

PARSHAT VAERA
26 TEVET 5783/19 JANUARY 2023
EXODUS 6:2-9:35
HAFTARAH EZEKIEL 28:25-29:21



Apotheosis
Grattage on canvass by Giovanni Guida

SCRAPING AWAY TO REVEAL THE DIVINE

1. "...the Israelites do not hear." (Exodus 6:9, 6:12)

"...Pharaoh did not hear." (Exodus 7:22; 8:11, 9:12)

"I am of uncircumcised lips." (Exodus 6:12)

2. Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, you are like the great crocodile, crouching in its River branches, thinking: "My River is mine, I made it for myself." (Ezekiel 29:3, haftarah for Parshat Vaera)

"O, my Lord, why did you bring harm upon this people? Why did you send me? Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has dealt worse with *this* people; and still You have not delivered *Your* people." (Exodus 5:22-23)

The Israelites did not listen to Moses, out of shortness of breath/spirit and out of hard labor. (Exodus 6:9)

"...because of emotional pressure and work that was hard for them" (Targum)

3. Language was in exile, as long as they refused to receive the word of God, were not prepared to hear it. In the midrash we find, “They did not hear, because it was hard for them to separate from idolatry, as it is written, “They did not cast away the detestable things they were drawn to” (Ezekiel 20:8)...In order to hear one must be clear of all obstructions. This is the essence of exile, even now, that one cannot clear oneself of distractions and forget the vanities of the world. (Sefat Emet)

4. Reverie is the state of giving ourselves up to the flow of associations. This state of letting something happen – a species of relaxation – is one we need to cultivate when we look at paintings or buildings....Reverie is a mode of introducing personal material into a picture or building: it brings an abundance of thoughts and feelings into play. It also frees us from merely following routine assumptions....Reverie operates at the root of thinking: it is essential to the creative process in which we come to make thoughts for ourselves....The value of a personal discovery lies in the fact that not only do we arrive at a helpful conclusion, but that we have experience of how the conclusion was reached. *We gain acquaintance with the process of coming to see.*” (John Armstrong, *Move Closer: An Intimate Philosophy of Art*) [Vaera]

5. The joy in every successful metamorphosis conforms...with the intellect’s age-old energetic need to liberate itself from the deceptive and boring paradise of fixed memories and to investigate a new, incomparably expansive area of experience, in which the boundaries between the so-called inner world and the outer world become increasingly blurred and will probably one day disappear entirely. (Max Ernst, “What is Surrealism”)