

Va'era Aliyah Summary

General Overview: In this week's reading, *Va'era*, Pharaoh refuses to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt, even after Aaron exhibits miraculous powers, transforming his staff into a serpent. The first seven plagues strike Egypt: Blood, Frogs, Lice, Wild Beasts, Pestilence, Boils, and Fiery Hail.

First Aliyah: This week's portion opens with G-d's response to Moses (continuation from the end of last week's reading). G-d told Moses that He revealed Himself to the Patriarchs and established with them a covenant to give them the land of Canaan. And now the time has arrived to fulfill His promises. G-d told Moses to tell the Israelites that He has heard their cries, and He will now deliver them from Egypt and bring them to the Promised Land. Moses relayed the message, but their unbearable workload prevented them from accepting his words. G-d then told Moses to instruct Pharaoh to send the Israelites from his land. Moses protested: "If the children of Israel did not listen to me, how then will Pharaoh listen to me? I have a speech impediment?" (G-d's answer below in the Third Aliyah.)

Second Aliyah: The Torah takes a brief interlude and traces the lineage of Moses and Aaron, listing their family trees.

Third Aliyah: G-d tells Moses to go speak to Pharaoh, and Aaron should serve as his spokesman. G-d informed him that He will harden Pharaoh's heart and he will refuse to release the Israelites. At that point G-d will "multiply His wonders" in Egypt, until the Egyptians will recognize that G-d is the Lord.

Fourth Aliyah: Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh. As per G-d's instructions, Aaron cast his staff on the ground, and it turned into a serpent. When Pharaoh's magicians did the same with their staffs, Aaron's staff swallowed theirs. Pharaoh remained unimpressed—and so the plagues commenced. Plague One: Aaron smote the Nile with his staff. The river and all the waters in Egypt

turned into blood, and all the fish perished. Plague Two: Aaron stretched his staff upon the Nile and droves of frogs emerged. They covered the land, entered all the houses, even the ovens and kneading bowls. Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and begged them to pray to G-d to remove the plague, after which he would release the Israelites.

[Fifth Aliyah](#): Moses prayed to G-d, and the frogs all died. Egypt reeked from the odor of rotting frogs, and Pharaoh reneged on his promise. Plague Three: Aaron smote the earth with his staff, and swarms of lice attacked Egypt, covering man and beast. Even Pharaoh's magicians were amazed by this, and informed Pharaoh that this is the "finger of G-d." Plague Four: G-d dispatched Moses to warn Pharaoh that his land will be infested by a mixture of noxious animals. Only the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, would be spared.

[Sixth Aliyah](#): The mixture of wild beasts descended upon Egypt, destroying the entire land with the exception of Goshen. Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and offered to allow the Israelites freedom to serve G-d whilst still in Egypt. When Moses rejected this offer, Pharaoh capitulated and offered to release the Israelites if only the plague came to an end. Moses prayed, the plague ended, and Pharaoh reneged on his promise again. Plague Five: all the Egyptians' cattle suddenly died; none of the Israelites' animals were affected. Plague Six: Moses and Aaron took handfuls of furnace soot and threw them heavenward. The soot descended, covered the entire Egypt, infecting all its inhabitants with painful boils. G-d sent Moses to Pharaoh with a message: Just as G-d wiped out all the Egyptian cattle, He could have easily slain Pharaoh and all his people too. "But, for this [reason] I have allowed you to survive, in order to show you My strength and to declare My name all over the earth!"

[Seventh Aliyah](#): Plague Seven: Moses warned Pharaoh that a catastrophic hail would descend upon the land. Man or beast that would remain in the field would be killed by the hailstones. Moses stretched his rod toward heaven and hail poured down—with fire blazing inside the icy hail. Aside for damage to humans and animal, the hail destroyed all vegetation and trees. Pharaoh summoned

Moses and Aaron. "I have sinned this time," he declared. "The Lord is the righteous One, and I and my people are the guilty ones. Entreat the Lord, and let it be enough of God's thunder and hail, and I will let you go..." Moses prayed. The hail stopped. And Pharaoh changed his mind yet again.