

PARASHAT VA'ERA

Exodus 6:2–9:35

Parashat Va'era begins with God saying to Moses: “*Va'era* . . . ‘And I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’” We are told of the relationship between God and the Jewish people and of the promise to give the Land of Israel to the people. God tells Moses that the time has come to free the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Moses is told that he should go before Pharaoh to ask that the Egyptian ruler allow the Israelites to depart. Twice Moses responds by saying that Pharaoh will not listen and apologetically explains that, because of a speech impediment, he is not the right person to represent the Jewish people. God answers by declaring that Moses’ brother, Aaron, will accompany him as the spokesman.

The two brothers appear before Pharaoh to request the freedom of their people, but Pharaoh refuses to liberate them. As a consequence, terrible plagues are set upon Egypt. The waters of the Nile are bloodied; then the land is filled with frogs and swarms of insects; then there is the death of Egyptian livestock; and later there is destructive hail. These plagues are sent to punish Pharaoh and to force him to free the Israelites.
