Moses didn't understand or believe that, YET.

This is an important point – don't take the fact that you're getting opposition or that you're only seeing meager results **as the indication that God *didn't* tell you to do it.**

Now – there WILL be times when we all ARE mistaken about God's direction – ask the elders about it. And if we realize that we were mistaken, He doesn't condemn us – we were doing our best in what we thought He wanted.

- (me and the MELTED COFFEE POT?)
- This incident with Moses's discouragement at the results – when in fact he was doing *exactly* what God wanted – was written for our encouragement
- Gary's message last week was about encourage one another – Here in Exodus, God is encouraging US!

STRAW

SLIDE: STRAW

Stubble: all kinds of field rubbish, small twigs, stems, roots of withered plants. This had to be chopped and sorted.⁶

- Source⁷ “Now, it is a very curious and interesting fact that the **Pithom** bricks are of three qualities. In the lower courses of these massive cellar walls they are mixed with chopped straw; higher up, when the straw may be supposed to have run short, the clay is found to *be mixed with reeds*—the same kind of reeds which grow to this day in the bed of the old Pharaonic canal, and which are translated as "**stubble**" in the Bible. Finally, when the last reeds were used up, the bricks of the uppermost courses consist of mere Nile mud, with no binding substance whatever.

By the way, the fact that the Egyptians used straw actually verifies history. Other lands, such as the Mesopotamia region, **baked** their bricks in a kiln^h. Baked bricks are very strong, but they require a large amount of burnable fuel to bake them.

The reason why the Egyptians did not bake the bricks is that you needed an abundant fuel source such as wood to fire the kilns. But Egypt was **wood-poor**, so the obvious way of making brick was to put mud/clay in brick molds and have it dry out in the sun. However, the Egyptians they came up with a method that was even *better* – mix straw with the mud in the mold. The scientific reason for this is that the straw releases something called *humic acid* into the mud, assisting in hardening the bricks.⁸ If the Bible account was written in another land by someone who was not a witness to the practice – as skeptics commonly profess – they would have drawn upon local practices which would not have included this very localized yet beneficial method.

^h e.g.; Genesis 11:2-4

ANOTHER AGENDA

SLIDE: THE EXODUS GAME >

OK – Let’s play a mind–game – it’s called *The Exodus Game*.

<click> Imagine you are God (*but don’t try this at home*). The Goal is freedom for the Israelites. On the first move, Moses and Aaron – at your instruction – meet with Pharaoh and tell him that you want him to let the Israelites to go into the wilderness for a celebration.

Pharaoh emphatically says – “NO WAY JOSE”.

<click> So, you roll the dice and start along the not–so–yellow–brick road of persuading the Pharaoh to let them go. First the snakes incident and then the water of the Nile River turning to blood. Pharaoh isn’t impressed and just walks away. So you roll the dice again, and again...

<click> eight more plagues follow eight more rolls, and the plagues are in increasing severity. Pharaoh seems to *briefly* change his mind after some of the plagues, but then his heart becomes hard again. Finally, there’s the 10th plague – the death of the firstborn – and the Pharaoh *orders* the Israelites to leave. You reach your goal!

<click> OK – but, here’s a question:

- Why did the Exodus Game have to be so complicated?

Couldn't an All–Powerful God have just use His heavenly transporter and teleported the Israelites out of Egypt and spared everyone the grueling process of the Ten Plagues? And – why Ten? Why not Five? Why not just go to the final 10th plague?

~~ The essence of the following narrative is borrowed from Rabbi David Fohrman excellent book – *The Exodus You Almost Passed Over*⁹.

“If **you** were an All Powerful God, do you think that you would **need** ten different plagues to set your people free? I don’t think so. Surely you could come up with a scheme that would accomplish your goal more quickly and efficiently than that.

In fact, you could have done it without any plagues at all, if you liked. Certainly Pharaoh could not have prevented the people from leaving if God had so chosen.

Maybe you could load all the Hebrews onto magic carpets, departing at noon for Ben-Gurion Airport. When you really think about it, the Exodus could have been easily implemented (**during the ninth plague**)...

- The ninth plague, the plague of darkness. In that plague, an unnatural pitch-black darkness descended upon the Land of Egypt. The blackness was so deep that no Egyptian dared venture outside for a full three daysⁱ. But the text tells us that the blackness only affected Egyptians – the Israelites could see perfectly.
- Can you imagine a better opportunity? The Egyptians can’t see their hand in front of their eyes – but the Israelites have all the electricity and i-pads turned on. Why not just walk right out of Egypt right then?

➤ They wouldn’t have had Pharaoh’s permission – but so what?

ⁱ Exodus 10: 23

- The Hebrews have three whole days to make their escape, plenty of time to gather their possessions and go.
- **Why** didn't they do it?

The fact that God did not pursue an easier and quicker road to freedom indicates that there is *some other agenda* at work in Exodus.

- **God was doing more in Egypt than just freeing the Israelites from slavery.**

What was it?

God was revealing Who He was – that He wasn't just some power, but He was actually the Creator of it all; the Creator of the Universe, the Creator of mankind.¹⁰

- **GOD WAS GOING TO DEMONSTRATE THE TRUTH OF **MONOTHEISM** TO THE ENTIRE WORLD.**

OK – but doing that is not as simple as you might think. Two questions immediately arise:

- 1) **HOW** are You going to convince them?
- 2) **WHY** do You want to do this?

First let's talk about 'How'.

- If you were God, and you wanted to reveal to humanity that You were not just one of a bunch of polytheistic gods, but you were the Only God, the One True Creator – how would you do that?

Well – you can cause plagues to happen; people would conclude that you were a god, but probably just another *one of the many* polytheistic gods. Because remember, the Egyptians were not atheists; they believed in *many* gods – it’s just that they didn’t believe that there was just One God. The individual plagues can demonstrate that you’re a powerful god – maybe the most powerful of them all – but it doesn’t prove that you’re the ONLY God. Even if You appear and tell them Who You are, they probably would suspect that You’re lying – all the other gods lie when it’s to their advantage.

HOW do you demonstrate that there’s Only One God?

- We’ll see the answer as the plagues unfold in a future presentation.

The 2nd question is somewhat curious when you stop and think about it: **WHY** would You want to prove that You’re the ONLY God?

- Why is it *so important* to demonstrate that **You are recognized as the Creator God?**

Isn’t that a bit egotistical? So what if people believe in other gods as long as they see You as the Highest God, the Most Powerful God, the One they worship *exclusively*? Why is it so crucial that they would need to see You the ONLY God?

- What’s so wrong with people believing in polytheism as long as they acknowledge You as the supreme “*leader of the pack*”?
- We’ll address this in just a bit

TALE OF TWO SPEECHES

Fohrman Educating Pharaoh

<https://www.alephbeta.org/course/lecture/educating-pharaoh/autoplay>

<Credit to Rabbi Fohrman – used as overall direction >

SLIDE: TWO SPEECHES?

Let's first examine Moses' two speeches to the Pharaoh during their initial meeting. Here, God takes a first step in educating Pharaoh that He (Yehovah) is the Creator God.

➤ Here the **OPENING SALVO**:

SLIDE: SPEECH #1

"Thus says **Yehovah**, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" Exodus 5:1

Pharaoh's response is: "Who is **Yehovah** that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know **Yehovah** and I will not let Israel go."

Moses **straightforwardly** states the demand from Yehovah to let His people go. Here is the **bottom line reality right up front**:

➤ His name is Yehovah – a Name that we saw reveals that He is the Creator – and the Israelites belong to Him and must go free.

But... NONE of what Moses & Aaron said here makes any sense to Pharaoh; it's all completely new to him. **WHO** is this God that you are talking about? This 'Yud Hey Vav Hey' – a god who claims to be the Creator God Who is outside of space and time – Who is He? You say that He actually spoke to you? You mean that there's a god that actually communicates His Will directly to mankind and not thru a bunch of *animal intestines* or the *movement of stars*?

THIS IS ALL THEOLOGICALLY NONSENSE TO THE PHARAOH. *I don't know anybody by the name of 'Yud Hey Vav Hey'.*

- The Midrash says Pharaoh looked through his Rolodex of polytheistic gods and said: "**Nope! Nothing here like that!**"¹¹ *And anyway, I am not sending out the Jews.*

<click> VISA DENIED!

Note that the Pharaoh didn't question whether a god named "Yehovah" *might* exist – he is only stating that he had never *heard* of a god named Yehovah. Which is completely understandable, as His Personal Name was only revealed to Moses several weeks ago at the burning bush.

Pharaoh has a hard time believing that a god that had some undefined kind of influence could exist *within* Egypt and he didn't know about it. After all, he also as a god and the keeper of polytheistic integrity in Egypt.

- Where did this Yehovah fit within the hierarchy of the gods?
- Why had no one *introduced* Yehovah to him before now? What was this new god's sphere of influence?

So, Pharaoh skeptical and downright offended.

The laughable idea that Pharaoh would allow the Israelites – his main work force – a few days to go worship their God in the Wilderness

merely *amused* Pharaoh. *What really bugged* the Pharaoh was that Moses is saying that Yehovah considered the Israelites as belonging to HIM! And, of course, this is the crux of the matter because as Pharaoh insists: AU CONTRAIRE, these Hebrews do *not* belong to this supposed god of the Hebrews.....THEY BELONG TO ME!

And even if Moses *was* telling the truth, why worry about one measly newly-announced god; especially one who is god to a bunch of slaves! After all, if this Yehovah was so powerful, how could his people be slaves to Egypt? This was de facto evidence to Pharaoh that the Egyptian gods were more powerful than the Hebrew god and that he had no reason to pay attention to Yehovah.¹²

SLIDE: Moses' OPTIONS

Ok – if you're Moses, what would you do next?

1. Do you **threaten** Pharaoh that He doesn't know Who he is messing with? Or...
2. Go back to God and tell Him that *"it didn't work"* – *we need a new plan...*
 - **Moses does neither.** He immediately delivers a 2nd speech based on an entirely different strategy.
 - **Moses gives Pharaoh the MESSAGE BIBLE version of speech #1.**

SLIDE: SPEECH #2

Speech #2:

"The Eloheim (generic word 'god') of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." Exodus 5:3

Moses says to Pharaoh: *"Okay- let me put this in terms you CAN understand. Let's leave out this 'Yud Hey Vav Hey' stuff, let's just say the 'power of the Hebrews' happened upon (nikra aleinu) us. He didn't really speak to us.*

We really want to go for three days. Notice "*we want to go*", God did not command us or you directly. We're trying to figure out what God says. We think we should sacrifice before God. No, none of this joy stuff, forget joy. We should sacrifice before our God because if we don't, he might strike us down with a sword or with pestilence. *So please help us.*"¹³

This last part is surprising. "...lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." Where did THAT come from? As far as we know, God *never* said to Moses. Is he freelancing here to help establish a common ground with the type of gods Pharaoh knows? Is he hearing directly from Yehovah here? Just about like you or I would do in such circumstances, standing before such a great and imposing man as the King of Egypt, we decide to jazz it up a bit. We don't know.

Now, this 2nd speech is actually something that Pharaoh CAN understand. This type of god is just like all the other gods.

And Pharaoh's response is very different than his response to the 1st speech. Does Pharaoh have a theological objection to the 2nd speech? **None whatsoever.** He perfectly understand what Moses is saying – he perfectly understands this sort of theological world, it's very pagan, it

makes perfect sense to him. – Pharaoh’s objection to Moses request here is **ECONOMIC**. “Why are you disturbing the people, they’ve got a lot of work to do. You’re keeping the slaves away from doing their work.”

Moses, the argument that you’re making is that “*the people are worried that their God might get mad at them and hurt them. Well, obviously that means that they must not be sufficiently worried that **!** might to hurt them. Forget about this allegiance to your newly discovered god – stop worrying about him; they should worry about **me** more.*” It’s a whole different response.

- Patton – “They’ll (American soldiers) lose their fear of the Germans. I only hope to God they never lose their fear of me.”¹⁴
-

Why the two approaches? What is Moses doing with the two speeches? He’s establishing a foundation upon which to build the case for monotheism.

You see – Moses and God **owed it to Pharaoh** to just tell him the truth. **Moses’ first speech tells it like it is.** There is a Creator God, He has a special relationship with the Israelites, this relationship is based on joy and celebration, and this Creator God has expectations for you Pharaoh to obey Him.

- So, even if Pharaoh doesn’t get it right now, he hears the truth of the situation.

Pharaoh rejects the demand; **it’s too new to him.** So, **at that point, the process of education begins.**

- So... Speech #2 is a “Let’s start with something you **DO** understand and we’ll work our way up from there.”

WHY demonstrate Monotheism?

OK – Pharaoh wants to hear none of what Moses and Aaron are saying. He calls the Israelites *lazy* and says the problem is that they evidently have too much leisure time on their hands, so he'll reduce the leisure time by making the Israelites find their own straw to mix with the clay.

- As I mentioned before, there seems to be a hidden agenda in the Exodus, and that is to demonstrate the truth of monotheism – there is ONLY ONE God and He is the Creator.

HOW He does that will be seen in the plagues. **WHY** He does it is a different question.

- WHY BOTHER? Why is this so important? As long as everyone can agree that you're the king of the hill, what's the big deal if they think there are lesser gods way down on the slopes?
- Is it just a numbers game?

No. it's not just a "numbers" game: there's something *qualitatively different* about monotheism and that can be seen in the **type of worship**. Worship under monotheism is different than under polytheism. Worshiping the sun god or the rain god or the river god is qualitatively different than worshipping the Creator.

- Jesus gave us a CLUE to this difference when He said that the time was coming when people would worship God "in spirit and truth".^j

^j "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:23-24

SLIDE: WHY People Worship >

What's the clue? It is in the MOTIVATION for the worship – **WHY** people worship.

- What's THE MOTIVATION of the worshipper?

In polytheism where each so-called “god” is limited in range and extent of his/her influence and who – like you and I – has needs, you make an offering *in order to get something in return*. It's a barter system

There is something about the polytheistic god that makes the polytheistic god susceptible to BRIBERY. What is that?

- ❖ **They have needs!**

If you look at any of the polytheistic systems, all the gods and goddesses are a lot like really *powerful* people, but at the same time, they have the *same frailties and lusts* as we humans.

- ❖ In other words, they have their weak points.
- ❖ And if someone has a weak point, it means that maybe I can give them something that they need.

So, that offering in a polytheistic world is a sophisticated system of BARTER – the god needs something, I need something. **LET'S MAKE A DEAL!**

- The fish god can give me **fish**, but he is only the fish god – that doesn't mean he has **grain**. If I have some grain to offer him, then maybe we can make a deal.

The end result is that, in a polytheistic society, the motivation for sacrifice and worship is primarily based on **SELF-INTEREST** –

- **BOTH** the WORSHIPPER who needs something as well as the god who does the favor in response to the sacrifice, are acting in **SELF-INTEREST!**
- **IT IS MUTUAL DANCE OF SELF-INTEREST.**

But, one of the dilemmas in polytheism is that there are *many* different gods, and each has his or her somewhat limited sphere of influence within the territory you're living.

- So, **how do you decide which god or gods to worship in such a bewildering array of forces?**

<click> Well, again, you decide through **self-interest**. So, for example, if you lived in a desert climate, you would worship the Nile god because you need water for drinking water and to grow crops. If you wanted more kids, you would worship the fertility god, and so on. So you decide who to worship by looking at **YOUR SELF-INTEREST AT THE TIME**.

- So, you *switch your focus* of worship among the gods *depending upon what you need at the time*.

But there's even a more basic motivation factor in a polytheistic society, and that is **FEAR**. Fear is the great motivator for polytheistic worship – *"I'm afraid, I need to live and if we don't appease the gods they will get mad at me and hurt me"*. This is how it works in polytheism.

- And this is why Pharaoh could readily relate to Moses' 2nd speech where Moses says that this god might hit them over the head if they don't sacrifice.

So, worship in a polytheistic society is motivated by two things: MUTUAL SELF-INTEREST and my FEAR.

Monotheism

How is worship in a monotheistic worldview different? Well, the idea that there is only ONE God and He is the **CREATOR** of all has many implications on the MOTIVATION for worship; for example:

- If God is the Creator of everything, then He has NO NEEDS. So how am I going to worship the God who has **no needs?**
- If God has no needs, why would He even *want* worship? He doesn't *need* it, so why does He seem to *want* it?
- If He has no needs, what can I give Him that He would be interested in?
- **What do you give someone for Christmas who has everything?**

This is the foremost difference between worship in polytheism and monotheism – sacrifice in polytheism is based on MUTUAL self-interest: I have needs and the gods have needs – so they can be bribed to get me what I need. But in monotheism, God doesn't *have* any needs, so HE CAN'T BE BRIBED.

But what about us? WE still have needs. What do we do once we realize this?

- Well, we PRAY because we have needs – health, finances, family problems, etc. – and there’s nothing wrong about praying for these needs – Jesus told us not just to pray to Our Father but to be PERSISTENT in these prayers.^k
- But part of the prayer is a giving of our NEEDS TO HIM – THINK ABOUT THAT; in prayer, we are NOT offering just our “GOOD STUFF” but rather the YUCKY STUFF, casting it on Him!
- And, WORSHIP in monotheism goes BEYOND our PRAYER FOR HELP – It is a GIVING OF OURSELVES to God just because He is Who He is!

Certainly there are occasions when people ATTEMPT a form of worship because they think that by doing so, they will GAIN something. Scripture calls that sin –

- that **probably was why Cain’s sacrifice was not accepted but Abele’s was.**
- Worship in polytheism is based on self-interest and fear –
- Worship in monotheism is based on ...

<click> it’s LOVE and GRATITUDE.

*So what can I say
And what could I do
But offer this heart O God
Completely to You.* ¹⁵

^k Luke 11:5-8

^l Psalm 55:22

FATHER AND RELATIONSHIP

Reference: Rabbi Fohrman tape 4a¹⁶

Let me ask you a question:

- **Why** would you be nice to your parents?

One reason might be because you want them to give you an allowance. But – as parents – you hope that they were being nice to you for some other reason also.

- **WHY** would we ultimately like our kids to be nice to us? It's the right thing to do because we gave them life.

Therefore is something inherent in the relationship with our kids that makes the child ultimately *in the debt* of the parents. Life comes from the parents, sustenance comes from the parents, and that defines the relationship, and therefore it is just RIGHT, there is a moral aspect of how a child relates to a parent. It's the same reason why we can feel gratitude toward God. There is not any great philosophical principal here – it's just natural.

So, what is God getting out of worship? If God already has everything, why would I offer him an offering? Am I stupid that I think I can give Him something that He doesn't already have? Why am I doing it? What's the reason? What He is getting from it? He is getting gratitude.

It's like when you give your parents something. There are two basic reasons why you give your parents something. Say that you have the student whose parents have just put them thru college and they have a job and you're coming to visit your parents with a potential spouse for the first time at Thanksgiving, so they bring their parents roses. So the roses can mean one of two things:

- they could mean, ‘*let’s keep it coming folks, I need another two years for funding support to get my master’s degree and we have to remain on good terms*”

Now, if the parents realize that this is the motivation, it is not good for the relationship. The parents know that the roses mean something else.

➤ A “keep it coming” offering is abhorrent – you feel used.

- But when it comes out of **gratitude and appreciation**, it’s totally different. I know that you don’t *need* them and can buy them on your own, but I want to show you my *gratitude*.

OK ... but the question still remains: **Why would God WANT to demonstrate the TRUTH of MONOTHEISM?**

- **Because it would radically and completely CHANGE our relationship with Him when led by the Holy Spirit thru the Cross.**

<CLICK> FATHER, RELATIONSHIP

But, what **IS** this relationship?

God as Father

Credit to <http://r zim.org/a-slice-of-infinity/our-father/>

“*Our Father?*” Posted by Jill Carattini on February 13, 2012

Not far into John’s Gospel, Jesus is gaining enemies at every turn. He uses a whip to drive men and livestock out of the temple. He chooses breaks

a religious law to heal a man who cannot walk. But it is because of his words that they seek all the more to kill him. To their anger over the healing, Jesus simply replies, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." (John 5:17)

To the person well-versed in *biting comebacks and fatal rhetoric*, these words don't seem at all like fighting-words.

- But to Jewish leaders who knew a history of combating (and failing to combat) the polytheistic influences of surrounding nations, Jesus uttered what seemed the most blasphemous notion possible. He called God his own Father.

The notion of God as "Father" was NOT a new concept. Even to the Jews who took offense at Jesus's words that day, **God was understood as Father in the sense that God is Creator, that God is Lord, that God is protector and forgiver.**

- **FOURTEEN TIMES** in the Old Testament, God is spoken of as Father, and each instance depicts a glimpse of divine fatherhood.
- Yehovah is likened to a human parent in his expressions of compassion and care. During the deliverance from Egypt and in the desert, Yehovah cared for Israel as a Father: "There you saw how the Lord your God carried (nasa) you, as a father carries his son. All the way you went until you reached this place." (Deut.1:31).

The word nasa signifies here the fatherly activity of lifting up an brining a child closer to oneself¹⁷, as in Exodus 19:4b: "I carried (nasa) you on eagles winds and brought you to myself."

But Jesus added to the notion of Father a **distinct element of intimacy and uniqueness with Himself**. Nowhere in Judaism is God addressed by an individual as "**MY** father."

- Jesus' use of such a title—and elsewhere the very intimate "abba" or daddy—reveals the very basis of his communion with God.

To the religious leaders who considered themselves guardians of the profane and the sacred, to the crowds who would have known the significance, these words would have revealed a **scandalous glimpse into the mind of Jesus.**

- ❖ The acceptable Jewish understanding of the term "God acts as a Father" is like we today would use the GENERAL statement: "*George Washington was the Father of this country*".
- ❖ But when Jesus said went further and made it PERSONAL – similar to saying "*George Washington is MY abba*", what was a bridge too far for the Pharisees.
- ❖ AND – ALL THE MORE SCANDALOUS, Jesus later EXTENDS HIS COMMUNION with God the Father **TO HIS FOLLOWERS.**

He says, "This, then, is how you should pray," "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:9–10)

The Christian confidence and comfort that God can be approached as Father is THE VITAL GIFT THAT **JESUS** MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE SPIRIT.

Erroneous Types of Monotheism

But – let's be clear: merely **BELIEVING in monotheism DOESN'T automatically GUARANTEE that you can have this RELATIONSHIP.**

Examples:

- Satan knows that monotheism is true^m but he does not bow to Yehovah. And...
- Islam believes in monotheism but bows to *another* god named Allah.
- Don't fall for the erroneous assertion that the names 'Allah' and 'Yehovah' are referring to the same God! Without going into the many doctrinal errors in Islam when viewed from Christianity, the simple fact that God said that His Personal name is 'Yehovah' (Exodus 3:16) would indicate that 'Allah' is not Him.)

Now – about 100 years after the Exodus, a pharaoh named **AKHENATEN** accepts the concept of monotheism. Akhenaten (1353–1336 BC) commanded that his subjects were to worship only one god: the sun-disk Aten. This, of course, angered the priests of the many other Egyptian deities, who were now essentially out of a job. The problem was that Akhenaten – while a monotheist – did not identify the One and Only God as being 'Yehovah' but rather with the Egyptian sun god.

➤ Scripture defines this type of monotheism as **IDOLATRY**.

When someone does not attribute the status as the One and True God to 'Yehovah', they're engaged in IDOLATRY.

➤ So, mere *belief* that there is only one God is NOT enough for enabling us to have this close relationship with the Father.

❖ **This is ONLY possible thru Christ!**

Jesus said that true worshippers will worship God "...in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24); part of that Truth **HAS** to be the belief that **ONLY** the Blood of Christ cleans me from sin.

^m James 2:19

- Just like there is only One Creator, there is ONLY ONE Savior. Attempting to worship God while holding the belief that there are MANY valid ways to approach Him is NOT worshipping in Truth.

When Jesus described God as His Father, and taught us to pray “*Our Father*”, was a radical message.

“[T]his one word ‘Father,’ together with ‘Our,’ contain all these concepts [Creator, Lord, King, Lawgiver] yet at the same time reveals them as intimacy, as love, as a unique, unrepeatable and joyful union.”¹⁸

➤ Bill several weeks ago: “Jesus didn’t die *just* so that we can go to heaven – He died so that we *also* can come into **RELATIONSHIP** with Him, the Father and the Holy Spirit.”

That’s WHY God is going to go about is a way different than we would in the Exodus Game – to *begin* to demonstrate Who He is in order to establish a relationship with a people based upon a Covenant -- this would culminated 1400 years later at the cross. And – just like you had to be circumcised– had to be part of the covenant – in order to avoid the *angel of death* back then, you have to be in the covenant today that is made available in Christ in order to avoid *spiritual* death.

SLIDE: Who is Knocking?

- KNOCK, KNOCK
- WHO’S THERE?
- JESUS.
- JESUS WHO?
- EXACTLY!!!

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible

.And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father.

Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried.

The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.

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Endnotes

¹ Strong's Greek #4005, *pentékosté*

² Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies*, KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1980, p. 246

³ Ancient Origins, <http://www.ancient-origins.net/human-origins-religions/sumerian-seven-top-ranking-gods-sumerian-pantheon-007787>

⁴ Tom Bradford, *Torahclass*, Exodus lesson 5, chapter 4

⁵ Tom Bradford, *Torahclass*, Exodus lesson 6, chapter 5-6.

⁶ J.H. Hertz (ed.), *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, 2nd edition, comment on Exodus 5 page 223.

⁷ Amelia Ann Blanford Edwards, *Pharaohs Fellahs and Explorers*, Chapter 2: The Buried Cities of Ancient Egypt, Harper & Brothers, 1891. (First edition.)

<http://www.digital.library.upenn.edu/women/edwards/pharaohs/pharaohs-2.html>

⁸ <http://www.bibleistrue.com/qna/pqna69.htm>

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- ⁹ Rabbi David Fohrman, *The Exodus You Almost Passed Over*, Alpha Beta Press, 2016, pg. 12-13
- ¹⁰ <https://www.alephbeta.org/course/lecture/god-against-the-gods>
- ¹¹ My Jewish Learning.com, Let My People Go, Exodus Rabbah 5, 14 “He said to them, ‘Wait for me until I check my book.’ He immediately entered his palace and looked up each and every nation and its gods. He began to read: the gods of Moab, and the gods of Ammon, and the gods of Sidon. He said to them, ‘I searched for his name in my archives but I could not find it.’”
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/let-my-people-go/>
- ¹² Tom Bradford, *Torahclass*, Exodus lesson exodus 5-6
- ¹³ Rabbi Fohrman
- ¹⁴ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0066206/quotes>
- ¹⁵ *The Stand*, Hillsong United
- ¹⁶ Rabbi Fohrman recording tape 4A, *Time Space Fishbowl*
- ¹⁷ Strong’s Hebrew #5375 ‘nasa’
- ¹⁸ Alexander Schmemmann, *Our Father* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 19-20.