

# Exegetical Lessons 001–100 on Exodus

When I exegete a book, I tend to get very bogged down in the details and so, I decided to develop a series of a few short lessons on various books of the Bible, where I attempt to simply deal with the primary points of each verse without getting too bogged down in detail. Each lesson is 4–5 pages long and designed to be read at one sitting. Although it is always nice to have a Bible open when studying this, I have, in almost all cases, included the relevant Scripture within the study.

I anticipate that the study of the book of Exodus will be considerably shorter than the book of Genesis.

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## Lesson 001: Exodus Introduction

## The Interim Period

At this point, we begin a study of the book of Exodus. The intent of this study is to help you to understand what is found in Exodus, what it all means, how this relates to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and also, how it relates to our lives today (seeing that the historical events recorded in this book took place about 3500 years ago).

Despite the fact that we live in the Church Age; that our Lord's death for our sins is an established historical fact; the Old Testament is still the Word of God and it is still relevant to our lives today. Therefore, we are able to study the Old Testament and to learn and grow from it. [The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. \(Isa. 40:8; ESV\) \[Jesus is speaking\] Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For I tell you truly, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single jot, not a stroke of a pen, will disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. \(Matt. 5:17–18; Berean Study Bible\)](#)

When studying the Old Testament, we have to be careful here and not to fall into a trap of legalism or misapplication. It is quite easy for the novice to study the book of Exodus and begin debating in his own mind if he ought to be observing the Sabbath or not; and he may even find himself wondering, *which day of the week is it?* (The Sabbath is Saturday.)

We live in the post-canon period of the Church Age; during which God works through the body of believers known as the church. There is no concern given to a person's race, gender or national origin—every person who believes in Jesus Christ is saved and is, therefore, a member of the body of Christ (1Cor. 12:12–27). Every person who believes in Jesus is a part of the church universal. We do not have a relationship to God through the nation Israel as the Hebrew people had. Nor is nation Israel (or the Jewish people) somehow transformed into the church. These are two separate entities, with some overlap in the first century A.D.

However, the God of the church is also the God of Israel. His essence, in these two dispensations, remains unchanged. There is not a God of the Law in the Old Testament and a God of Love in the New. Jesus does not reveal God the Father as being somehow nicer in the New Testament than He was in the Old. Therefore, there is much that we can learn about God in the Old Testament. Furthermore, we learn to appreciate God's incredible plan as we study His prophecies and the types found in the Old Testament.

There are roughly 400 years between Genesis 50 and Exodus 1; just as there are about 400 years between the closing out of the Old Testament and the birth of our Lord. The reason for the latter is, there needed to be a clear delineation between the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament needed to be established, stand on its own, and exist in its completed form by the time of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament had a finished text and existed in the Hebrew, Greek and probably the Arabic and Aramaic by the time of the first advent (when Jesus was on the earth). The Old Testament text had been established and it was well-known to the Jewish people (it was read in their synagogues). Furthermore, although the people did not fully appreciate Who the Messiah would be, most could agree upon which passages were *messianic* (that is, refer to the coming Messiah). Interestingly enough, even though the rabbis could agree upon which passages were messianic, they, for the most part, were unable to recognize their Messiah.

This time gap between the testaments, during which time the Bible is translated into Greek, insures that no one could go back and change the Old Testament in order to match up the messianic passages with the historic Jesus or with the things that Jesus did. That Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament could not be questioned, because the text of the Old Testament was not in question.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in 1947, gave clear evidence of a completed Old Testament. These scrolls confirm the accuracy of the current Old Testament text, as they came from a library in existence roughly 100–200 years before our Lord. So this 400 year gap between the testaments was essential.

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<sup>1</sup> In general. Quite obviously, there are some passages in which the text is not completely known.

It is less clear as to why there are 400 years between Genesis and Exodus without a word being said, apart from the genealogies found in the first half of 1Chronicles (which is also the case for the gap between the Old and New Testaments). This fulfills what God promised to Abraham, that his people would be in Egypt for 400 years; and perhaps it has to do with the Scriptures being primarily produced in the land God gave to the Jews. Most, but not all, of the Old Testament was written in the land of Canaan (the land which God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob).

There is an important change which occurs after these 400 years—God begins to treat Israel as a national entity as opposed to a chosen family of individuals.

We have discussed the authorship of Genesis on many occasions, and I have put forth the theory that it was written by maybe 8–10 different people and that it was passed along orally from generation to generation. If Moses did anything at all, regarding the book of Genesis, he committed Genesis to written form; and he, along with the other authors, may have updated some of the geographic references to cities and areas found in Genesis (although that probably was not necessary). In any case, there is no reason to credit Moses with the authorship of Genesis; nor does anyone in the New Testament do this. However, Moses is said to be the author of the other 4 books of the Pentateuch in the both Testaments; and there is internal evidence in these 4 books which supports his authorship.

Egypt is one of the most notable of the ancient world countries, and it still exists today as a sovereign nation. The interactions between Egypt and the children of Israel are legend, and recorded throughout Scripture.

The extra Biblical history which has been preserved from Egypt is remarkable, but not infallible. We have seen in our own history that there are attempts to rewrite it—sometimes only months after the fact. So we ought not be surprised if Egypt attempted to write and rewrite its own history by those in power. The same thing is *not* true of the history of Israel, as its history is preserved accurately in the Word of God—they cannot go back and change it because that would be changing their Scriptures. There has never been an attempt with Scriptures to whitewash any of Israel's history. Israel's history and the people who made its history are to be found, with their faults, their good points, their victories and defeats, throughout the Old Testament. Even though the Hebrews are rightfully called God's people, this does not mean that their behavior has been exemplary at all times. Recall that when Pontius Pilate offered the Jewish people a choice between releasing Jesus or Barrabas (a horrible criminal), they called for the release of Barrabas, which meant that Jesus would suffer crucifixion by the Romans.

We will study some of this not-so-exemplary behavior on the part of the Hebrew peoples in the book of Exodus.

Although Abraham made it known that his son Isaac was not to leave the Land of Promise; Jacob (Abraham's grandson) left Canaan on two occasions. He screwed things up so badly at home that his brother Esau wanted to kill him; so Jacob went to Haran, where his extended family lived. He lived there with his uncle for 20 years. Also, near the end of this life, Jacob left Canaan to live in Egypt. God approved of Jacob's departure from the land on both occasions, and personally came to him to tell him so.

### God's Removal of Jacob and His Sons from Canaan

1. God determined that there would be a new race of people on this earth—the sons of Israel—and this race would come ultimately from the loins of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
2. Abraham had a son, Isaac, and Isaac, had a son, Jacob; and all of Jacob's sons and all of their descendants became the children of Israel (God renamed Jacob *Israel*). The descendants of Israel (Jacob) were known as Israelites.
3. Abraham had other children besides Isaac; and Isaac had another son besides Jacob. However, these other children of Abraham and Isaac were not Jews<sup>1</sup>, but Arabs.
4. Therefore, not all of Abraham's children were Jews. In a fascinating historical parallel, those who were not Jews (the other sons of Abraham or Isaac) were Arabs, possibly the most antithetical and, at the same time, similar people to God's people.
5. Abraham had a son, Ishmael, by the Egyptian slave girl Hagar; and Abraham also had other children by Keturah (his second wife). Isaac had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. The sons of Ishmael, Keturah and Abraham, and Esau (who intermingled with the family of Seir) are all Arabs. Properly speaking, they are also *Semitic* (descended from Shem); but most people apply this term to Jews only.
6. Generally speaking, any woman could become a part of the Jewish family by marriage; but we have no indication of men outside of this new race entering the Jewish people until perhaps the exodus itself, when the Hebrews are said to be accompanied by a *mixed multitude* (that is, people who genetically were not Hebrews, but who were adopted by nation Israel).
7. In Canaan, there was the problem of horrendous degeneracy. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God because of their sexual degeneracy. Gen. 19
  - 1) Abraham was never in danger of being led astray by the debauchery in Sodom.
  - 2) However, Lot (Abraham's nephew)—and, more specifically, Lot's family—were.
8. The Jews also faced the problem of other small families wanting to intermarry with them (which was not uncommon in that era); which is something that we studied back in Gen. 34 and 36 (Esau's descendants, for instance, bonded and intermarried with the people of Seir).
9. God did not want the Jews to intermix with the degenerate peoples of the land of Canaan; and in some cases, even when heathen women were brought into the house of Jacob, there were some disastrous results (two of Judah's sons by a

## God's Removal of Jacob and His Sons from Canaan

- Canaanite woman died the sin unto death).
10. God did not want the Jews to become influenced by the degenerates of Canaan. In the future, God would destroy all of the peoples of Canaan because of their degeneracy. Now, if every Hebrew had the character of Abraham, they could live side-by-side such degeneracy and come out okay; however, not every Hebrew was like Abraham; so God needed to protect and isolate them.
  11. God used famine to bring the Hebrews out of the land of Canaan; and He told Jacob personally that it was okay for him to temporarily leave the land of promise. Gen. 46:1–4
  12. Jacob and his sons were brought to Egypt, where they were given a good place to live; but it is clear that the Jews remained separate from the Egyptians. Egyptians did not like their chosen profession (shepherds); and Egyptians did not even like to eat meals with such dirty people (we have already seen that they did not even eat food at the same table).
  13. When the sons of Israel were first brought to Egypt, Egypt enjoyed great prosperity; and the Pharaoh at that time became one of the richest men in human history (*wealth* being a relative concept). There appears to have been great spiritual growth among both the Jews and the Egyptians early on during the Israel sojourn in Egypt, which would certainly go hand-in-hand with worship of the Revealed God.
  14. In Egypt, the Hebrew people were kept separate from the Egyptians; and that was what God wanted. The people of Canaan, meanwhile, were allowed to degenerate further and further until God simply used the Jews to remove them from human history.
  15. It is clear that the Egyptians were more self-disciplined, more oriented to authority, and less prone to hedonism and self-indulgence than most peoples. In fact, it becomes fairly clear in the information that we learn about the Egyptians, is that they were authority-oriented and, insofar as we know, upheld the laws of divine establishment.<sup>2</sup>
  16. Therefore, it was much better for the sons of Jacob to grow up side-by-side the people of Egypt, rather than intermingled with the people of Canaan.
  17. Furthermore, even though the Israelites lived in Egypt, they were somewhat isolated—in part because of their profession, which most Egyptians abhorred.<sup>3</sup>
  18. When God brings the people of Israel out of Egypt, it will be a great sign to all of the nations around.
  19. And, at some point, the Israelites will return to the Land of Promise and take the land of the Canaanites by force, because of their degeneracy.

<sup>1</sup> The terms *Jew*, *Jews*, *Jewish* come from the proper noun *Judah* (later, *Judæa*<sup>2</sup>). We do not find those terms used in the Bible until the books of Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah, Daniel and Zechariah and the end of 2Kings. I believe the Jeremiah is the first writer of Scripture to use the term *Jew* (Jer. 34:9<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> The laws of divine establishment are laws designed to protect and perpetuate the human race. They are designed for all nations and peoples, whether saved or unsaved.

<sup>3</sup> I don't know that I can explain why the Hebrew people were looked down upon for being shepherds, as the Egyptians had to have livestock as well. Perhaps it was the Hebrew choice of livestock—sheep, goats and rams that was the problem.

There are two very difficult topics found in the book of Exodus: (1) the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (what does it mean and who did it?) and (2) the time period that Israel was in Egypt. Although I cannot promise to be the final word on either of these topics, I have come up with some unique observations which may help us to understand these two controversial subjects better.

## Lesson 002: Exodus Introduction

## Authorship, Time Frame and Accuracy

The book of Genesis was primarily narrative taking place over 2000–3000 years, with a few genealogies thrown in. The book appears to have been written by many different authors with some minor additions made to the text from time to time to update the names of various places (these changes are called *glosses*).

It appears that the text of Genesis was transmitted was from father to son, by memory. And on some occasions, the son would add a few chapters of material to the text and pass all of it on to his son.

For a significant portion of the Genesis text, it is my theory that several people presented this history to their children—Joseph and Judah for certain—and possibly Leah and others. Jacob, as the elder in Egypt, would have given the first 36 chapters of Genesis, all from memory, and then Judah and Joseph to step forward and pick it up from there, trading off. A few decades later, a son of Judah and a son of Joseph might speak in the place of their fathers; and the oldest living patriarch would still give the first 36 chapters of Genesis.

Although this theory is conjecture, it is very much in line with the long-established traditions of the Jewish people—many of these traditions are followed even today. It would also explain the chronology of the final 14 chapters, where we seamlessly move from one set of eyes to another set of eyes (known as 3<sup>rd</sup> person omniscient today).

We do not have any specific text which tells us that Genesis was memorized; nor do we have any text which refers to writing down the words of Genesis; nor do we have any specific authorship for this book listed anywhere. We have some reasonable

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<sup>2</sup> There is no *h* in the middle or at the end of a word in the Greek language. So Judah, when under the control of Greek-speaking rulers became *Judæa*. As an aside, there is no letter *j* in the Greek or the Hebrew; but that is a whole other story.

<sup>3</sup> I do not know if this is a gloss or not.

circumstantial evidence for this theory (the personal nature of some of the histories; the way that the narratives are organized); all of which we have discussed previously.

We do not know who exactly possessed the Word of God; and who exactly passed it along to his children—but there are portions of Genesis which are so personal as to defy being written by some third party hundreds of years later. Furthermore, there is enough looking back in Exodus to Genesis to suggest that many exodus-era Hebrews knew the book of Genesis.

### **The Authorship of the Book of Exodus:**

Unlike the book of Genesis, there is every indication that the contents the book of Exodus were actually written down (and that, they had writing materials available to them during that time period). God actually instructs Moses to write down His words; and Moses is very careful throughout the book of Exodus to distinguish between God's words and his own words. We nearly always know when God is speaking; and we know the events which take place before and after. Moses is meticulous about who is speaking.

Given Moses' background, there is every indication that he received the best education available to an Egyptian during that time (which would have included reading, writing, geography, history and languages). Script writing in Egypt goes back to 3150 B.C. (Hieroglyphic writing only a short 50 years before that).<sup>4</sup> What we have studied at the end of Genesis was around the 1800's B.C. (The 1600's by a different calculation). In any case, writing in Egypt preceded Jacob's family moving to Egypt by well over a millennium.

These facts may argue for a recording of the book of Genesis (and Job?) during the time that Jacob's sons resided in Egypt. However, nothing is ever actually said about the recording of those two books.

Exodus is a much different sort of book. The author appears to be Moses (he is called the author on many occasions in the New Testament); he is the central human figure of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. God on several occasions told Moses to write down His words (Exodus 17:14 34:27). Moses is said to have written down portions of the Pentateuch (Exodus 24:4 Num. 33:1–2 Deut. 31:9–11). Furthermore, Moses is said to be the author of those 4 books in the Old Testament (Joshua 1:7–8 8:31–32 1Kings 2:3 2Kings 14:6 21:8 Ezra 6:18 Neh. 13:1 Dan. 9:11–13 Mal. 4:4) and in the New Testament (Matt. 19:8 Mark 12:26 John 5:45–47 7:19 Acts 3:22 Rom. 10:5). He is never said to be the author of Genesis.

### **The Time Frame of the Book of Exodus:**

Laying aside the history noted in the first chapter of Exodus, this book, because it includes the birth of Moses, covers 80 or 81 years in time; but most of this book (Exodus 3–40) actually deals with less than a year's time.

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<sup>4</sup> From [http://www.ancient.eu/Egyptian\\_Writing/](http://www.ancient.eu/Egyptian_Writing/) accessed June 28, 2017.

The primary narrative picks up with Moses living in Midian, out with his sheep (apparently) and then he sees this burning bush. At the guidance of God, Moses returns to his people, the sons of Abraham, whom he then leads out of Egypt under the direction of God. Most of the first half of Exodus is about Moses' confrontation with the Pharaoh of Egypt, with his organization of the people of Israel, with leading them out of Egypt and to Mount Sinai. Much of the second half of Exodus will take place at the foot of Mount Sinai, where Moses will hear and then convey the Law of God to his people. Exodus 3–40 takes place over a period of perhaps a year's time.

Like most of the Bible, the history recorded appears to have been done after the fact. That is, Moses does not appear to keep a diary (with the exception of Num. 33). Whereas, Moses, who personally observed these events take place, was the author; he experienced the event, time passed, and then he wrote about it (or, it is possible that he dictated much of this book to Joshua). This is not some great revelation nor is this approach novel and unusual; this is how most eyewitnesses have nearly always written history. I mention this simply because, in our era of the internet and instant communication, many historical events are written down as they occur or within minutes of them occurring; and then that is disseminated; or a video of the event is made and that is posted online immediately after the incident (often edited in order to push a particular point of view). It is not unusual for a major news event to occur, with books on that event coming out within 1 or 2 years of the event (for instance, the terrorist attack on the US Embassy in Benghazi—several books on this event came out, presenting two very different points of view about that event).

In the ancient world, it would not be unusual for an eyewitness to wait 10, 20 or more years before committing a series of events to *writing* (John did not record his gospel until 60 years after the fact). It sometimes takes time and accumulated wisdom in order to help a person put the events in his periphery into a reasonable historic context (this appears to be the case for the gospel writers). It is easy to misread history and give significance to unimportant events; but yet to ignore the most important events. For my generation, the defining event was the assassination of President Kennedy; and the next generation had the defining event the explosion of the Challenger; and after that, the attack on the Twin Towers on 9/11. Even though a considerable number of people believed the United States government to be taken over when Kennedy was killed, and that there was some great conspiracy involved, in all actuality, his death in 1963 is at most, an historical blip in the history of the United States—not very meaningful apart from giving Lyndon Johnson power as president, who was one of the most effective presidents in American history (not saying that he was a *good* president; but he was certainly one of the most effective).

We often witness history (particularly today) but without being able to appreciate its importance or lack thereof. As we grow older, as we become wiser (ideally speaking), and we see the event in the timeline of history, we often develop a better perspective (not really true with the druggies who were affected by the assassination of JFK—some of them still see this as a complex conspiracy to take over our government).

God waited until Moses was 80 before appearing to him, so Moses lived a long life both in the palace of Egypt and in the quiet fields of Midian. He led two very different

lives—from age 1 to 40, he was being groomed to become a future pharaoh; and in age 40–80, he was a simple married rancher/shepherd out in the desert-wilderness of Midian, with a wife, two kids and some sort of dwelling place. However, Moses' life became dramatically different from age 80 on, witnessing with his own eyes the great power of God. And the most dramatic event that Moses will observe? He will lead the people of Abraham out of Egypt and into the Land of Promise. This is leadership and an event unlike any other in the history of the world. And Moses, more than anyone else, did not think that he was up to it.

With Egypt being so close to Canaan, with the various interactions which took place between these areas—the people of Canaan, for instance, went to Egypt for several years to purchase grain (those who could afford it). So it should not seem far-fetched that, a written language for the Canaanites and for the people of Jacob to have developed by this time. However, in [viewing](#) the Hieratic Book of the Dead of Padimin written sometime after 664 B.C., I do not see any sort of similarities between the written form of ancient Egyptian and Hebrew. Let me suggest some various possibilities: if the book of Genesis was committed to writing at any point around the time of the end of Genesis, while the people of Jacob were in Egypt, then: (1) they had developed a written language by that time and were able to use it; (2) they decided to keep their holy book written in a language which most Egyptians could not read, possibly in order to protect it. Or, (3) they retained the books of Genesis and Job in oral form.

In any case, the first time we hear of anything being written down is in the book of Exodus, where God specifically tells Moses to write His words down. This implies that a written language for the sons of Jacob existed (how long it existed or how it was developed is unknown to us); and the public writing of the words of God in the book of Joshua (Joshua 8:31–32) suggests that the people of Jacob were able to read (otherwise, why write down stuff in a public area that no one is able to read?).

Interestingly enough, the 4 books of Moses (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) each have their own flavor. Each book is very different from the others. However, Moses is said to be the author in both the Old and New Testaments of those 4 books.

Apart from the Bible, the written Hebrew language certainly goes back to around 1000 B.C., around the time of King David. The earliest example that we have of Hebrew writing comes from this time, although that is disputed. This does not mean that the Hebrew language did not develop until this time; it simply means that we do not have examples of it from before this era as we do of Egyptian writing. Given the ephemeral nature of the writing materials used by the Hebrew people, we would not expect any of their writings of that era to remain. But they do.

### **The Accuracy of the Bible:**

People seem to think that there ought to be copies of the Old Testament (or portions of it) dating back to a few months after it was written. That is not the case. The long-standing

tradition of the scribes was to make a perfect copy of the Old Testament; and then the older, worn and imperfect manuscript would be destroyed. The oldest Old Testament books that we have date back to 200–100 B.C. (and, obviously, they had to have been written prior to that). Those manuscripts are actually a recent discovery known as the Dead Sea Scrolls (discovered in 1947). Prior to that discovery, we had manuscripts of some Old Testament books dating back to around A.D. 900.

*Jeremy Thomas: Until the discovery of the Qumran Scrolls authority rested on the Masoretic Texts, mostly from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Recent discoveries of the Qumran Scrolls in various caves near the ancient community of Qumran near the Dead Sea have confirmed a tremendous preservation of the OT. 95%+ of the text is considered accurate, a figure unheard of among ancient documents except in the NT which boasts 98-99% accuracy. There can be no doubt that what we have in Exodus is a near perfect account of the actual events and no archaeological finding has ever nullified the historical record in the Bible. Time and again, secularists are faced with archaeological finds that only confirm what the Bible already said.<sup>5</sup>*

For some believers, this is a difficult fact; because they would hope that God would preserve His Word 100%. I have personally exegeted most of the Old Testament, between Genesis and 1Kings, along with some other books and psalms, and I can recall one verse in all of that time where there was a major mistake with the text I have certainly come up against verses I did not feel qualified to interpret or translate—which could have been because of some problematic text (but, more than likely, the problem was my imperfect understanding of the Hebrew). But, I have never run into a textual problem where it changed a major (or even, minor) doctrine.

It is worth noting what John Lea wrote in the previous century, comparing the writings of the New Testament to Shakespear. The NT was preserved over the years in manuscript form, where hand-printed copies printed by hand needed to be made in order to preserve the text. Shakespear wrote 100 years after the inventions of the printing press. So how do they compare? *It seems strange that the text of Shakespear, which has been in existence less than two hundred years, should be so far more uncertain and corrupt than that of the New Testament, now over eighteen centuries old, during nearly fifteen of which it existed only in manuscript...With perhaps a dozen or twenty exceptions, the text of every verse in the New Testament may be said to be so far settled by general consent of scholars, that any dispute as to its readings must relate rather to the interpretation of the words than to any doubts respecting the words themselves. But in every one of Shakespear's thirty-seven plays there are probably a hundred readings still*

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<sup>5</sup> From [Fredericksburg Bible Church](#) accessed April 11, 2018.

*in dispute, a large portion of which materially affects the meaning of the passages in which they occur.*<sup>6</sup>

The point being, even though the Bible has been imperfectly preserved by man, there is probably not a single disputed passage in the Old or New Testaments whereupon a fundamental doctrine of the faith rests.

## Lesson 003: Exodus Introduction

## Title, Typology and Time Frame

### The Titles of the book of Exodus:

Jeremy Thomas: *The Hebrew name of the book follows the traditional Jewish method of naming the book after the first words. Thus, the Hebrew name is we'elleh shemot, "now these are the names of" (Exod 1:1). When the Hebrew people returned from exile in Babylon the majority had lost use of the Hebrew language. As a result, the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek. Tradition says 72 men in separate cubicles made the translation resulting in the Septuagint (LXX). Although the titles are not inspired the translators gave this book the title 'Exodus' meaning "to go out" "to exit" "to depart" because the mass exodus of Israel from Egypt is the main event in the book. The word 'Exodus' comes from the Greek Translation of the Hebrew yatsa, which is found in Exodus 19:1.*<sup>7</sup>

Exodus 19:1 On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out [yâtsâ' (יָצָא)] of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.

When the Jews were removed from the land in 572 B.C., a generation of them grew up not knowing Hebrew; they spoke Greek instead. So, at some point, it was appropriate to translate the Old Testament into Greek (this is called the Septuagint or the LXX<sup>8</sup>). Tradition has it that 72 translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek (this would have taken place between the testaments). This same word in the Greek LXX is ἔξοδος or *Exodus*.

This word *exodus* actually only occurs 3 times in the Bible and only in the New Testament, because it is a Greek word (most of the Old Testament is written in Hebrew; the New Testament is written in Koine Greek). *Exodus* is only found once only in the way that we understand it in Heb. 11:22, where it means *departure*. *Exodos* (ἔξοδος) [pronounced *EX-ohd-oss*], means, 1) *exit, i.e. departure; a going forth* 2) *the close of one's career, one's final fate; 3) departure from life, decease*. Strong's #1841. Quite obviously, we have simply transliterated the word. It is also found in Luke 9:31 2Peter 1:15, where it is

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<sup>6</sup> From [Old School Contemporary](#); accessed April 11, 2018. This quote can be found in many places, and John Lea is actually quoting someone else (an unnamed author, if memory serves).

<sup>7</sup> From [Fredericksburg Bible Church](#) accessed April 11, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> LXX means 70, after the approximate number of translators.

translated *decrease*. However, this word does occur 55 times in the Greek Old Testament (but only twice in the book of Exodus—19:1–23:16).

### **Typology:**

Typology studies various men, statements, and acts found in the Old Testament; and how they look forward to future events (most of them look forward to Jesus Christ or to the crucifixion). Although typology was known to some writers of the New Testament (chiefly, the writer of Hebrews), this concept was developed more thoroughly many centuries later. An example of this is, in Gen. 22, God told Abraham to offer up his son, whom he loved, to God. This is typical of the crucifixion, where God offers up His Son as a substitute for us and for our sins.

A type does not know that it is a type; and Old Testament era theologians did not know what typology was or when they were reading about a type. So, chapters of the Old Testament which look forward to the crucifixion (Gen. 22 Psalm 22 Isa. 53) were not understood by ancient rabbis to be typical of the crucifixion. Gen. 22 is understood to be a series of literal events (which is how the Christian views it) which showed how obedient Abraham was to God and how much Abraham trusted God (which is all true). Typology understands all of these things about this passage; but further, understands that it looks forward to the future event of the crucifixion.

A prophecy, as differentiated from a type—like a Messianic passage—was known by Jewish theologians to be Messianic. The Jewish people understood that a Messiah would come to them, as prophesied in so many passages: He is David's Greater Son, a prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15–19); the Anointed or Messiah (Psalm 2); the One Who would sit at the right hand of God (Psalm 110:1–3); etc.

Many confuse prophetic passages with typological passages. The difference is, the Jews generally understood prophetic passages to be prophetic. However, Jewish theologians did not understand typical passages to be typical. So, even though an ancient Jewish theologian may give a slightly different interpretation to Isa. 9:6–7 (*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*—ESV; capitalized); he would still understand this to be a Messianic passage.

On the other hand, although we can recognize typological passages today; ancient Jewish theologians did not understand them to refer to anything other than the intent of the original writer (the writer of a typological passage did not know that he was writing about a future event or about the Messiah). Again, Scripture has a human author and a Divine Author. There are times when the human author is thinking and writing one thing; but the Divine Author uses those same words to convey a different message. Isaiah, when writing

Isa. 53, did not realize that He was writing about the Lord dying for our sins. However, when we read that passage today, it is obvious that is what it is about.

It is not unusual for people today to group prophetic and typical passages together today (such as, [The Top 40 Most Helpful Messianic Prophecies](#)), not realizing that these are different classifications. For further information, see **Typology** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Moses, like many men of the Old Testament (Abraham, Isaac, Joshua, David, Solomon), is a *type* of Christ. This means that there are remarkable parallels between the person and history of Moses which look forward to the Person of Jesus Christ.

| <b>Moses and His Life as Typical of Jesus Christ</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Moses</b>   | <b>Jesus Christ</b>  |
| During the time that Moses was born, there was a ruler who was intent on killing all of the Jewish male children (because the Jewish people were multiplying too fast). Exodus 1:12–22 | Similarly, during the time of the birth of our Lord, there was a ruler intent on killing all of the children of the Jews to prevent their King from being born. Exodus 2:16  |
| Moses had two natures. He was born a Hebrew; however, he was adopted into the royal family of the ruling class of Egypt. Exodus 2:1–10   | The LORD has two natures: one fully human and one of divine royalty. As believers, we have a common nature, but, upon exercising faith in Jesus Christ, we are adopted into the royal family of God. Philip. 2:6–8 |
| Moses' Jewish background parallels the Lord's human nature; and his royal background as an Egypt parallels the Lord's divine nature.   |  |
| Moses will take the side of the Jews against their Egyptian masters and act as their deliverer and savior. Exodus 5–12   | Jesus will take the side of man before God, taking on Himself the sins of mankind, acting as man's Deliverer and Savior. 1Peter 2:24 Rom. 3:21–31  |
| Moses acted as the mediator between God and man (the Exodus generation). Exodus 32:7–14  | Jesus is the Mediator between God and man. 1Tim. 2:5 Heb. 8:6  |
| Moses will stand before God to protect the people of Jacob.  | Jesus stands before God to protect those who have believed in Him.   |
| Moses so well understood the plan of God for the Jewish people that he spoke for God in the book of Deuteronomy.   | Jesus understood the plan of God for the Jewish people and for all people; and the words which He spoke were the words of God. John 3:34 12:49   |

As we have seen in the book of Genesis, the study of typology is a marvelous field, and one of the many proofs of the divine nature of Scripture. Any person with a prominent place in Scripture nearly always is a type of Christ; and in very unusual ways. In the 3 examples given above, we have a parallel of events, the hypostatic union, and the purpose of Jesus Christ acting as our Savior. These parallels rarely involve trivial similarities (such as, they both wore sandals, they were both Cleveland Indian fans, etc.). Many times, the parallels are quite clever and not always immediately apparent.

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The reason that we have the science of typology is, the Divine Author of Scripture is God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, He includes information from the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, which is a shadow of things to come.

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A more complete version of Moses as a type of Christ will be given part way through the book of Exodus.

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### **The time between Genesis and Exodus:**

Prophetically, this time frame was said to be 400 years, which is a round number. Gen. 15:13–14 **Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions."** (ESV) Their *affliction* will be for 400 years. If you have studied the book of Genesis, it is very difficult to assign the term *affliction* to the time when Joseph was prime minister in Egypt. He was the second highest political figure in Egypt; and his brothers were all guests of Pharaoh. But *after* a pharaoh arose who *did not know Joseph*, then the affliction of the Hebrew people began.

What is probably the case is, affliction is assigned to the entire time that the Jews were in Egypt, even though a portion of that time has the sons of Jacob enjoying blessing there.

Historically, it was said to be 400 years. Acts 7:6–7 **And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. 'But I will judge the nation that they serve,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.'** (ESV; Gen. 15:14; Exodus 3:12)

A figure of 430 years is given in Exodus 12:40–41 **The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.** (ESV)

We find the same figure, but slightly different time parameters, in Gal. 3:15–17 **To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring,"** who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward,

does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. (ESV; Genesis 3:15; 21:12; 22:18)

In speaking to Abraham, God told him: "As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." (Gen 15:15–16; ESV) So, in that era, a generation was roughly 100 years. This does not mean that there are only 4 generations in the land, and their children. People would get married, in their teens, 20's or 30's; and have 10 or more children. By the time they have had their last children, their oldest children are getting married and having their children. A set of parents would have children, grand children and great grandchildren, at the very least (not unlike today). They would just have a lot more of them (unlike today). Sometimes, a generation is viewed as how long it takes from a person to go from infant to producing children, which would be 25–40 years (for most people); others would view a generation as being the entire life of a person, a rounded average being about about 100 years.

The reference to 450 years in Acts 13:20, appears to be over a different time period, as we have 40 years in the desert in v. 18 and the destruction of the Canaanite nations in v. 19 (this would be Joshua's advance against Canaan).

Acts 13:16–20 **So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel and you who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. And for about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. And after destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance. All this took about 450 years. And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet."**

We might put it together like this:

|                                 |           |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| The time Israel was in Egypt    | 400       |
| Wandering in the wilderness     | 40        |
| Destroying of the seven nations | <u>10</u> |
|                                 | 450 Years |

There are two basic views of the time that Israel was in Egypt—one [view](#) has the people of Israel in Egypt for 215 years<sup>9</sup> and another for 400–430 years. I don't know that I want to spend a great deal of time exploring the first view; so it is linked there for your edification. Whereas the large population of Israel is easily produced in a period of 400 years; this is more difficult to justify over a period of 215 years. Mathematically, 215 years in Egypt may very well be impossible, when considering the population of Hebrews (approximately 2 million) who left Egypt, having begun with an initial population of 70.

In researching this on the web, nearly every website that I come across wants to assign Israel's time in Egypt as 215 years. Many of them state that the persecution of Israel by Egypt began when Ishmael, Isaac's half brother, treated him poorly at a very young age

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<sup>9</sup> 430 years is the result of 215 years in the Land of Promise followed by 215 years in Egypt.

(which led to Hagar and her son being put out of Abraham's home). Someone else places this beginning when Abraham and Sarah went to Egypt. At least two of these websites made references to the inherent sinfulness of man, who just wants to distort Scripture. While not disagreeing with that sentiment, I don't see how that is really a good argument to be made for either viewpoint. In any case, every explanation which has Jacob and his sons in Egypt for only 215 years, somehow never provides a clear explanation for Exodus 12:40 *The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years.* (ESV) The LITV reads: *And the time of the dwelling of the sons of Israel, which they dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.* The Concordant Literal Version, which is apparently following the Samaritan Pentateuch, reads: *Now the dwelling of the sons of Israel and their fathers who dwelt in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt was four hundred thirty years.* Then v. 41 adds: *At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.* (ESV) Then let me add, when it comes to the phrase *on that very day*, do you suppose that *that very day* refers back to the day that Ishmael made fun of Isaac, the day that Abraham and Sarah went to Egypt, or to the day that Jacob and his family all arrived in Egypt in Egyptian caravans? Which of those days to you think Israelites would have made note of in their chronological records? To understand the time frame of the sons of Israel living in Egypt to be anything other than 430 years, I would have to twist the logical explanation of that passage like a pretzel to achieve 215 years.

Traditionally, most theologians and commentators have adhered to the 430 year figure for the time that Jacob and his sons entered and then exited the land (Jeremy Thomas suggests<sup>10</sup> from 1875–1445 B.C.). This 215 year figure seems to be a recent (and incorrect) development in many circles.<sup>11</sup>

## Lesson 004: Exodus Introduction

## The Time Line and Prophecy

We ended the previous lesson in a discussion of the timeline of the sons of Israel being in Egypt; and it is my contention that they were in Egypt somewhere between 400 and 430 years.

The only difficult passage related to this is Gal. 3:17 *This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.* (ESV) Does the Law come 430 years *after* the first time that God spoke to Abraham and gave him a promise? If that is the case, then that would throw every estimation of time there is out of whack. Or does this promise, given by God on several occasions, go back to the final time that God gave it to Jacob? Gen. 46:1–4 *So Israel [= Jacob] took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered*

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<sup>10</sup> From [Fredericksburg Bible Church](#) accessed April 11, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> In the history of the church, there are weird ideas which emerge, and many people jump on the bandwagon in support of those ideas. An example of this would be the JEPD theory of the authorship of the Pentateuch. This is the theory that a variety of men wrote the books of Moses (instead of Moses). This theory is still taught in many seminaries today.

sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "**I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes.**" (ESV) What I have bolded is the final promise that God makes to the patriarchs (specifically to Jacob), that he will be made into a great nation *in Egypt* (which aspect of God's promise had not been given before); and that God would bring them up again out of Egypt. These promises interlock with the covenants given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob on previous occasions. These promises form the basis for Jacob later desiring to be buried in the Land of Promise; and Joseph asking that his bones be taken into the Land of Promise when nation Israel exits Egypt.

If Israel and his descendants were in Egypt, 430 years to the day of their exodus, then God's final promise to Jacob and God giving the Law to Moses would have been 430 years + 1–2 months, which is 430 years.

Exodus 1–2 covers a period of 429 years; Exodus 3–40 is year 430.

We are actually able to best set the date of the exodus from a passage in 1Kings:

1Kings 6:1 **In the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, he began to build the house of the LORD.**

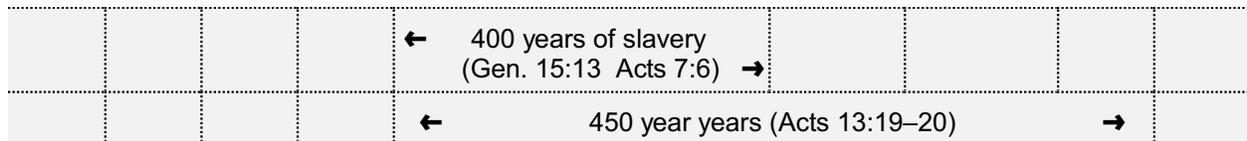
Solomon began his reign in 971 B.C. so he began to build the Temple in 967 B.C. So, if we work backward, 480 years brings us to the date of the Exodus, which was 1446/1445 B.C. These sets of dates allow us to determine all of the other dates.<sup>12</sup>

I believe that this is one of the best timelines available; which includes reasonable dates and Scriptural references to various periods of time.

### Timeline from Genesis 46 through Joshua 12 (Jeremy Thomas)

|  |      |      |             |  |   |                              |                    |      |
|--|------|------|-------------|--|---|------------------------------|--------------------|------|
| 1875   | 1865 | 1855 | 1845        | Interim Period   | 1445                                    | 40 years of wandering        | 1405               | 1395 |
| Gen. 46  |      |      | Gen. 50     | The end of Gen. 50 through to and Exodus 2                             | Exodus 3–40                             | Numbers–Deut.                | Joshua 1–12        |      |
| All sons of Jacob in Egypt                     |      |      | Joseph dies | New Pharaoh who does not know Joseph rises up; enslaves sons of Israel | Exodus from Egypt; Law given from Sinai | Israel wanders in the desert | Conquest of Canaan |      |
| ← 430 years (Exodus 12:40–41 Galatians 3:17) → |      |      |             |  |   |                              |                    |      |

<sup>12</sup> Paraphrased from Jeremy Thomas [Fredericksburg Bible Church](http://www.fredericksburgbiblechurch.com) accessed April 11, 2018.



This graphic is modified from Jeremy Thomas's graph at [Fredericksburg Bible Church](http://Fredericksburg Bible Church) accessed April 11, 2018. There are some problems with the timeline, as Joseph was in Egypt for more than 30 years. So, more work needs to be done here.

## Egyptian Dynasties and the People of Israel (Jeremy Thomas)

| 1991 B.C.  | 1786   | 1717   | ~1600  | 1567  |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| 12 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty   | 13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> Dynasties | 15 <sup>th</sup> – 16 <sup>th</sup> Dynasties  | 17 <sup>th</sup> Dynasty                                     | 18 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> Dynasties |
| Amenemhet I<br><br>Joseph sold into slavery in Egypt (1867)<br><br>Jacob enters Egypt (1845) |  | Hyksos — (Asiatic Semites)<br><br>• iron chariots<br>• Asiatic bows<br><br>history of Jacob's family obscure | Seqenenre II rebels<br><br>gradually, the Hyksos are run out |   |

The Middle Kingdom that extended from 1991-1786 B.C. This was the 12th dynasty of Egypt. When Joseph was sold by his brothers into Egypt in 1867 B.C. the Pharaoh was Amenemhet I. 22 years later Jacob and his family entered Egypt in 1845 B.C.

Then came the 2nd Intermediate Period which extended from 1786-1567 B.C. and included the 13th-17th dynasties.

During the 15th and 16th dynasties the Semitic-Asiatic peoples known as the Hyksos invaded and subdued Egypt. Their weaponry such as iron chariots and Asiatic bows were too advanced for the Egyptians to ward off. The history of Jacob's family during this time is obscure but we are sure that they were under oppression (Gen 15:13, 16; Exod 12:40-41).

During the 17th dynasty, Pharaoh Seqenenre II rebelled against the Hyksos rule and gradually the Hyksos were run out. Egypt entered the period of the New Kingdom under its first native king in a long while, Pharaoh Ahmose I

Since I do not know Egyptian history, nor have I studied it, I took this information from Jeremy Thomas and slightly edited and modified his chart. From [Fredericksburg Bible Church](http://Fredericksburg Bible Church) accessed April 24, 2018.

The New Kingdom extended from 1567-1220BC and included the 18th and 19th dynasties. This period is known as the Period of the Empire because Egypt rose during this period to become the world superpower.

## The Pharaohs During the Life of Moses (Jeremy Thomas)

| 1567–1546              | 1546–1526   | 1526–1512   | 1512–1504   | 1504–1482        | Dates uncertain                           | 1482–1450  |
|------------------------|-------------|---|-------------|------------------|---|--|
| Ahmose I               | Amenhotep I | Thutmose I  | Thutmose II | Queen Hatshepsut | Thutmose III                              | Amenhotep II   |
| He did not know Joseph |             | Genocide of male babies; Moses is born; Hatshepsut finds Moses in the River |             |                  | Intense oppression; Moses flees to Midian | Pharaoh of the Exodus; Moses returns to Egypt; Moses performs signs of God and takes the people out of Egypt |
| Exodus 1:8             |             | Exodus 2:1–10   |             |                  | Exodus 2:11–25                            | Exodus 3–14  |

Since I do not know Egyptian history, nor have I studied it, I took this information from Jeremy Thomas and slightly modified his chart. From [Fredericksburg Bible Church](#) accessed April 11, 2018. He was unclear about the timing of the reigns of Hatshepsut, Thutmose III and Amenhotep II.

### The overall view of Exodus:

There are two sections in Exodus: the historical progression of events in Exodus 1:1–15:21; followed by the giving of the Law and the system of laws for the people of Abraham (Exodus 15:22–40:38). The first half is narrative interspersed here and there with the words of God; and the second half are the words of God interspersed with a little narrative. So that there is no misunderstanding, all of the book of Exodus is the Word of God. By *words of God*, I am referring to God actually speaking to Moses, and Moses recording those words verbatim.

Each section can be divided into many subsections.

Although the power of God was on display in the book of Genesis, it was not on the level of the miracles found in the book of Exodus. The miracles of Exodus had to be more than of the parlor tricks by magicians designed to perplex a audience of a few hundred or a few thousand. The miracles of the Exodus had to convince an entire people to leave the place of their birth and to follow Moses to a place where they had never been. These miracles also had to be seen by all the Egyptians—allowing them to make a clear choice for or against the God of Israel. These miracles needed to be overwhelming in their size and scope.

One thing which we learn from this book is, miracles are not overwhelming enough to overturn a person's volition which is stuck in negative. All of the Egyptians and all of the sons of Jacob saw these miracles. A majority of the Egyptians resisted them and did not follow the sons of Israel out of Egypt.

The miracles done by the hand of Moses were much different than the miracles done by the hand of Elijah or those done by our Lord in His earthly incarnation. Moses' audience was an entire nation of two separate peoples. God, Who is fair, had to make certain that everyone in Egypt could make an informed choice—to stand with Moses (and the God of the Hebrews) or stand against him. In that way, do you see how he is a type of Christ? So the miracles of Moses had to affect everyone; everyone had to be able to experience them or, at the very least, see or hear about them.

When God does miracles in Scripture (some of which are in accordance with the laws of nature to some degree and some which are not), they are always appropriate to the audience that the miracles are for. This is true for all signs and miracles found in all the books of the Bible. God's appeal by miracles to Moses out in the Midian wilderness are much different from God's appeal to Egypt and Israel through the hand of Moses. Moses could appreciate the burning bush; he could appreciate his hand being made leprous; but these signs would not be appropriate to an audience of 2 million Israelites and however many million Egyptians. Moses never stands before all Israel and says, "Okay, now, watch my hand..."

Moses will live for a 120 years, and his life is divided into 3 time periods. From 1–40, he lives in Egypt and is raised up to become Pharaoh. From ages 40–80, he lives in Midian, in hiding because of the crime he commits. From ages 80–120, he will lead the children of Israel out of Egypt and to the Land of Promise. He will not enter the Land of Promise himself at any time (although he will be east of the Jordan River).

Exodus 1 provides a bridge between Gen. 50 and the book of Exodus. We jump forward in time about 320 years. For someone to write Exodus 1, they must be familiar with Genesis, otherwise, why try to write a bridge from there to the life of Moses?

### **Israel's Suffering in Egypt:**

When we last left Genesis, it was 320 years ago (roughly). Joseph had moved from slavery to a high position in Egypt, and he used the wisdom and guidance of God to guide Egypt through 7 years of economic depression.<sup>13</sup> In fact, a famine was suffered all across the land, and Joseph's father and brothers came to Egypt to live, because Egypt had preserved its excess grain. The sons of Jacob did not return to the Land of Promise, which decision was God's geographical will for them. It is reasonable to assume that God never guided them, or their children to return to Canaan.

Exodus 1 ties the end of Genesis to the beginning of Exodus, bridging the 320 year gap between these two books. We are given almost no history of that interim time period, although there are some genealogies which tie these time periods together. My guess is, the names given to these generations between the times of Joseph and Moses (found in

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<sup>13</sup> Let me caveat this statement by reminding you that we do not have any recorded instances of God speaking directly to Joseph.

the early chapters of 1Chronicles) probably give us some clues as to their lives in that interim era.

### **Prophecies fulfilled in the book of Exodus:**

God made these promises to Abraham: Gen. 15:13–16 Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

This is fulfilled in these passages:

Exodus 12:35–36 The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

Exodus 12:40–41 The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. (ESV)

Here is a related promise, which was partially fulfilled during the time of the exodus, but not completely fulfilled until the book of Joshua (which picked up where Deuteronomy left off). Joseph trusted the promises of God (the covenants which God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) that he said this at his death:

Gen. 50:24–26 And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here." So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Even though we are not told about it, Joseph's coffin (or, at bare minimum, his bones) had to be taken out of Egypt during the exodus. They would have remained with the people of Israel in the desert until they went into the land.

The Hebrew people went into the land as led by Joshua and took it (Joshua 1–12). Then Joseph's bones were buried in the Land of Promise:

Joshua 24:32 As for the bones of Joseph, which the people of Israel brought up from Egypt, they buried them at Shechem, in the piece of land that Jacob bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for a hundred pieces of money. It became an inheritance of the descendants of Joseph.

This will be the final set of introductory lessons to the book of Exodus. Most of this lesson will be charts and doctrines.

The overall background:

### The Background for Exodus

1. We live in a fallen world, which is hip deep in the Angelic Conflict. Man was created in order to resolve the Angelic Conflict. God created angels with free will; about a third of the angels fell (chose against God). Those angels have been judged and God has set their sentence, but they have not yet been punished. Between their judgment and punishment, man was created.
2. R. B. Thieme, Jr. suggests that Satan objected to their punishment of eternity under judgment, saying that a loving God would condemn His creatures to a lake of fire forever. I would suggest that there were a myriad of objections brought up, each one of them matching God's actions in judgment with God's essence and questioning God's essence. For instance, is it just to condemn His creatures to an eternity of judgment when their wrongdoing only occurred over a relatively short period of time (even if that is billions of years)? Of course, there would be the objection, "You made me this way; I am not responsible for what I have done." Satan, perhaps the most brilliant creature of all, no doubt formulated thousands, if not millions of objections.
3. Man was created in order to resolve and answer those objections.
4. Man was on earth for a considerable time where there were a dramatic number of changes.
  - 1) Man was created sinless, but with the ability to sin against God.
  - 2) Although the woman sinned against God because she was deceived, Adam sinned against God understanding what he was doing (which resulted in a different set of judgments for men and women).
  - 3) God allowed actual interaction between the fallen angels and man—and nearly all mankind had been corrupted by these angels.
  - 4) God cleansed the earth with the flood and man began again.
  - 5) After the flood, seasons became a part of our lives, which suggests that the earth was tilted on its axis during the flood or at the beginning of the flood.
  - 6) The descendants of Noah lived on the earth for nearly a thousand years.
5. A new program by which God could interact with man was developing, known as the Jewish Age or the Age of Israel. In this Bible study, we are in phrase I of the Age of Israel, where the Hebrew people—a new race of people—have been brought into the world by God. God would communicate to the world through these people.
6. The Jewish Age consists of 3 parts:
  - 1) The patriarchal period (from Abraham to Moses).

## The Background for Exodus

- 2) Nation Israel (from Moses to Christ).
- 3) The Tribulation (7 years). The Tribulation is still to come.
7. This new race of people, the Hebrew people, are all of those who are descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
8. God used these 3 men to explain His redemptive plan for mankind; and He will use the Hebrew people as a whole to also explain His redemptive plan for mankind.
9. Salvation was promised to mankind through Abraham's son—referring to Jesus Christ (this promise is very similar to how the woman was promised salvation through her seed in Gen. 3:15).
10. Through a series of incidents, the people of Israel (the other name for Jacob) were brought to into Egypt on friendly terms. Jacob's son, Joseph, is the prime minister of Egypt and he saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of Egyptians by preparing Egypt for the great 7-year famine.
11. As we will study, after Joseph dies, the Hebrew people are enslaved by the Egyptians and this is the way that we find them in this book.

Some of this is from <http://www.spokanebiblechurch.com/books/exodus> accessed March 21, 2018.

Each book of the Bible has several purposes.

## The Purpose of the Book of Exodus

1. The Book of Exodus is the foundation of the Hebrew nation Israel.
2. The Exodus is one of the most momentous events of the Old Testament (along with from creation of the earth and universe; the restoration of the earth; and the flood).
3. From a national standpoint, the Exodus is the most momentous event in the history of nation Israel. It will be referred back to many times in the remainder of the Old Testament and in the New.
4. The exodus and the eventual taking of the land of Canaan are unique events in human history in the founding of a nation. However, one cannot deny that there are parallels to early Israel and modern Israel.
5. The exodus is also a great picture of redemption (purchase). God has purchased His people (with His blood) and He has delivered the sons of Israel (Jacob).
6. This national redemption is a picture of spiritual redemption—where the Lord redeems (purchases) us and delivers us from oppression.
7. In salvation, we are positionally redeemed from the world, the flesh (= the sin nature) and the devil, our 3 enemies.
8. So the redemption of nation Israel is a picture or a type<sup>1</sup> of our redemption from sin and rebellion against God.
  - 1) As an aside, a type does not know he/it is a type; the writers and readers of the Old Testament do not know that he or it is a type. They do not even know what a type is.

## The Purpose of the Book of Exodus

- 2) No one in Old Testament times read about the Exodus and thought to themselves, *this is a redemption of the Hebrew people just as the sacrifice of the Messiah will redeem His people.*
  - 3) Today, we look back on the Exodus and give it additional meaning to it that it did not have to the author (Moses) while writing the book of Exodus; or to the participants of the exodus.
  - 4) The Holy Spirit, the Divine Author of Scripture, knows the end from the beginning, so we are able to understand the meaning which He has placed in the Word before it was fully understood and appreciated.
  - 5) This additional layer of meaning does not negate the historicity of the events recorded in this book; nor does it negate the meaning of this book to the people of Israel.
9. To the Old Testament believer, the Exodus is God redeeming His people and bringing them out of slavery.
  10. To the New Testament believer, the Exodus is a picture of Jesus Christ redeeming His people and purchasing them from the slave market of sin.
  11. The book of Exodus is the 5<sup>th</sup> most quoted book from the Old Testament. Psalms, Isaiah, Deuteronomy and Genesis [are quoted more often](#). Moses is the most quoted author from the OT.
  12. The doctrines fundamental to the exodus itself are redemption, propitiation and reconciliation.
  13. The doctrines fundamental to the people at Mount Sinai are the Law, the justice of God, the priest nation concept, and inspiration and inerrancy of the Word of God.

As an aside, the book of Ruth also paints a picture of redemption, most fully understood in the Church Age.

<sup>1</sup> *A type is a preordained representation wherein certain persons, events, and institutions of the O.T. stand for corresponding persons, events, and institutions of the N.T. Types are pictures or object lessons by which God has taught His redemptive plan. They are a shadow of things to come, not the image of those things (Col. 2:17 Heb. 8:5 10:1). The Mosaic system, for example, was a kind of kindergarten in which God's people were trained in divine things and taught to look forward to the realities of things yet to come.*<sup>14</sup>

Some of this information was inspired by Jeremy Thomas, from [Fredericksburg Bible Church](#) accessed April 11, 2018.

I have decided to place this chart in the Introduction, so that it is near the beginning of the book and easy to find. You can refer back to this chart to see where we have been, to gain context, and to see where we are going.

Unfortunately, there are several chapters which are poorly divided.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> From [Dake](#), accessed October 15, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Chapter and verse divisions came long after the text was written.

## Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Exodus

| Chapter   | Brief Description   |
|-----------|---|
| <b>1</b>  | <p>Exodus 1 bridges the gap between Genesis and Exodus, listing the sons of Jacob who entered into Egypt, followed by a later pharaoh who put all of the descendants of Jacob into slavery.</p> <p>In the third section of Exodus 1, pharaoh orders that all of the male infants be killed, as the population of the Hebrew people is growing too quickly.</p> <p>God blesses the midwives who spare the Hebrew males.</p>  |
| <b>2</b>  | <p>Moses is born and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. Moses grows up in the palace, but as an adult, he ventures out among the Hebrew slaves and kills an Egyptian slavedriver. Because he is later recognized, Moses flees to Midian to escape punishment. In Midian, Moses becomes closely associated with a Midianite ranching family and he marries one of the man's daughters. Meanwhile, in Egypt, the Israelites cry out because of their slavery and God hears them.</p>  |
| <b>3</b>  | <p>When Moses is out in the desert-wilderness of Midian, God (manifested as a burning bush) calls upon him to deliver the Jewish people. God carefully tells Moses what he is going to do, speaking first to the elders of Israel and eventually leading the sons of Israel out of Egypt to the Land of Promise. God also tells Moses how he will appeal to Pharaoh, and God indicates that Pharaoh is going to be negative towards this whole idea from the beginning.</p>   |
| <b>4a</b> | <p>Moses complains to God that no one would listen to him, so God gives him two miracles to perform. Then God begins to tell Moses what he will do when those miracles are not considered. However, Moses complains that he is not a public speaker and would be unable to do what God is asking him to do. God tells Moses that he is going to meet his brother Aaron, and that Aaron would do the talking for him.</p> <p>Moses tells his father-in-law that he is going to return to Egypt, but does not tell him about his encounter with God, instead saying that he is going to go see his family, to find out if they are still alive.</p> <p>Along the way, God meets Moses and tells him that he must circumcise his sons before they proceed, which he does; and which greatly upsets his wife.</p> |
| <b>4b</b> | <p>In this half of the chapter, God tells Moses what the first and last signs (judgments, plagues) will be.</p> <p>Moses meets Aaron and they go and speak to the elders of Israel, who believe what they say and therefore, they prostrate themselves before God.</p>  |

## Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Exodus

| Chapter   | Brief Description   |
|-----------|---|
| <b>5</b>  | Moses and Aaron go and speak directly to Pharaoh, and ask that they be able to lead the Hebrews a 3-day journey into the desert-wilderness to worship their God. Pharaoh says <i>no</i> and increases the workload of the Hebrew slaves, requiring them to find the straw on their own in order to make bricks (something which they did not have to do before). The Israelite foremen appeal to Pharaoh, who accuses them of being lazy and sends them out with no relief, requiring of them an impossible workload. These foremen complain to Moses and Aaron; and Moses then complains to God. |
| <b>6a</b> | God tells Moses that Pharaoh will eventually cooperate, but it will be under strong compulsion. God tells Moses of the promises which He has made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and that He will now begin to fulfill those promises. Moses, armed with this information, speaks to the sons of Israel, but they do not buy into it this time. Moses again complains to God, telling God that he is not a persuasive speaker—in fact, he is unable to even convince his own people of that.   |
| <b>6b</b> | In the middle of Exodus 6, we have a genealogy of Reuben, Simeon and Levi; with the Levi genealogy leading to Moses.  |
| <b>6c</b> | At the end of Exodus 6, we return to Moses making the point to God that he is unable to convince his own people, so how can he speak before Pharaoh? This appears to be the same conversation that Moses was having with God prior to the genealogy insertion.  |

Exodus 5–7 are somewhat confusing chapters, chronologically speaking. I believe what happened was, Moses, a few years after this all occurred, was recording the events of Exodus 5–6a, and he had to stop and attend to some crisis. Then he returned to write 6b, but was distracted again; and then he returned to write Exodus 6c–15 in almost one sitting.

My point being, whereas most of Exodus is a chronological narrative, that is not the case for these 3 chapters.

## Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Exodus

| Chapter | Brief Description   |
|---------|---|
| 7a      | <p>God, answers Moses' complaint from the previous chapter, saying that He has sent for Aaron to speak on behalf of Moses. He also warns that He will strengthen Pharaoh's heart and also provide more signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. God promises that, in the end, He would bring all of the people out of Egypt.</p> <p>Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh and this appears to be the same as the appearance in Exodus 5. They show the miracle of the staff being turned into a serpent; but Pharaoh's magicians, wise men and sorcerers, were able to do the same thing. Despite the fact that Aaron's serpent swallows up the serpents of the magicians, Pharaoh's heart remains strong against God, and he would not listen to them, as God had warned would happen.</p> |
| 7b      | <p>God speaks to Moses about the first sign/plague, where Moses and Aaron are to station themselves to meet Pharaoh at the Nile River, and Aaron would raise the staff over all the waters and they would become blood (or something which resembled blood); and all of the waters in Egypt turned to blood, even standing water in open containers. The fish in these waters died and the water stank.</p> <p>Magicians were able to duplicate this act in some way (on a much smaller scale) and Pharaoh remains obstinate. The Egyptians were able to dig shallow wells in order to find water to drink.</p>   |

## Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Exodus

| Chapter | Brief Description  |
|---------|--|
| 8       | <p>7 days later, God gives new instructions to Moses, that Aaron stretch out his staff over the waters, and from them would come billions of frogs, which would invade the land of Egypt everywhere. Moses and Aaron did this, and, even though the Magicians duplicate their sign on a small scale, Pharaoh asked that they speak to their God to remove the frogs, which had infested everywhere. Pharaoh agreed to send God's people forth. A day later, all of the frogs died and only remained in the Nile. The dead frogs produced an horrendous odor. Pharaoh, after the frogs had died, strengthened his heart against God and refused to let God's people go.</p> <p>The 3<sup>rd</sup> plague is gnats and it appeared that the very dust of Egypt was turned into gnats, which landed on people and on animals. The magicians could not even imitate this sign. They testified to Pharaoh that this was the <i>finger of God</i>. Pharaoh remained stubborn.</p> <p>God then sends Moses and Aaron to stand before Pharaoh when he went to the water the next day, and to promise swarms of insects which would affect the Egyptians only (Plague #4). Pharaoh gave in (again), and promised to send the people out and even bargained with Moses as to how far they could go.</p> <p>By the time that the swarming insects were removed, Pharaoh again had strengthened his heart against God.</p> |
| 9       | <p>Plagues 5 (killing of the Egyptian cattle), 6 (the boils); and 7 (hail) are found in Exodus 9. Pharaoh's heart was strengthened against God after plagues 5 and 6.</p> <p>For the 7<sup>th</sup> plague, there was a warning to the Egyptians that God would send hail upon the land, and that it would kill the cattle which remained out in the field and all their vegetation. Pharaoh relents again. However, when Moses appeals to God to stop the extreme weather, Pharaoh hardens his heart against God once again.</p>  |

## Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Exodus

| Chapter | Brief Description  |
|---------|--|
| 10      | <p>Plagues 8 (locusts) and 9 (darkness).</p> <p>With the threat of the plague of the locusts, even Pharaoh's officials argued that he should send the Israelites into the desert-wilderness to worship their God. Pharaoh was about to give in, but he would only allow the men to go and worship God, as he believes Moses to have an evil plan in mind. Because of this, God sends the locusts, who were so thick that it was like darkness over the land. Pharaoh gave in, called Moses and Aaron to implore God to remove the locusts, but, after God does, God also strengthens Pharaoh's heart and he relents again.</p> <p>The plague of darkness followed, where there were 3 days of darkness, where no one could see anyone else. Pharaoh agrees that all of Israel may go and worship their God, but their flocks must remain behind. God strengthens Pharaoh's heart (or, resolve), and he refuses; and warns Moses, "If you see my face again, you will die!"</p> |
| 11      | <p>The final plague (#10), the death of the firstborn, part I. Pharaoh is warned, and God makes his heart strong, to refuse to let the sons of Jacob go.</p>   |
| 12      | <p>The final plague, the death of the firstborn, part II.</p> <p>The Passover is instituted. Blood from a lamb would be applied to top and sides of the front door; and the Angel of God would pass over that house with the blood and pass over it (He would not take their firstborn).</p> <p>God also institutes the celebration of the Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, which would be continued throughout Israel's history.</p> <p>At midnight, the Lord struck down all the firstborn, from the least to the greatest; and this included the firstborn of all livestock. Pharaoh rises up and sends all of the Israelites and their flocks and cattle out of Egypt.</p> <p>After 430 years, the Lord brings the sons of Israel out of Egypt.</p> <p>More regulations regarding the observation of the Passover are given.</p>  |
| 13      | <p>In the first half of the chapter, Moses tells the people about the consecration of the firstborn and the regulations for the Festival of the Unleavened Bread.</p> <p>At the end of the chapter, God is guiding the sons of Israel through the desert.</p>  |

## Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Exodus

| Chapter    | Brief Description  |
|------------|--|
| <b>14</b>  | <p>God brings the Israelites to the Sea of Reeds and warns Moses that He has made Pharaoh's heart stubborn.</p> <p>Meantime, Pharaoh decides that he has made a horrible mistake to let the Israelites go and he organizes his people to pursue the Hebrew people. As they approach the Hebrew people, the Hebrew people call out to God, not for deliverance, but to complain that He brought them out to the desert to die.</p> <p>Moses upbraids the Hebrews, tells them to move forward toward the Sea of Reeds, where they will cross on dry land, between the waters.</p> <p>The Egyptians follow after the Hebrews, and God allows the waters to come together, and they drown the Egyptians.</p> |
| <b>15a</b> | <p>Exodus 15 is a Song of Moses, celebrating the power of God over Egypt; and how this would concern other peoples who might be antagonistic toward the Hebrews.</p> <p>Although man list the very end as a short song by Miriam, it appears to me that she is only singing harmony or backup to Moses.</p>  |
| <b>15b</b> | <p>After 3 days in the desert-wilderness, the Hebrew people had not come across any water. They came to the waters of Marah, which were bitter. A log was thrown into the waters to make the waters sweet. The people went further and came upon Elim, where there were 12 springs of water and palm trees.</p>  |
| <b>16</b>  | <p>The people grumble about their lack of food and God gives them manna from heaven.</p>   |
| <b>17</b>  | <p>God provides the children of Israel water from a rock (first instance of this).</p> <p>The Amalekites come out to fight against the Israelites. In this battle, when Moses raises his arms, the battle goes in favor of the Israelites; when he lowers them, the battle goes against them.</p>  |
| <b>18</b>  | <p>Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, comes to visit him in the desert-wilderness. He brings along with him Moses' wife and their two children (they apparently returned to Midian at some point).</p> <p>Jethro rejoices when he hears all that God did on behalf of Israel.</p> <p>Jethro suggests that Moses delegate some of his responsibilities to lower-level judges.</p>  |

## Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Exodus

| Chapter  | Brief Description   |
|--|---|
| 19   | <p>The sons of Israel come to Mount Sinai and Moses calls for the people to cleanse themselves and to separate themselves from Mount Sinai. They were not to even touch it.</p> <p>God makes himself visibly and audibly known on Mount Sinai.</p>  |
| 20   | <p>God speaks the Ten Commandments to all the people of Israel; and it really shakes them up. They ask Moses to speak to God directly and then to tell them what God says. They do not want to hear God speaking directly to them.</p> <p>God speaks to Moses and Aaron about idols and altars.</p>   |
| Apart from the Ten Commandments, most of the moral laws are given in Exodus 21–23.   |   |
| 21   | <p>God gives laws about slavery, personal injury and homicide. These laws include actions by animals (the guilty party is the owner of the animal).</p>   |
| 22   | <p>Laws on theft and a set of general property rights and laws. This chapter includes a wide variety of laws on illicit sexual activity, worship of another God, mistreatment of widows and orphans, loan conditions and restrictions, and consecration of the firstborn.</p>   |
| 23   | <p>Laws on giving truthful testimony, the keeping of the Sabbath and Sabbatical years; and the three major festivals are described.</p> <p>God promises to help the Israelites enter into the land of Canaan to take it.</p>  |
| 24   | <p>God tells Moses that he may bring certain other people up the mountain with him next time.</p> <p>Moses brings these laws, which he has written down, to the people. Animal sacrifices are offered and he reads the laws to the people.</p> <p>Moses, Aaron and many other people go up Mount Sinai and God allowed them to see the Manifestation of Himself.</p> <p>Moses then goes up by himself and remains at the top of the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights.</p> |
| The ceremonial laws are given in Exodus 25–30. In total, there are only 10 chapters in Exodus specifically given over to the delineation of the laws of God. Much of this is ceremonial. |   |

## Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Exodus

| Chapter | Brief Description  |
|---------|--|
| 25      | God describes the ceremonial things which are to be made/built. A description of the sacred furniture is given: the Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat, the Table of Showbread, and the Golden Lampstand.   |
| 26      | God describes how the Tabernacle is to be designed, as well as the Holy of Holies. Where the furniture is to be placed is also described.  |
| 27      | The Altar, the Courtyard area, and the oil for the Lamp are described.   |
| 28      | A description of the priest's clothing, the Ephod and the Breast piece is given.   |
| 29      | The consecration of the priests is described.  |
| 30      | <p>A description of the Altar of Incense.</p> <p>God speaks of the redemption price which must be paid for each person.</p> <p>God then describes the Bronze Basin, the anointing oil, and the incense, all which will become a part of the rituals to be practiced by the Hebrews.</p>  |
| 31      | <p>God tells Moses about specific craftsmen whom He has chosen to build these things.</p> <p>God speaks to Moses about the Sabbath again.</p> <p>When God was finished speaking to Moses, He gives him the two tablets of the Law, written by the finger of God.</p>   |
| 32      | <p>While Moses is receiving the law from God, Aaron, down below, encouraged by the people, makes a golden calf for the people to worship. They celebrate heathen religious worship.</p> <p>Meanwhile, on Mount Sinai, God warns Moses that the people are involved in idol worship and that He speaks of consuming them. Moses intercedes for the people, reminding God of the promises which He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.</p> <p>Moses comes down the mountain with Joshua, they can hear the celebration of the people. Moses is quite angry and he breaks the tablets of the Law, and first goes to Aaron, who lies about how it happened.</p> <p>The Levites were called upon to destroy the wicked among them, and 3000 people were killed that day.</p> <p>Moses goes back up the mountain and intercedes again for the people.</p> |

## Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Exodus

| Chapter   | Brief Description   |
|-----------|---|
|           | God instructs the people (through Moses) to leave Mount Sinai and to go towards the Land of Promise.  |
| <b>33</b> | God demonstrates His Presence at the Tent of Meeting. This is the Tabernacle which will be built in chapters 35–40.<br>God allows Moses to see His Glory, but while Moses is in a crevice in the rock.        |
|           | Moses cuts out the tablets of stone upon which God would write the Law a second time.   |
| <b>34</b> | God describes His Essence/Personage.<br>God repeats His covenant promises to give Israel the land of Canaan, warning them to destroy all the vestiges of the heathen religion of the Canaanites.              |
| <b>35</b> | The people bring offerings and materials for the building of the Tabernacle.<br>The craftsmen to build the Tabernacle and its furniture are drafted into service.   |
| <b>36</b> | The head craftsmen are named again. While they were building the Tabernacle, the people continued to bring things to be used until they had brought too much.<br>The building of the Tabernacle is described. |
| <b>37</b> | Bezalel builds the Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat, the Table of Showbread, the Golden Lampstand and the Altar of Incense.  |
| <b>38</b> | Bezalel then builds the Altar for Burnt Offerings and the Bronze Basin. He also builds the courtyard of the Tabernacle.<br>Then there is a record of all the materials used in the building of these things.  |
| <b>39</b> | The priestly garments, the Ephod and the Breastplate are made; along with the robe of the Ephod and other priestly garments.<br>Moses inspects the finished work.   |

## Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Exodus

| Chapter | Brief Description  |
|---------|--|
| 40      | <p>God gives Moses instructions for setting up the Tent of Meeting, and the arrangement of the sacred furniture. Many things, including the priests, will require consecration prior to beginning their service. Moses obeys God's instructions.</p> <p>The Glory of God fills up the Tabernacle. The nature of God's Presence with regard to the Tent of Meeting guided the Israelites in their movement toward the land of Canaan.</p> |

The book of Exodus begins with the descendants of Jacob in Egypt, who have been made slaves; and ends with the building of the Tabernacle (the Tent of Meeting); where God's Shekinah Glory fills the Tabernacle.

There are a number of ways of summing up the teachings of a particular book.

| Exodus in a Nutshell                        |  |
|---|--|
| Main characters                             | God and Moses.   |
| Secondary characters                        | Aaron, Pharaoh of Egypt, Miriam, children of Israel, the Egyptians.  |
| Primary Events                              | God's calling of Moses; the 10 judgments of Egypt; the exodus out of Egypt; the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai; and the building of the Tent of Meeting out in the desert. |
| Purpose of Exodus                           | <i>"God's deliverance from bondage" and "God's revelation of how to live once delivered"</i>   |
| Key words                                   | Pharaoh, Hardened, Law, Ordinances, Plague, Tent and Ark.  |
| Major doctrines associated with the exodus  | Substitutionary Atonement, Redemption, Propitiation, Reconciliation, God's sovereignty and omnipotence.  |
| Major doctrines associated with Mount Sinai | Revelation, Inspiration, Inerrancy, Canonicity.  |
| Themes of Exodus                            | Deliverance and Obedience; hesitance on the part of Moses; and the disobedience of Gen X (those who left Egypt as adults).   |

## Exodus in a Nutshell

|                 |         |                    |
|-----------------|---------|--------------------|
| Types in Exodus | Pharaoh | Satan              |
|                 | Israel  | Sinners            |
|                 | Moses   | Christ as Savior   |
|                 | Moses   | Christ as Lawgiver |
|                 | Leaven  | Sin                |
|                 | Lamb    | Substitute         |
|                 | Hyssop  | Bitterness         |

Much of this was taken from Jeremy Thomas, pastor of the [Fredericksburg Bible Church](#); (an rtf document, so it will open in Word or WP); accessed July 14, 2017. Also material from [Spokane Bible Church](#); accessed March 21, 2018. Thomas's words were used in most of this chart.

Ray Stedman: *[Regarding the Book of Exodus,] remember four things. The whole book centers around four great events. The first one is the Passover. Chapters one through fourteen lead up to it and climax in that great event. The second event is the crossing of the Red Sea, which is described for us in chapter fourteen. The third great event is the giving of the law at Sinai and the fourth is the construction of the tabernacle in the midst of the camp of Israel. These four events sum up the book of Exodus.*<sup>16</sup>

Tod Kennedy on the expanded theme of Exodus: *God created Israel—his priest nation—from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He used Joseph to protect the nation during the beginning years in Egypt. Years later, God raised up Moses to lead the new nation out of Egypt and back into Canaan, their homeland. A short time out of Egypt, God gave Israel the Law. The Mosaic Law was the constitution for the theocracy. The first half of Exodus (1-19) finds them in Egypt and then takes them to Sinai. The second half is the record of God's laws and instructions (20-40). Moses records God's successes alongside Israel's unbelief and failures.*<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Exodus Book Commentary.

<sup>17</sup> From <http://www.spokanebiblechurch.com/books/exodus> accessed March 21, 2018.

**Chart from Exploring Exodus by Wilbur Fields** (which is equivalent to the College Press Bible Study). Taken from <http://icotb.org/resources/Exodus.pdf> accessed July 13, 2017. I should point out that there is nothing magic about these chapters or how they match up, as the chapter divisions were added long after the fact. I have cleaned up the table to make it more readable and edited slightly it as well.

| God's Man  | Plagues                                   | Pathway  | Covenant  | Tabernacle Instructions                                     | Golden Calf   | Tabernacle Construction                              |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|
| - 1 -<br>Need for God's man  | - 7 -<br>The conflict begins!<br>Plague 1 | - 13 -<br>Demands and direction for the redeemed | - 19 -<br>Preparations to receive God's covenant  | - 25 -<br>Tabernacle Instructions (Ark, table, lampstand)   | - 32 -<br>Rupture of covenant   | - 35 -<br>Offerings and workmen                      |
| - 2 -<br>Preparation of God's man  | - 8 -<br>Plagues 2, 3 & 4                 | - 14 -<br>Baptized unto Moses                    | <br>- 20 -<br>The Ten Commandments | - 26 -<br>Enclosures (curtains, boards, bars, veil, screen) | - 33 -<br>God and Israel at odds  | - 36 -<br>Things enclosed                            |
| <br>- 3 -<br>Call of God's man | - 9 -<br>Plagues 5, 6 & 7                 | - 15 -<br>From song to bitterness                | - 21 -<br>God's covenant ordinances   | - 27 -<br>Altar and court                                   | - 34 -<br>Renewal of covenant   | - 37 -<br>Inside furniture                           |
| - 4 -<br>Hesitancy of God's man  | - 10 -<br>Plagues 8 & 9                   | - 16 -<br>Bread from heaven                      | - 22 -<br>God's covenant ordinances   | - 28 & 29 -<br>Priest's garments and consecration           |  | - 38 -<br>Outside furniture; total cost              |
| - 5 -<br>Resistance to God's man   | - 11 -<br>The last warning!               | - 17 -<br>Two tests: water and war               | - 23 -<br>God's covenant ordinances   | - 30 -<br>Incense, etc.                                     |   | - 39 -<br>Priests' garments, finished work presented |
| - 6 -<br>Strengthening of God's man  | - 12 -<br>Plague 10 over and out          | - 18 -<br>Jethro and judges                      | - 24 -<br>Covenant ratified   | - 31 -<br>Craftsmen, Sabbath                                |   | - 40 -<br>All set up; glory of God                   |

The Burning Bush (a graphic); from [Three Minute Bible Study](#); accessed January 17, 2018.  
 The Ten Commandments (a graphic); from [My Jewish Learning](#); accessed January 17, 2018.  
 Aaron in High Priest Garments (a graphic); from [A Scrapbook of Me](#) (in which there are many aspects of the High Priest's garment illustrated); accessed January 17, 2018.



Thomas provides a short, sleek outline:

### **Outline for the Book of Exodus (Jeremy Thomas)**

- I. Israel's liberation chs. 1—18
  - A. Israel's affliction (Israel is Egypt's possession) 1:1—2:14
  - B. Deliverance 2:15—18:27
- II. Israel's adoption chs. 19—40
  - A. Covenant delivered 19:1—24:11
  - B. Sanctuary planned 24:12—31:18
  - C. Covenant broken ch. 32
  - D. Covenant renewed chs. 33—34
  - E. Sanctuary's construction 35:1—40:33
  - F. Covenant sealed (Israel is God's possession) 40:34-38

From [Fredericksburg Bible Church](#) accessed April 11, 2018.

Also a very brief view of the entire book.

### **The Narrative of Exodus (from the Spokane Bible Church)**

1. God prepared Moses for the leadership, formed the sons of Israel into a community, and Moses led them out of Egypt (1-12). The people repeatedly complain against God and Moses because they refuse to believe God's word.
2. At Sinai, God made them his kingdom of priest and his holy nation (19).
3. God gave the Israeli people his law, called the Mosaic Law (20-34).
4. While Moses was on Mount Sinai, Aaron failed as a leader and the people made the golden calf idol (32).
5. Moses interceded for the people based upon God's covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and God kept his word to bless Israel (32-34). The Israelites complete the tabernacle and God's glory filled the tabernacle (35-40).

Palace Fort 18th Dynasty. Ruins of a large fortification were discovered in the 1990s at Ramesses on the south bank of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile River. It was active during the 18th Dynasty, ca. 1550-1300 BC.

From <http://www.spokanebiblechurch.com/books/exodus> accessed March 21, 2018.

Previously in the weekly study of Genesis, I used the Modern KJV translation. For the book of Exodus, I will use the New King James Version (unless otherwise noted), which is a superior (but not perfect) translation.

There are 3 sections of the first chapter of Exodus.

### Outline of Exodus 1

- I. The list of those who moved down to Egypt. Exodus 1:1–7
- II. The Egyptians subject the Hebrews to slavery. Exodus 1:8–14
- III. Pharaoh orders the male Hebrew children to be killed. Exodus 1:15–22

The time frame of the first chapter of Exodus is about 350 years. Chapter 2 will be about 40+ years in length (from Moses' birth to his leaving Egypt at age 40); and chapters 3–40 will take place over about a year's time, beginning when Moses is about 80 years old.

Whereas, many chapters and sections of Genesis could be organized into chiasmi, I have not found the same to be true in the book of Exodus (even though there are still commentators who are able to find chiasmi throughout the book). I think the reason for this is, a chiasm<sup>18</sup> makes a long passage of Scripture easier to memorize. Even though it is clear that the book of Exodus will be in written form (at some point); the average person would not have had a copy of this book (or of any other). To learn and preserve truth, a person would have to memorize a sacred book.

Exodus 1:1–4 *Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.*

What we find here in vv. 1–4 is *not* a list of all the sons of Jacob nor is it a list of the tribes of Israel. It is a list of those who went with Jacob to Egypt, bringing their own families with them. That is why there are 11 men named, and Joseph's name is left out, as Joseph was already living in Egypt. Joseph had sent for them all.

The sons are named according to their birth mother and birth order. Leah had 4 sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah); then there was a time interval, during which, she gave her personal servant to Jacob to impregnate. Then she had two more sons (Issachar, Zebulun). Her six sons are named first. You may recall that Jacob had been tricked into marrying Leah, the older sister.

Leah's sister, Rachel, had two sons. Joseph was already there in Egypt, so his name is not given in this list. She died when giving birth to Benjamin. Benjamin was brought to Egypt with his father; so his name is listed next. Rachel is the sister that Jacob loved.

Rachel did not, at first, have any children. In desperation, she gave her personal maid to Jacob and she produced two sons for Jacob: Dan and Naphtali (the idea is similar to our concept of a surrogate mother today).

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<sup>18</sup> A chiasm matches the first idea with the last idea; the second idea with the second-to-the-last idea; etc.

Seeing this, Leah gave her personal maid to Jacob, and produced two sons by her: Gad and Asher.

The sons are grouped by their mothers, but with Joseph being left out.

Exodus 1:5 [All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons \(for Joseph was in Egypt already\).](#)

Jacob and his 11 sons account for 12 of those. Then there is Leah, the two personal maids, Dinah and at least 11 wives (assuming that all sons were married by this time). That indicates that there were about 54 children (and grandsons) of the 11 sons of Jacob (although some of this number could be unnamed sisters of the 11 sons).

There were 33 sons, grandsons, great grandsons and daughters from Leah (Gen. 46:15). Going back to that passage and counting them up, 2 sons of Judah died; which would imply that there was Dinah and another daughter of Leah to take us to 33.

Zilpah had 2 sons, and they had 12 sons and daughter; and 2 grandsons. 16 in all (Gen. 46:18).

Rachel had 2 sons, Joseph and Benjamin. Joseph had 2 sons (in Egypt) and Benjamin had 10 sons. That gives us 14 who ultimately came from Rachel (Gen. 46:22).

Bilhah had 2 sons who had a total of 5 sons, making 7 in all.

$33 + 16 + 14 + 7 = 70$ . So this is where the 70 comes from (which number appears to include Jacob).

We can account for quite a number of these people in 1Chron. 2:1–7, which is really the line of Judah. The other sons are mentioned in that chapter, but their wives and children are not. However, the lines of the other sons are found in 1Chron. 5–8. They are listed all by name (except for their wives) in Gen. 46. We were able to account for 66 who had been descended from Jacob (Gen. 46:26); and add in Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, that takes us to 70 (Gen. 46:27). So my assumption here is, the descendants of Jacob include Jacob, Joseph and Joseph's two sons.

The Exodus passage gives us a summation including everyone, and it seems to have come from Gen. 46:27.

Gen. 46:27 [And the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two. All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy. \(ESV\)](#)

Exodus 1:5 [All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt. \(ESV\)](#)

But we have a problem when we come to Acts 7:14, where we have a different number altogether.

**Acts 7:14 and the number of people moving to Egypt:** A portion of Acts 7 parallels this section of Exodus (this is the great historical/theological sermon of St. Stephen). In this passage, we read:

Acts 7:14 **And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all.**

66 persons descended from Jacob came *with Jacob* when the entire household moved to Egypt. Already living in Egypt is Joseph, his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and apparently a wife. Including Jacob, there are 4 people are undoubtedly accounted for, at the entry of Jacob and the rest of the family into Egypt.

The number 75 in Acts 7:14 does not appear to include Joseph and his two sons; and possibly not even Jacob. This is because, in Acts, it is Joseph who sends and summons Jacob his father and all of his relatives, which is 75 in all (most would understand the 75 to apply to those that Joseph sent for; which may or may not include Jacob; some might include Joseph and his sons).

The term *kindred* is *suggeneia* (συγγένεια) [pronounced *soong-GHEHN-i-ah*], which means, 1) *a kinship, relationship*; 2) *kindred, relations collectively, family*. Thayer definitions only. Strong's #4772. This means that we are not necessarily speaking of blood relatives.

The 66 leaves out Jacob, Joseph and Joseph's two sons. Similarly, the 75 would be leaving out the same 4. What this possibly suggests is, 9 unnamed women traveled with Jacob to Egypt. These could be the remaining wives of Joseph's 11 brothers (or wives of some of their sons), who would have not been included in Gen. 46 or Exodus 1.

In the Greek of Exodus 1:5, we have 75 rather than 70. It is very likely that this is where St. Stephen got the number 75 from (the disciples used the Greek Septuagint as their OT text<sup>19</sup>). It is also possible that this is an accurate number, including the wives who are still alive. It is also likely that Stephen's speech was inspired, even if he got that number wrong. Getting the actual number exactly right is not really an important factor in Stephen's speech. The actual content of his speech would stand, whether he said 66, 70 or 75.

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<sup>19</sup> Although I have heard some discussion of the disciples speaking in Aramaic (Syriac); the translation of the Old Testament into Greek was a very big deal in that era. There appear to be two primary views: (1) the Old Testament was translated into Syriac by some Jews in Edessa at the beginning of the Christian era; or, (2) it was translated in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century or the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. by Christians. See [Wikipedia](#). Passages like this suggest very strongly that the Apostles used the Greek LXX and, therefore, spoke Greek (primarily).

This particular problem is dealt with in a variety of different and sometimes complex ways. I believe that my explanation above is reasonable. To sum up, the two points of view are: (1) The number 75 is accurate and it includes the remaining wives of the sons of Israel. (2) The number 75 may or may not be accurate, but the actual number is irrelevant to the sermon that Stephen gives. If the actual number, which included wives, was 77 (or whatever), those who knew the Greek text would get stopped at that point. They would not be able to mentally move beyond it. They would want to stop at that point for clarification. Many of those in the crowd listening knew the passages to which Stephen was referring, knew the number 75 (as both Christians and Jews at this time would have used the Greek LXX); and had Stephen used any other number, their brains would have stopped at that number.

Let me give you an example. I once posted this: "Given that the United States is the greatest country in the world, who are so many Americans taking intoxicants?" Nearly all of the discussion which followed was about whether or not the United States was the greatest country in the world, ignoring the actual question posed. The liberals at that site just could not get over the idea that someone considered the United States the greatest country in the world, and they provided me with many links that said different. Almost no one commented on, "Americans live in a great nation with great prosperity; why are so many Americans taking intoxicants?"

By using the number 75, no discussion and no argumentation would have come up about that number. That is the number that most of these people had memorized in the Greek.

So the other point of discussion is, *what about the inspiration of the Scriptures and Stephen's sermon?* The book of Acts accurately records Stephen's sermon, and the points that he made were accurate and inspired. This also tells us, historically, that the LXX (the Greek Septuagint) was Stephen's text.

Whether or not the number 75 was accurate, we will never know in this life.

As an aside, I found numerous other explanations; but none of them seemed reasonable or helpful; so I did not bother to list them.

Exodus 1:6 [And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation.](#)

The book of Exodus here bridges the gap between the time of Joseph and the time of Moses.

In Genesis, we only had accounts of the deaths of Jacob and Joseph.

Every generation gives way to the next generation. Death is inevitable; and we will either meet Jesus as our Judge or as our Savior. God made this our choice. We may like that; we may not; but life is what it is (and so is death).

Life is filled with limiting factors—we will all die; we cannot breathe underwater, we cannot fly, we cannot drink salt water; we can only go for so long without food, water or sleep. We accept and live with these limiting factors. Who created the earth and the universe and Who He is something which we may or may not like; but God is Who He is. Just as we learn to adapt to the physical realities of our lives; we should also learn to adjust to the spiritual realities of life as well.

Exodus 1:7 **But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.**

The Hebrew people prospered in Egypt during their tenure there. They had large families and they multiplied and spread across the land allotted to them. The word *land* does not necessarily refer to the land of Egypt, as it appears that the Jews were segregated in Egypt from the beginning (which was God's intention).

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**Lesson 008: Exodus 1:7–8****The Term *Hebrew***

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In Exodus 1:1–6, Moses listed the sons of Jacob who moved to Egypt.

Exodus 1:7 **But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.**

By this chapter, there were two ways of referring to the Jews—those descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were either called *children of Israel* (literally, *sons of Israel*) or they were called *Hebrews*. I often use the designation *Jew* (*s*) out of habit; but that word actually comes into being much later in their history.

Israel (*God prevails; contender; soldier of God*) was the name that God gave to Jacob; and, despite his many failures as the patriarch of his family, Jacob's descendants were called *the sons of Israel*. *Israel*, by the way, refers to Jacob—not to nation Israel, which does not exist at this time. There is no nation Israel when Jacob (Israel) moves to Egypt. There is only Jacob, his sons, his grandsons, his daughters, his wives and the wives of his sons and grandsons. There is a point in time when God uses the term *Israel* in a national sense; that will occur in the book of Exodus.

Many times when a new translation came out, people would complain; and, believe or not, this translation *the children of Israel* is a small bone of contention. Literally, this should be translated *sons of Israel*. Is that really a problem? No, it is not! Wherever we read, *sons of Israel*, we should generally understand this to mean the *descendants of Jacob*. Dinah, and any other daughters (or granddaughters) are *not* being left out of this designation. So, for future reference, I will often use the words *sons of Israel*; but what I mean is, *the descendants of Jacob*.

Interestingly enough, we find the term *Hebrew* about 15 times in the book of Exodus; but only one other time in the remaining books of Moses. The term *Hebrew* meant one thing

in the book of Genesis (where it is found 6 times); but here, in the book of Exodus, it will mean something different.

This approach may be more detailed than you might want. However, there is less known about this term than you might suspect. However, there are two basic approaches to the meaning and origin of this word.

The ESV; capitalized is used below:

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1. Many believe that the term *Hebrew* originally referred to people from outside the land of Canaan because we read in Gen. 14:13a **Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite.** Abraham came from the east (the area that we know today as Iraq and possibly modern Syria—from the eastern portion of modern Syria). He crossed over the Jordan River, entering Canaan. It is possible that *Hebrew* in this verse is a gloss (that is, added later).
2. Shem, the father of the Semitic peoples and Semitic language, is also said to be **the father of all the children of Eber** (Gen. 10:21b). Eber is the great grandson of Shem (Gen. 10:21–23 11:11–14).
3. There are two Hebrew words pertinent to this:
  - 1) <sup>ʿ</sup>Ēber (עִבְרִי) [pronounced *ĠAY<sup>B</sup>-ver*], which means, *one from beyond, the other side, across, region on the other side*; and is transliterated *Eber, Heber, Hebrew, Eberite*. This is the proper noun found in Gen. 10:21. Strong's #5677 BDB #720.
  - 2) <sup>ʿ</sup>Ib<sup>o</sup>rîy (יִבְרִי) [pronounced *ġih<sup>b</sup>-VREE*], which means, *one from beyond*; transliterated *Hebrew, Eberite*. This is a proper masculine singular gentilic/noun. Strong's #5680 BDB #720. Every time you see the words *Hebrew* (or *Hebrews*) in the Bible, this is the word that is being translated (almost transliterated).
  - 3) <sup>ʿ</sup>Ib<sup>o</sup>rîy is the gentilic form of <sup>ʿ</sup>Ēber, meaning that <sup>ʿ</sup>Ib<sup>o</sup>rîy is a general singular form designation for the people of Eber. The masculine plural form is <sup>ʿ</sup>Ib<sup>o</sup>rîym (מִיבְרִי) [pronounced *ġih<sup>b</sup>-VREEM*].
4. Now, we do not find the word *Hebrew* used anywhere else to describe Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob while they are in Canaan. This suggests that the word *the Hebrew*<sup>1</sup> may be a gloss in Gen. 14:13 (added in at a later time). However, if <sup>ʿ</sup>Ib<sup>o</sup>rîy (יִבְרִי) [pronounced *ġih<sup>b</sup>-VREE*] does correctly refer to a descendant of Eber, then it would have been properly applied to Abraham.
5. Abraham is clearly descended from Shem through Eber. Gen. 11:11–26. Furthermore, men are known by their ancestors (I am a *Kukis*, which is my surname; that name goes back many, many generations). There is a very important difference. The original *Kukis* is long dead and gone; but Eber (and almost all of Abraham's ancestors) was probably still alive during the time of Abraham (see Ages of Patriarchs [chart](#)).
6. Therefore, it is not difficult to connect the dots and suggest that Abraham was known as a *son of Eber*; an *Eberite*; which designation takes in a fairly large

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- group of people. Today, we only apply the word *Hebrew* to those born from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but then, that word would have had a much wider application.
7. The next use of the term *Hebrew* in the Bible occurs in Egypt, possibly to refer to those coming down from Canaan (see Gen. 39:14, 17 41:12). It possibly meant *stranger, foreigner*; and was only applied to the sons of Israel as a general term that applied to them and to others.
  8. In Gen. 39:14, the wife of Joseph's master says, "See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to laugh at us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice." This is a quotation, suggesting that this woman used the term to refer to slaves coming from Canaan.<sup>2</sup>
  9. The other two references to Joseph being a *Hebrew* from the book of Genesis are quotations as well. The people speaking of Joseph as a *Hebrew* were Egyptians and they would not have come up with a racial term to describe Joseph or members of his family *only* (they would not have known anything about Joseph's family).
  10. The word *Hebrew* is used in the context of one Egyptian speaking to another Egyptian, further indicating that this is an Egyptian way of referring to men of Canaan (the term did not have to originate with the Egyptians to be used by the Egyptians).
  11. Therefore, we have a problem here: did this have a more specific application to those descended from Eber or did it refer to those slaves who came from Canaan? Were there physical characteristics which differentiated between the people of Canaan and the people from the east? Quite frankly, we do not know; but the etymology suggests a connection to Eber, despite the lack of references in Gen. 14–38. Furthermore, the Egyptians were an educated people in one of the most powerful nations of that era—so they may have developed a sophisticated set of racial designations regarding slaves and/or immigrants, possibly even based upon the languages of the people themselves (that is, they may have used the language of the people to specifically name them).
  12. Furthermore, recall that God confused the languages (Gen. 10), and then the people were forced to separate themselves and to move apart from one another. Based upon our studies of Genesis, people would have tended to be far more racially pure than what we have today. My point being, it is very possible that people who had come from the east had easily identifiable racial characteristics which may have clearly differentiated them from the Canaanites.
  13. Therefore, this word *Hebrew* could be a term applied to specific Semites<sup>3</sup> who came from the Babylonian area (specifically, the sons of Eber)—this would make sense, given the meaning of the word *Hebrew*; but this word is not actually clearly used in this way until Joseph is in Egypt.
  14. However, at some point, likely during their time in Egypt, this word *Hebrew* became a defining term for the sons of Israel; to where they became synonymous with the title/designation Hebrew.
  15. In the book of Exodus and forward, *Hebrew* is applied to the descendants of

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Jacob (and, of course, to all those who marry into the family).

<sup>1</sup> We see this as two words; the Hebrew language sees *the Hebrew* as a single word.

<sup>2</sup> Jacob's family was so small at this time; so the Egyptians would not have had a special term just for them. This woman would have known nothing about the origins of Joseph and his family. However, there may have been obvious racial characteristics which distinguished him. Today, racial purity is virtually non-existent. If you could have a group of American (or European Jews) and stand them next to a group of Jews from the year A.D. 1, the two groups would look dramatically different.

<sup>3</sup> Recall that a Semite is someone who is descended from Shem.

The term *Jew* (or, *Jews*) is a very late term applied to the people of Israel. We do not find it until 2Kings 25:25. This seems to be applied when the Chaldeans were going to overrun the people of God and force them out of their land (in the northern kingdom). It is related to the tribe of Judah, which became, at some point, the only known tribe of Israel, apart from the Levites (descendants from the other tribes exist and some Jewish people today believe that they belong to these other tribes; but only God knows who belongs to which tribe for certain).

Back to our text.

Exodus 1:7 **But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.**

So, the family of Jacob (Israel) has moved to Egypt and, for a time, they enjoy both autonomy and great prosperity. As a result, they enjoy a population explosion. From the time that the sons of Jacob move to Egypt in the final chapters of Genesis to the time that Moses leads them out of Egypt, they grow from a population of 70 (+ their wives) to about 2 million.

Exodus 1:8 **Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.**

How does a king rise up who does not know Joseph? For whatever reason, the history of Joseph in Egypt was removed, to the point where a Pharaoh is raised up and he does not know Joseph. Most pharaohs are going to know history, geography and politics; as well as how to read and write in several languages. These are highly educated men, for the most part. These things would make up the basic knowledge that a pharaoh would have—their basic preparatory training. But this Pharaoh does not come with that knowledge. This suggests that the history of Egypt was changed or distorted; and that the history of Joseph and what he did was removed from Egypt.

Now, a very reasonable question would be, *why would the Egyptians remove Joseph (and his people) from their history? Or, why would Egyptians develop a dislike for Joseph later on?* Although Joseph saved many families of Egypt alive, he did this by bartering for their silver, animals, and farms. So, the people of his era appreciated that, as he kept them alive; but their descendants, lacking any claim to the land or to any inheritance, may not

have been so grateful (years 3–7 of the great famine and Joseph’s actions are found in Gen. 47:13–27).

Let me suggest a possible set of circumstances which occur many decades after this: an Egyptian Pharaoh, attempting to sound like a populist, could have easily distorted what Joseph did, and removed him from history, at the approval of the people of his era (this is pure speculation on my part, to explain how a king could arise and not know Joseph). There were different dynasties with different agendas which rose up in Egypt; but all we need to know is, a king rose up who did not know Joseph (or, perhaps, did not *acknowledge* Joseph as the national hero and patriot that he was). Joseph dies and, apparently, his true history as a savior of Egypt does not continue with Egypt.

Could a pharaoh arise who vilifies Joseph (which later generations may have done); and say, “Who is this Joseph? Do I know a Joseph? I should say not!” Joseph could have been portrayed as the man who placed all Egyptian farmers into bondage to the Pharaoh of Joseph’s time (Gen. 47:18–26). This would have been a very populist approach.

People in this life can be notoriously unhappy; or distressed with certain contemporary or historical figures—taking the norms and values of their day and applying those norms to people from many generations back. We have seen our own founding fathers of the United States of America vilified, as many of them owned slaves. Many confederate statues have been torn down or removed and relocated; and threats on the statues of founding fathers made. The leaders of such movements try (and often succeed) in making one’s opinion a binary choice. (1) You support slavery, wish that we still had slaves, and you want all such statues to remain to honor these men for owning slaves; or (2) you oppose slavery and therefore, you want the statues of all slave owners removed (because such statues are representative of honoring the men; and, therefore, honoring slavery). No nuance allowed.

Therefore, it is not hard to imagine a generation arising—even the next generation—who vilify Joseph. They are being taxed at 20% (Gen. 47:23–24), this money all goes to the government, and this can upset those paying the taxes—those who are a generation or more removed from the great famine. If they understand Joseph to have instituted those taxes, apart from the actual historical context; then they may hold him in low esteem (all of this is conjecture on my part).

Just as likely is, a pharaoh arises who removes the history of previous pharaohs; and what remains is distorted. Joseph is somehow lost in this re-shuffling (or, he is vilified).

The only reason that I suggest such an approach is, when would a king arise who really did not *know* Joseph? It seems more reasonable to me that Joseph was purposely excised from history or purposely given a bad reputation by later generations.

In any case, what remains in Egypt is the Hebrews, who are increasing rapidly in population; and who are separated from the rest of the Egyptians. How they got there is either distorted by or not known to the Pharaoh who arose who *did not know Joseph*.

As an aside, I can guarantee you that, while the Jews lived in Egypt, unharmed and allowed their freedom, they were prosperous and Egypt was prosperous. As God promised Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.” And when they turned against the Hebrew people, life, no doubt, became worse for the Egyptians.

Remember how this chapter begins, speaking of 70 Hebrew people; so, how do Egyptians feel now that there are tens of thousands of Hebrews? They have not integrated into their society; they have kept to themselves. They reject the gods of Egypt and their worship their own God. It is easy to vilify such a people, even though there may not actually be a good reason for doing so.

Let me suggest that, those first few generations of Israelites enjoyed great prosperity, a great increase in livestock, and a population explosion. The Egyptians—even if their standard of living is higher than it has ever been—may still look upon the Israelites with suspicions or even jealousy.

We have that sort of thing occurring today in America. People have got more *things* and a greater access to foods and personal comfort than ever before in American history; and yet, they see these CEO’s or Wall Street traders or even politicians; and they develop an anger which is based upon jealousy and covetousness.

I know the life that my parents led when they were younger; I know the life that they led as adults with children; and I know my life today. I see a great increase in wealth and possessions over that scope of time. Furthermore, I know from doctrine and from common sense that there is no reason to be jealous of anyone else, even if they have much more than I have. But some people cannot see things in this way. They themselves may be a part of a generation of greater prosperity than has ever been (and they are); but they still set their eyes upon people with a massive amount of wealth, and they allow themselves to be disturbed with that.

My point being is, Egypt, during this time, may be greatly prosperous; but this does not keep them from have very negative attitudes towards the Hebrew people in their midst.

## **Lesson 009: Exodus 1:7–13**

## **The Enslavement of the Sons of Israel**

The people of Israel (Jacob) had been living in Egypt for about 340 years. Even though, at the very beginning, Joseph, a son of Jacob, delivered these people from famine, reasons had been found to place the Hebrew people into slavery. This will be described in vv. 7–11.

Exodus 1:7 **But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. (ESV)**

As we have studied, the Egyptians were more than likely also enjoying great prosperity. As long as they gave respect to the Hebrew people and to their God, God blessed them as well. However, many people are blessed and they have not even an ounce of appreciation for it.

The sons of Jacob were given an area known as Goshen, in northern Egypt; and they had filled that area up. We do not know if they expanded beyond that or if the Hebrews were found owning land outside of that territory. My educated guess would be that this did not happen, based upon the Egyptian norms and standards which required separation between the Egyptian people and the Hebrews.

Exodus 1:8 **Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.** (ESV)

This new king may have literally not known any history at all about the Hebrew people; or the history that he knew was distorted, so that he did not know the Egyptian patriotism of Joseph, but a villainized caricature instead. Or, as we have previously discussed, the king himself chose to distort Joseph's place in Egyptian history. Whatever the case, I do not doubt that history had been erased or distorted.

Exodus 1:9 **And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we;..."**

This one speaking is the new king of Egypt; and he is apparently speaking to a group of Egyptians—possibly a large group of elders. There may have been a number of meetings involved here. Perhaps, these are the earliest townhall meetings? Or, far more likely, this is Pharaoh meeting with the elders and leaders of the land.

The sons of Israel were living in the same land, but segregated from the Egyptians. Although there may have been some Egyptian women who married into the Jewish people (we know of at least one<sup>20</sup>), for the most part, there was no intermingling between the Hebrews and the Egyptians. As was the custom in that day and time, a woman brought into the family from the outside became a part of that family (which would have included the worship of the Hebrew God, Y<sup>e</sup>howah).

In the book of Genesis, we were given two examples of a separation which was probably maintained between the Hebrews and the Egyptians: (1) they did not eat together; and (2) the vocation of the Hebrews (raising cattle) was disgusting to the Egyptians (which is one reason why the Pharaoh who knew Joseph placed the people in Goshen, separate from the Egyptian people).

You will recall that when Joseph had his brothers over for lunch (before they knew who he was), he even ate at a separate table from them. When the sons of Joseph first spoke to Pharaoh, they were to make clear that they were shepherds, which apparently caused Pharaoh to give them land which is very separate from the Egyptian people.

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph's wife.

Exodus 1:9–10 And he [the Pharaoh who did not know Joseph] said to his people, “Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.”

Throughout man’s history, prejudice and racism has been used as weapons. This has been particularly true of attacks upon Jews (even in the United States, there are far more [racial attacks](#) against Jews than against Muslims).

This new pharaoh has made some observations which are obvious to everyone. The Jewish population is growing by leaps and bounds. He warns that, if Egypt is ever attacked by enemies, the Jews might just join up with them and attack the Egyptians from the inside. They would be a great force to be reckoned with.

Pharaoh uses a strawman argument, placing an assumption on top of a possible occurrence, and then says, “And therefore, we must act.” What he actually suggested is, they must be *shrewd* when dealing with the Jews. But what he means is *ruthless*.

We are not given a series of intervening events which lead to this point, so I will do some speculation here.

If you will recall the events from Gen. 47, the people of Egypt, due to a 7-year famine, essentially gave their animals, homes and land to Pharaoh as a result. What happened was, Pharaoh could not actually take physical possession of all their animals and land; so the people continued to take care of their own animals and land, but, were charged 20% off the top that was paid to Pharaoh (Gen. 47:24). What Joseph did saved these people and they were grateful (Gen. 47:25); but generations die off and new generations rise up.

Let me suggest that a generation rises up, and they do not like paying this 20% tax to Pharaoh. Who do they hold responsible for this tax? Joseph, of the Hebrew people. The circumstances of events which took place are often not important to later generations (as a very wise man once said, *history begins for most people the day they are born*). Also, bear in mind, the people of Jacob are not actually subject to this tax (as Joseph was able to take care of them with the grain that had been stored).

A new pharaoh also rises up, and he takes their complaints into consideration, and he says to his people, “I do not know any Joseph!” (who is, by this time, dead). And the people of Egypt cheer him.

At this time, the Egyptians would be taxed and the Hebrews were not subject to the same taxation. The Hebrew people seem to be getting stronger and stronger, and they never integrated into Egyptian society. They blame this Joseph fellow—a Hebrew—for these events. So a hero to one generation becomes villainized by another. And out of this, a plot is hatched for the Egyptians to enslave the Hebrew people. Bear in mind, much of this is speculation. I am simply filling in some of the history which could have led to the enslavement of the Jewish people. The idea being, *it could have happened this way*.

Certainly, another generation could have arisen which knew absolutely nothing of the previous history (not even a distorted version of it). In any case, the Hebrew people were enslaved simply because they were separate from Egyptian society (which could not have been an easy thing to do). The enslavement could have been sudden; and they could have eased into it, telling the Hebrew people, “You are living on Egyptian land; it is time that you paid a price for that.”

However this came about, at some point, the Hebrew people became full-on slaves to the Egyptians, to the point of building entire cities for the Egyptians. How exactly this came about, we are never told—we are simply given the barest of hints. But the Egyptians were a very well-organized people; and it is possible that this began with an edict from the king: “All Hebrew persons will now be slaves to the king of Egypt.” There would be enough Egyptian military types to make this stick; and examples would have been made of those who resisted.

We should bear in mind that each generation is responsible for its own response to God and His plan (known in that era as *the way*). So, there is no reason to assume that the Hebrew people, at the time of their enslavement, were blameless. How many of them adopted Egyptian idolatry? How many of them abandoned their God? Let me suggest that the pain that they suffered was not completely undeserved.

Exodus 1:11 **Therefore they** [Pharaoh and the Egyptian people] **set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.**

The Hebrews were made into slaves and, interestingly enough, they built *store* or *supply* cities. What was probably stored in these cities was grain and other foods which could be preserved. It is suggested by some that Egyptian troops, when going into Palestine and Syria, would stop at these cities in order to put together their supplies for such a trip.

It certainly does strike me as a coincidence that Joseph built storage barns for the storage of grain; and the Egyptians are having their Hebrew slaves build entire cities with roughly the same intent. Was this intentional? Did the Egyptians see this as poetic justice? Or was this the ultimate in historical irony? Joseph, looking out for the Egyptian people, built grain storage; and now the Hebrew slaves were doing roughly the same thing for the Egyptian people.

There is yet another point of possible intersection between the acts of Joseph in Egypt back in Genesis and the events which led to the enslavement of the Hebrew people. The Egyptian government would have found itself with a great surplus of money, based upon what Joseph had done. Some Pharaohs no doubt decided to put this money toward building projects—like great storage cities. Such projects require both cash (gold, silver) and very large labor pools.

Again, we do not know exactly how the people of Jacob were enslaved, and which steps led to this, apart from a generation of Egyptians rising up with no appreciation for Joseph or for his people.

**Israel In Egypt, 1867 (oil on canvas)** by Sir Edward John Poynter; from [Fine Art America](#); accessed May 23, 2018.



Exodus 1:12 **But the more they** [the Egyptian people] **afflicted them** [the Hebrew people], **the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.**

As we see in our own nation, many times when a political solution is offered and implemented, it often does not fix the problem that it claims it will fix. They placed the Hebrews into slavery, and yet, the sons of Jacob continued to grow in population—exactly the thing that this pharaoh was trying to stop from occurring.

The sons of Jacob never really seemed to catch on to the idea that Pharaoh was concerned because of their numbers.

Exodus 1:13 **So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor.**

We have a curious phrase at the end of vv. 13 & 14: *with rigor*. This is actually the preposition ב<sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b<sup>eh</sup>], (*in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within*); affixed to the masculine singular noun perek (פֶּרֶק) [pronounced PEH-rehk], which means *harshness, severity, cruelty; crushing; oppression, tyranny*. Strong's #6531 BDB #827. Usually, the NKJV is an excellent translation. Here, it is not. We should understand this to mean, *with oppression; in severity*.

At some point in time, the Egyptian pressed the Hebrews into slavery. They had moved there when Joseph was the Prime Minister of Egypt; and enough years had passed where

Joseph was unknown to the present-day leadership. This can simply be the next generation. Even though a wise generation will try to pass along their wisdom to their sons and daughters; their sons and daughters can reject their wisdom as old fashioned and go down another path. We have a considerable number of people in the United States who have done just that.

One way that evil can triumph in a nation, is when the people do not know their own history or do not have an accurate understanding of the facts. We have that in our own nation today. There are a significant number of young people who have not even the slightest clue about the founding of our nation; nor do they understand the great blessings that God has given our nation. If I were to guess, easily half of the millennials in the United States do not recognize the blessings which God has given them and this nation; and they do not understand where these blessings ultimately come from. On top of that, let me suggest that half of these millennials do not even recognize or appreciate the great blessings that they themselves have. Those millennials who advocate for a more socialistic system of government do not really have any idea what it is that they support.

If you have ever studied the Millennium, you may have wondered, *how can man, living in perfect environment, under the reign of Jesus Christ, reject God and rebel against Him?* The United States is the most blessed country in human history, and yet, easily a third of those living in America think that America is a terrible place (or, at least, somewhat bad); and that there are dozens of nations where life is better. There are even some who believe that *free education* and *free healthcare* in Cuba are great and wonderful things and superior to what we have in America. They even think that Cuban [education](#) and [healthcare](#) is something that we, as a nation, ought to aspire to (no doubt, American education is in free fall right now). A person cannot be more uneducated as to believe that they would be better off in Cuba; and yet, millions in our country actually believe these kinds of things. And they will quickly cite this or that [article](#) on the internet of the best places in the world to live, and point out, with a tremendous lack of pride and patriotism, that the United States is [not even in the top 5](#).

I recently saw a survey that had been done, where [more millennial Americans believe in socialism than capitalism](#)—and this is with a free and unfettered internet that they believe this. We could, in as little as 20 years, have an America dramatically different from the one which we grew up in. We could be as socialist as Russia, if not more so, with a more controlled press (right now, only 5% of the media is even close to being fair or accurate).

The point I am making is this: Joseph was a great and patriotic man in the nation of Egypt. He loved his adopted country and did what he believed was best for it. His memory should have been preserved, and his people should have been respected. However, God will use the fact that this history was not preserved among the Egyptian people against them. All of the evil foisted upon the Hebrew people by the Egyptians will be dealt with; there will come a reckoning.

Here is what we have already studied:

Exodus 1:6–7 Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

Israel was given a relatively isolated area in which to live (quite possibly because they were shepherds); and they grew and expanded in this area. They remained separate from the Egyptian people.

Exodus 1:8–10 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."

A king in Egypt arises who either does not know Joseph or knows a distorted historical account of Joseph. This king is antisemitic. So he suggests that, in the event of a war, that the Israelites might rise up and join the enemies of the Egyptians.

Exodus 1:11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses.

So the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish people; and caused them to build two storage cities for Pharaoh.

Exodus 1:12–13 But the more they [the people of Israel] were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves... (ESV)

The Egyptian king, who presented slavery of the Jews as the solution to their population explosion and to their potential lack of loyalty, actually exacerbates these *problems*. These things are not actual problems for the Egyptians; but, like so many politicians today, he defines as a problem—something that is not really a problem—and then develops a program to *fix* this problem—again, something which is not actually a problem. The sons of Jacob in Egypt have never been a problem for the Egyptians. In fact, Egyptian no doubt enjoyed great prosperity and peace, because of their relationship with the Hebrew people.

An example of fixing a non-existent problem: there was recently a president of the United States who, as a newly elected president, had a lot of good will. Therefore, he decided to *fix* the economy (which, by the time that he took office, was actually in good shape and recovering on its own). He then passed a massive spending bill (called the Stimulus), which was a greater stimulus than had ever been passed before. This did not fix or improve the economy, which had already begun to recover on its own (if left alone, recessions often turn into a rebound economy).

FDR, earlier in American history, inherited a depression; and then proceeded to do everything possible to fix it, causing our economy to remain in a depression for the next decade (no other allied nation suffered a *great depression* during this time). A president previous to FDR, from the same century, also faced a similar downturn in the economy. That president did nothing; and the economy rebounded. Most people do not know about that economic downturn; but they do know about the Great Depression; which many believe was made *great* by a president who would not stop fiddling with the economy.

So, the king of Egypt inherited this large population of Hebrews—who were a blessing to Egyptian society—and he villainized them and made slaves of them. He took something which was not a problem and “fixed it.” He took a situation which was good and made it lousy.

Exodus 1:14 *And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor [that is, with severity, oppression and hardship].*

*They* refers to the Egyptians; and *their* and *them* refers to the sons of Israel.

The service expected by the Egyptians was most difficult; and the Hebrew people, for many reasons, were made to feel like outcasts in the land.

No doubt, Satan was involved here as well, as Satan seems to be quite able to whip up antisemitism under any circumstance. Bear in mind, we know, based upon the first two chapters of Job, that God would often direct the attention of the angels (including Satan) towards specific people. If given the opportunity, Satan would go to great lengths to attack and harm the people God upheld. This is how Satan thinks. All that God favors, he despises.

We see this very thing today. The present-day Israel is a tiny postage stamp of land. In the Middle East, it perhaps takes up 0.2% of the entire land there. And yet, there are nations (Iran) and peoples (the Palestinians) who see tiny nation Israel as some sort of an existential problem. There are large groups of Muslims who see the destruction of the Jewish people as almost a religious rite. Many of them believe in [the final solution](#) as much as the Nazis did.

In 2015, in the United Nations, Arab League secretary-general Nabil al-Arabi said, “The continued Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian territory is the main challenge before the international community to achieve peace and stability in the region and the world...This occupation represents the main cause for the spread of terrorism and extremist ideology in the region.” From [CNS News](#), accessed October 17, 2017. This sort of talk is nonsensical; and yet, there are large groups of people (Muslims and liberals, primarily) who actually believe it.

The problem in the Middle East is Islam and the hard-heartedness of so many Muslims. That the Jews have a tiny country in the midst of them is not some great problem or threat.

Only a distorted, Satanic logic could conclude that one of the smallest nations in the Middle East is somehow responsible for *the spread of terrorism and extremist ideology in the region*. Yet, the concept of terrorism and extremist ideology is endemic to the Islamic faith.

If you understand the Bible, Satan, and God's chosen people, the Jews—all of this makes perfect sense. Not only should we understand antisemitism, but we should expect it to be a part of human history until the end of human history. If we ever came to a point in history when there was *not* a considerable amount of hatred directed towards the sons of Jacob, then that should be confusing to us as Christians. So, even though there are numerous holocaust museums, and people who sincerely say, "We will never forget;" extremist ideology which targets the Jewish people will not end. We have already studied antisemitism back in **Gen. 13** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

As an aside, at the time that I write this, the United States is the most powerful nation in the world with the greatest military in the world. This is not just a happy happenstance for Americans, but it also represents God entrusting the United States with great responsibility. When we stop, as a nation, acting responsibly with faith towards God; then this great power will be removed from us. Great Britain, a most recent client nation on the world stage, also had the greatest military in the world and ruled over perhaps a fifth of the world. They brought both law and order and Christianity to nations all over the globe. But there came a time when the Brits no longer understood their place in the world; and their power and influence on the world stage was diminished from being the greatest, most powerful nation on earth; to becoming just another nation. This same thing could happen to the United States—and it could happen virtually overnight.

As an application, let me explain what we have done right in our history. At the end of World War II, General Douglas MacArthur called for Bibles and missionaries to be sent to the nations which we defeated. He ruled over Japan, our great enemy in that war, for a time. There were two very important results to come out of this (and subsequent military efforts). Japan became a staunch ally of the United States; with a Christian population there that survives to this day (there are about 2–3 million Christians in Japan); and the nation of South Korea also has a great, Christian population (South Korea is nearly 30% Christian and they send out many missionaries throughout Asia).

Here is what we have done wrong in our recent history: we went into Afghanistan and Iraq with the intention of imposing a democracy on these people. Now, whereas democracy is a wonderful thing, what would have been far more important would have been to allow missionaries into these countries; and to allow servicemen to freely evangelize the people (when off-duty, of course). Interestingly enough, the president who placed us into those two countries was both a Christian and an historian; and yet, the fundamental fact that Christianity is key to a long-lasting relationship with Afghanistan and Iraq, eluded him. In fact, evangelism was actually [discouraged](#) in these countries.<sup>21</sup> As a result, 10 years later, we are still in both nations and it is chaotic in both nations. The evil ideology of Islam

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<sup>21</sup> There is some [controversy](#) about this; but when we had the greatest power in Afghanistan, we should have required complete tolerance for all religions, but we did not.

cannot be excised from these nations; but it can be *replaced*. I write this in the years 2017 and 2018, and at this point, it is unclear whether any president will actually be able to look at our recent history and understand why our presence in Japan and South Korea worked; but why it is not working in Afghanistan or Iraq. If we want to fix the mess in Afghanistan and Iraq, we send in Bibles and missionaries. A former president on many occasions, has said, "There is no military solution." In that he was right. But there is no political solution either; the only solution is a spiritual one!

If we follow the doctrine of, *we broke it so we must fix it*; the only true fix is the truth of Jesus Christ.

It may seem that I have gone far afield here from our study, but what we are studying in Egypt is the result of antisemitism. The people of Egypt have lost or distorted their history; and now they have, for many years, used their antisemitism to exploit the Hebrew people. If we allow that to happen in the United States, then our nation will plunge from the great perch of power that we now occupy (no doubt, many would like to see this happen—including some people in our own nation).

These actions of the Egyptian people and royalty against the sons of Jacob will result in the destruction of nation Egypt. They will go from being one of the most powerful nations in the world to a weak and destroyed nation. That is a portion of the history which we will study in the book of Exodus. However, what happens to nation Egypt is just a sideshow in this book.

Exodus 1:12–14 *But the more they [the Egyptians] afflicted them [the Hebrew people], the more they multiplied and grew stronger and stronger. So the Egyptians were abhorred by the children of Israel; and the Egyptians ruled over the Israelites with rigour and made their lives bitter with hard labour in working clay and making bricks and with all the toils of the field, according to the several kinds of service to which they forcibly subjected them.* (Charles Thompson translation)

Exodus 1:15a *Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives [lit., midwives of the Hebrews]...*

This is the first use of the term *Hebrew* in the book of Exodus. It was used many times before in Genesis (Gen. 39:13–14, 17 40:15 41:12 43:32). *Hebrew* is the word 'Ib<sup>e</sup>rîy (יִבְרֵי) [pronounced *gih<sup>b</sup>-VREE*], which means *one from beyond*; and is transliterated *Hebrew, Eberite*. Strong's #5680 BDB #720. In this verse, we have a form of this word.

In the book of Genesis, the word *Hebrew* could not have been exclusively applied to the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because that would have suggested that the Egyptians actually had a cultural imperative concerning the people of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Joseph, as Prime Minister of Egypt, could not eat with Hebrews because that sort of intermixing was not allowed—Gen. 43:32). This term simply referred to people who came from the east and settled in Canaan (or, in perhaps any area west of the Euphrates

River). It is very likely that the name actually was applied to the sons of Eber, from whom Abraham was descended.

If the term *Hebrew* simply refers to people who have come across the river, we have a similar term which is used today: *ex-pats*; which term is used in many different countries, where Americans (or Europeans or whatever) have come to live in another country (many times, they simply move to another country to retire there).

Early on, as we have studied, various groups of people spread out over the world. Then God told Abraham, who was living in the east, to travel west (eventually, to the Land of Promise—Canaan). He was considered to have *come from beyond*, and was called a *Hebrew* as early as Gen. 14:13. It is a designation which stuck with his family in particular. So, even though, strictly speaking, Arab groups of Genesis would have been known as *Hebrews*, once we get to Exodus 1, this term has begun to attach itself only to the people of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Jacob actually returned to the east, and found two wives and two mistresses there, and then returned to Canaan, having 11+ children who were born in the east. So this made him even more of an outsider.

However, it appears that it is in Egypt where this name is applied to the people of Jacob; and where it sticks (see Gen. 39:14, 17 41:12). There would have been a wider application then, but it eventually narrowed to just the sons of Jacob.

## Lesson 011: Exodus 1:15–22

## The Midwives Who Feared God

Although Moses (and the Hebrew people) may have passed along the material in the first few chapters orally, there will come a time when God tell Moses to write it down. There are fewer well-designed chiasmi in the book of Exodus as compared to the book of Genesis.

### Chiasm of Exodus 1:15–22 (by Hajime Murai)

|    |           |                                       |
|----|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| A  | (1:15-16) | Command to kill boys                  |
| B  | (1:17)    | The midwives feared God (ואריתו)      |
| C  | (1:18-19) | Dialogue between Pharaoh and midwives |
| B' | (1:20-21) | The midwives feared God (וארי)        |
| A' | (1:22)    | Command to kill boys                  |

From [http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02\\_Exodus\\_pericope\\_e.html](http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02_Exodus_pericope_e.html) accessed October 18, 2017.

Exodus 1:15 Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives [lit., *midwives of the Hebrews*], of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah;...

According to Barnes, Shiphrah and Puah are Egyptian names and he believes them to be Egyptian women.<sup>22</sup>

The Bible Query: *[A]n Egyptian Papyrus in the Brooklyn Museum (35.1446), written approximately 1540 B.C., mentions a Shiphrah. This Shiphrah lived over a hundred years before the Shiphrah mentioned in Exodus.*<sup>23</sup>

We would not expect these to be the same person; but this simply indicates that this is a legitimate Egyptian name. Therefore, these are *not* Hebrew midwives, but *midwives of* or *midwives to* the Hebrew people. I am using the NKJV throughout, which is an excellent translation; but it is not perfect (many translations have *Hebrew midwives* as the translation).

It is likely, therefore, that these *Hebrew midwives* are not Hebrew midwives, but Egyptian midwives ministering to the Hebrew people.

It is significant that these women's names are given; but the name of the king of Egypt is not given. Based upon the events of this chapter, these women clearly believe in the Hebrew God (and therefore are saved); and the Egyptian Pharaoh did not. The names of the midwives are obviously written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 13:8 20:12, 15 21:27). The choices that these women make have eternal repercussions whereas the Pharaoh of this generation was just another bit player in life.

Exodus 1:15–16 [Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives \[lit., \*midwives of the Hebrews\*\], of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah; and he said, "When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live."](#)

Pharaoh speaks to the two midwives. We do not know if he does this directly or whether it is through an intermediary. We do not know if Pharaoh had additional meetings with other midwives, or if these two women oversaw all those in this profession. What appears to me is, Pharaoh called in all of the midwives, however many that there were, and spoke to them directly. These two women, in the realm of spiritual things, stood out from the rest.

Pharaoh apparently believes the propaganda that he has been spewing, that the Hebrew people may align themselves with some foreign enemy and go to war against Egypt; so he is going to reduce the number of Hebrew men to contend with.

What is far more important than the original heritage of these midwives is their trust in the God of the Hebrews. No doubt, they saved many Hebrew children by what they did.

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<sup>22</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Exodus 1:15.

<sup>23</sup> *Bible Query*; March 2006 version. Copyright (c) Christian Debater(tm) 1997-2006.; from e-Sword, Exodus 1:15.

Pharaoh tells these women to kill any male infants of the Hebrews. Obviously, this puts these women in quite a difficult spot. They must either commit murder and obey Pharaoh; or spare the lives of the children and disobey him (a crime for which they could be harshly punished).

This is how evil works. It does whatever it can to make believers sin. We have had this recently with the homosexual movement. It was presented, at first, as people who just were born this way, and that all they wanted was to live *normally*, expressing their homosexual tendencies (there is no such thing as *normalcy* for homosexuals). However, now, a person who does not believe in same-sex marriage (or believes that homosexual acts are sinful) is portrayed as a bigot homophobe and a hater. This went quickly from a movement which professed tolerance, to one which insists upon intolerance toward those with different beliefs. Now, in some places, people who do not want to recognize homosexuality as normal, can find themselves being sued. Some lose their businesses; [some lose their jobs](#).

The midwives knew to fear the God of the Hebrews rather than Pharaoh. This is why, *the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom* (Prov. 9:10a).

Exodus 1:17 [But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive.](#)

We have studied this expression *to fear God* previously. This suggests more than simply believing in the Revealed God; this means that these women thought about God, respected Him, and recognized His great power and authority over them. A person who fears God in the Old Testament is more than just a believer; there is some level of spiritual maturity associated with them.

In considering their situation, these women just could not outright murder these infants. They knew that this was so wrong, that they could disobey the word of Pharaoh. They would rather take their chances with retribution from Pharaoh than with God. That is faith in the Revealed God; that is fear/respect of the Revealed God.

The Bible clearly teaches that we are to obey the authorities over us; but we are given some occasions in which we may disobey those authorities. When it is a matter of teaching Bible doctrine or presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ, those are imperatives for the believer, no matter what authorities say. Now, you have to be careful here. You cannot be hired by McDonald's to sell fries, and use your interaction with customers as a chance to evangelize them. There is a proper time and place; and under all conditions, you have to wait for the right opening. You depend upon Bible doctrine in the soul and the guidance of God the Holy Spirit to help you determine when is the right time and what is the right thing to say (which is a matter of putting God's thinking into your soul).

The authorities over you, whether political or economic, cannot require you to sin either. These women will disobey Pharaoh because he required them to kill Hebrew children. God will bless them as a result.

Many of us have naturally rebellious attitudes, and we may look for any and every opportunity to disobey authority. In the United States, there are going to be few if any instances which allow you to buck the authority over you. That is because, for the most part, the United States preserves the freedom of religion. As of late, the U.S. president in 2016<sup>24</sup> tried to curb the actions of believers; but his approach is atypical of U.S. presidents. The president in 2018 is attempting to preserve religious freedom and *religious expression*.

Here, disobeying Pharaoh has its consequences. He returns to speak to the midwives. Again, we do not know if he calls them in and speaks with them personally; or if he uses an intermediary. This is recorded in such a way as to suggest direct contact.

Exodus 1:18 [So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?”](#)

We do not know how much time passed before Pharaoh realized that his orders were not being followed, so he speaks to the midwives again. Whether he speaks to more than these two; or whether he speaks only to these two, is unknown. Context suggests that he goes back to these two midwives in particular. What seems to be the case is, these two women are over all the midwives for the Hebrews. Or, these are the two midwives who are disobeying him; and perhaps there are a dozen others who are doing what Pharaoh is ordering them to do.<sup>25</sup> So Pharaoh may be speaking, at this moment, to these two women along with perhaps a dozen other midwives (again, all we are certain of is, Pharaoh is speaking to these two women in particular).

Exodus 1:19 [And the midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them.”](#)

Since these midwives make comparisons between Hebrew women and Egyptian women, we can reasonably suppose that they are involved in the births of both. Therefore, these midwives are not necessarily Hebrew women.

Interestingly enough, the midwives simply lie to Pharaoh. They tell him, “By the time we get there, the child is born.” This may be in part true or not.

Pharaoh’s idea, therefore, was for them to deliver and then kill the child and simply report to the parents that the child died when being delivered (which would be a lie on top of murder). They could not do this, if they show up and the child is already born. They cannot kill healthy children who have already been born. So, this is the excuse that they give.

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<sup>24</sup> I started to work on these lessons back in 2010; and continued working on them for nearly a decade before beginning to distribute them.

<sup>25</sup> We do not know what all of the midwives are doing; we do not know how many there are or what their organizational levels look like. We only know about these two women.

Now this is not necessarily the case; but what is said here allows us to hone in more on the order given to the midwives. The murders that Pharaoh ordered them to commit were to be surreptitious. He wanted his hands clean; he wanted them to be the ones to kill; and then for them to lie to the parents about what they have done.

Pharaoh did not want to simply order that all Hebrew male children be killed; but he wanted to do this in a sneaky manner, having the midwives do his dirty work for him. When this does not work, he will eventually become much more overt in his actions. The importance of his overt actions is, the people of Israel will recognize Pharaoh for the monster that he is. This is important for at least two reasons: (1) one or more families will take important steps to save their sons alive; and (2) God needs to drive a wedge between Egypt and the people of Israel. If they are satisfied with where they are, how can they be coaxed to leave Egypt?

Exodus 1:20 [Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the \[Hebrew\] people multiplied and grew very mighty.](#)

God blessed the midwives who protected the Hebrew children; therefore, the people of God continued to multiply and prosper.

Exodus 1:21 [And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.](#)

**The Midwives Feared God** (a graphic); from [Blog Spot](#); accessed June 5, 2018.

It appears that the midwives were given households, which suggests that they were married and had children themselves as a result. Or, they may have been unmarried and God provided husbands for them (as well as children). This would obviously be a blessing, as we may reasonably presume a midwife loves children. In whatever way, God blessed these midwives (and their names have been preserved for thousands of years—as are the names of many believers in the Scriptures).



Their actions now force Pharaoh to become far more overt in his evil.

Exodus 1:22 So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.”

The Pharaoh now orders that all male children of the Hebrew people be thrown into the river to drown. He no longer attempting to make the midwives quietly and secretly do his evil bidding. These evil actions become law, by order of the Pharaoh.

Tyranny takes a variety of forms. It may begin with great subtlety; but it will eventually become overt and easy to recognize. Any evil movement has to reveal itself at some point for the evil that it is. Communism and socialism always present themselves as a panacea of benefits for the imperfect society. Are you hungry or without medical care? Socialism will fix that. Is it hard for you to find a job? Socialism guarantees you a job. Do some people make so much money that you are jealous of them? Socialism will even all that out. And socialism presents itself to all kinds of economies, as a fix for all society’s ills. However, socialism is simply totalitarianism where some measure of equality is enforced among the people. Power and wealth are then concentrated into the hands of the political class, the few who rule with absolute authority over the many. And if you don’t like that, they can deal with you too. They are the judicial branch, the executive branch and the legislative branch all rolled into one. We separate these branches of government to insure a tension between the powers that be. The only tension in socialism is, *who* is at the top. Then all must be properly obedient to him.

Unfortunately, if a socialist bureaucrat has determined that you are a wrong kind of person, they can take care of you; they can jail you, starve you or move you to a horrible place. There are people in a socialist government who can make virtually unilateral decisions about people that they do not like. In many cases, there are no appeals; no disinterested 3<sup>rd</sup> party is ever called upon to put fresh eyes on such a case.

At best, we have economies like Russia and China which, despite having more people<sup>26</sup> and more resources, cannot outperform the United States economy (in fact, [Russia cannot even outperform California’s economy](#)). At worst, you have economies like [Venezuela](#), a country with some of the greatest oil reserves in the world, but which is unable to feed its own people.

The Bible does not in any way promote socialism; and Jesus was *not* the first socialist. Socialism is one of the great evils of modern society. For a more complete study of socialism and the Bible, see the **Doctrine of Socialism** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

|                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Lesson 012: Exodus 2:1–9</b> | <b>Pharaoh’s Daughter and Moses</b> |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

**Moses Is Born** (these titles come from the NKJV).

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<sup>26</sup> In 1990, the USSR had more people than the USA.

Unlike Genesis, only a small portion of the writings of Moses could be said to be chiasmic.

### Chiasm of Exodus 2:1–10 (by Hajime Murai)

|    |          |  |
|----|----------|--|
| A  | (2:1-3)  | The mother let the boy go                            |
| B  | (2:4)    | The sister watched the boy (αηλι)                    |
| C  | (2:5-6)  | Pharaoh's daughter picked up the boy                 |
| B' | (2:7-8)  | The sister negotiated with Pharaoh's daughter (αηλι) |
| A' | (2:9-10) | The mother therefore took the child                  |

From [http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02\\_Exodus\\_pericope\\_e.html](http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02_Exodus_pericope_e.html) accessed October 18, 2017.

Exodus 2:1 **And a man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi.**

The sons of Israel knew which tribe they belonged to. Some married within their tribe and some married outside of it. But they were able to trace themselves back to one of the sons of Jacob—and this is true for some even today. Based upon the first 10 or so chapters of 1Chronicles, we know that the Hebrews kept accurate, extensive genealogical records. This would further suggest that the Hebrew people knew their own history. That is, they knew who their ancestors were and some information about their background. It would seem rather incongruent for someone to know that they are a son of Levi, and yet know nothing whatsoever about Levi.

Exodus 2:2 **So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months.**

This son who is born is Moses. We do not know if the midwives were involved at this point.

They all knew that the male children were being killed, and she hides her child. It is very possible that she gave birth without the help of a midwife.

Recall that the midwives were not cooperating with Pharaoh, so he issued an edict. Exodus 1:22 **Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live."**

The exact circumstances of Moses' birth—whether by one of the midwives or not—is not given to us.

Exodus 2:3a **But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch,...**

When Moses is about 3 months old, it is clear to his mother that she can no longer hide him; yet she cannot allow him to be killed by Pharaoh's henchmen. The mother, interestingly enough, fashions an ark for Moses. She designs it to be waterproof.

Exodus 2:3 But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank.

Although these actions may seem to be somewhat random, there is no reason to assume that. The mother and Moses' older sister knew the direction of the water flow; they knew where this little ark would be carried to. Although there is nothing specifically said, it is reasonable to think that this ark was placed into the water at a particular time with the intent that is not just randomly float down the river, but that it was placed in the water at a specific time to float down to a specific place. There may even be the intent that it get caught up in the reeds where they expect the ark to go.

There are a great many people in the family of God who do random things, and expect that somehow, God will bless them and their random behavior. They are in a crisis, they open their Bible up to some random page and plop their finger down, in hopes that they will find the verse of the hour to guide them in the storm. However, this is not God's plan. God's plan is for you to have Bible doctrine in your soul first. You do not plop your finger down on some random verse, but your mind searches your human spirit for the wisdom of God's Word, which can be applied at the proper time. Your finger does not fall upon some random verse; your mind chooses an appropriate verse (or concept) from the doctrine resident in your soul.

One legitimate problem solving method is known as applying a faith-rest rationale. There are general and specific principles found in the Word of God; and if you understand your circumstances in the light of the Word of God, you can then pull a concept out of what you know from the Word of God and place your faith in that concept. For instance, you are alive and you are, for whatever reason, concerned about being alive in the near future. Life after salvation tells us that, *we are still in God's plan and God has a purpose for us* (whether this purpose will be worked out over the next 5 minutes or the next 5 years, we often do not know). But, whenever you are breathing and cognizant of your circumstances, the faith-rest rationale tells you, "I am in God's plan right now; God has things for me to do right now."

If you have not grown spiritually, then it is God's plan for you is to hear Bible doctrine being taught by a well-qualified pastor-teacher. If you have been growing spiritually over a period of 1 or 5 or 10 years; then God's plan might be for you to grow some more (which involves learning the Word of God), and/or God's plan might be for you to apply what you know to the circumstances at hand.

Miriam (Moses' older sister) and her mother knew that they could not allow for Moses to simply be killed—they knew that was wrong. They knew that if they kept this child around, his existence would become known and he would be killed, by order of Pharaoh. So, they try a different approach—Pharaoh said, every male child must be thrown into the River; and so they sort of do that. They place the child in a basket and float him to where Pharaoh's daughter bathes that time of the day (I am assuming that they did not simply put

Moses in an ark in the water at some random time at some random place, but that they had a specific end in mind).

Exodus 2:4 [And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.](#)

This is probably Miriam, Moses' older sister. She watches the ark to see what would happen to the child inside.

Again, I do not believe that this was random; but that they knew where the ark would float to; and they knew who would discover the ark with baby Moses (he has not been named yet, by the way) in it.

Who logically hatched this plan? Either the mother or the father (I would choose the mother, as she remains a part of this narrative). I have forgotten the exact age difference between Moses and Miriam, but I think she is about 7 years old at this time, so this is certainly not a plan which she hatched. She is a smart young lady and it will become apparent that she has been well-instructed as to what she had to do.

Exodus 2:5 [Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her maidens walked along the riverside; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it.](#)

Because the daughter of Pharaoh is bathing in the river, and the ark is caught in the reeds near her, it is very possible that this was intentional on the mother's part. She would have known about the daughter of Pharaoh, much as people know about celebrities today (there are always human celebrities; and the primary ones in that era would have been Egyptian royalty).

There is no reason to think that all that happens here is simply random. In any case, certainly God had a hand in all of this as well.

It is reasonable to assume that the baby, at this point, is crying; however, even if the baby is not, something like this ark floating among the reeds would have certainly caught the attention of a curious young girl.

Exodus 2:6 [And when she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."](#)

A normal woman, when faced with a helpless child, feels great compassion for that child. Women have a great capacity for love; and when something is helpless and needs care, the woman's love, compassion and empathy go into overdrive.

It appears that this is Pharaoh's daughter who is doing all of this. Her personal maid has fetched the ark, but she opens it up. She knows that this child is one of the Hebrews because he is circumcised. It is obvious.

Exodus 2:7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?"

Now, Miriam, Moses' sister, pops up sort of out of nowhere, and she asks if she should find a Hebrew woman to nurse the child. Let me suggest that Miriam and Moses' mother had a plan; and young Miriam would present that plan to Pharaoh's daughter.

At some point, as the daughter of Pharaoh looked at baby Moses with great compassion, knowing the order of her father. However, at the same time, there would be part of her thinking which would have been about the practicalities of, *how would I feed this child?*

Now, note exactly what Miriam said: "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?" Miriam does not say, "Listen, I know the mother of this child and I can bring her here." Instead she offers, "Shall I go and find a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, so that she can nurse the child?" So Miriam just happens to know a woman who is nursing and would be willing to come and nurse this child.

This allows the daughter of Pharaoh the solution to the first anticipated problem—*how would I feed and take care of this baby?* Without saying so, Miriam is suggesting that the mother—and they both know that this is the baby's mother who will nurse the baby—will not lay claim to the child. She cannot, because of Pharaoh's order.

Although we are not told what the Pharaoh's daughter is thinking, she has clearly bonded with this child and has laid claim to him, as he floated to her in the Nile. By what is carefully said and not said, Pharaoh's daughter knows that the baby can be fed and that she has full claim on this child.

Exodus 2:8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the maiden went and called the child's mother.

Pharaoh's daughter gives the order, and so Miriam goes to get their mother to nurse the child. But, she will never be called the mother of this baby—not to Pharaoh's daughter. I don't doubt that Miriam was so instructed.



**The Discovery of Baby Moses** (a graphic); from [The Orthodox Life](#); accessed June 12, 2018.

Is Miriam taking a chance here? Is the mother of Moses taking a chance? No doubt, they are. But Pharaoh's order did not leave them with a lot of options. It is my guess that, this was figured out all in advance. There seemed to be one way to preserve the life of Moses, and that is what they chose to do. They would depend upon the natural compassion of the daughter of Pharaoh.

Exodus 2:9 Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him.

The Pharaoh's daughter does not raise the child at home at first; he is sent back with the mother to nurse. It is unclear as to how long this was; and what sort of protection was afforded the child and mother; but, some sort of protection and agreement was made, so that Moses was allowed to live as an infant with his mother. Then, at some point, the infant was brought back to Pharaoh's daughter. I would assume that this is when the child stopped nursing. Such details about the protection of the child are not given in this narrative.

Other details as to, was there any formal adoption or was this simply assumed; what did Pharaoh say about this, etc.—none of this is discussed. I think that, at most, we can assume that Miriam, the mother and Pharaoh's daughter left a great deal intentionally unsaid. I don't think that Moses' mother was ever called his mother—not in front of Pharaoh's daughter—and I think that the love of Pharaoh's daughter for this little child was so strong that, she almost automatically assumed responsibility and ownership.

Let me suggest that Pharaoh's daughter knew and understood the order given by her father, to throw male infants of the Hebrew people into the Nile. However, when she encountered such a child face to face, she could not bear to see him harmed.

### **Lesson 013: Exodus 2:10–11 Acts 7:17–22**

### **Moses out among his people**

A male child is born to two Levites at a time when the Pharaoh has demanded that all Israelite male infants be thrown into the Nile. His mother, instead, places him into a watertight ark, and Miriam, the older sister, watches the ark to see what would happen to him. The ark came to rest in some reeds where the daughter of pharaoh was bathing. She sent one of her servants to fetch the ark, and when she opened it, there was a baby inside—clearly a male Hebrew child. Although she immediately took to the child, she would have been unable to nurse the child. The young Miriam approaches her, offering to find a suitable nursemaid among the Hebrew people to nurse the child for the royal daughter.

The subtext is, the royal daughter no doubt knew that Miriam is his sister and that the nursemaid would be his mother—but this is never said out loud. Instead, this is some lone

helpless male child, floating in the Nile, and Miriam appears out of nowhere as an interested bystander, and she just happens to know that she might find a woman to nurse the child. The relationships are left unsaid, so that the daughter of Pharaoh—if her heart is right—will adopt this child, unencumbered by any other potential claims on him. To make this a proper transaction, the royal daughter would even pay the nursemaid to feed the infant, as would be proper.

Protection for the child at this time is not discussed—but bear in mind, this is treated as if this child belongs to the pharaoh’s daughter, and the child is in the Hebrew city simply to be nursed. No one would harm the son of the pharaoh’s daughter.

Exodus 2:10 *And the child grew, and she [the nursemaid, the child’s birth mother] brought him [the weaned infant] to Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, “Because I drew him out of the water.”*

At some point, the child is brought to the daughter of Pharaoh (she has no doubt dealt with her father about this), and she raises him as her own son.

The English text sounds like this was a series of singular events. The real mother takes the baby back, nurses him, weans him, and then brings him to Pharaoh’s daughter to continue raising him. However, the verbs *grow*, *brought*, *became* and *called* are all in the imperfect tense, and this gives us two possible options: these are a series of actions which take place in this order (when a series of imperfect verbs are held together by *wāw* consecutives, then this is one way to interpret them); but the other way to see these verbs are as processes; a set (not series) of events viewed as a set of coterminous processes. The child grows—that is a process; the child becomes Pharaoh’s daughter’s son—that is a process. Let me suggest that bringing the child to Pharaoh’s daughter was also a process—that it did not take place all at once, but every day,<sup>27</sup> the child was brought to Pharaoh’s daughter, and every day the child became more and more the child of Pharaoh’s daughter.

All of this leads me to the Pharaoh’s daughter naming the child. Now, at what point did this take place? If we see this as a series of chronological events, then after everything happens, and now the baby is permanently in the hands of Pharaoh’s daughter, she decides, “Why not give him a name?” This might be a year later or even longer. Let me suggest instead that, Pharaoh’s daughter began spending more and more time with the child (that she spends time with the child is conjecture on my part), and that she thought about his name for awhile—and, perhaps after a few weeks, settled on *Moses*. This would have logically taken place before she took complete custody of the child. The people involved could only call baby *Moses*, *kid* or *boy* for so long.

The other view is, these are all consecutive actions, and that Pharaoh’s daughter would not name the child until he became her child, living with her all of the time. At that time,

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<sup>27</sup> That this may have been a daily or periodic process is conjecture on my part, but it is based upon the imperfect verb.

it all became very real. That is by far the most common way that we interpret consecutive imperfect verbs. Even though it seems quite odd to name a child when that child is age 1 or 3 (or whatever), it is possible that is what took place.

Regarding intervening contact with the child—the text does not indicate that occurred, but one could not rule that out. After all, the nursing mother was paid. Would that not have been an opportunity for the adopting mother to come and see the child? Was she paid weekly or monthly—or even daily?

Whether or not there was intervening contact, there is no doubt that the daughter of pharaoh thought about this infant every day because that is what a woman is like when she opens a place in her soul for another person.

Now, let's consider the Pharaoh, who has ordered the death of these Hebrew children. Why doesn't he kill this child? If you cannot understand how Pharaoh can order the killing all of the male children and yet allow his daughter to raise a young, adopted male child (who is clearly a Hebrew boy), then you have never had a daughter. If the daughter of pharaoh said, "I am adopting this child" or "I would like to adopt this child," her father simply cannot refuse her.

The writer of Hebrews presents this history to us in this way:

Heb. 11:23 **By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.**

The king's edict was that all male children born at that time were to be thrown into the Nile River and drown. Moses' parents refused to be intimidated by this order.

Saint Stephen spoke about Moses during this period of time in a marvelous sermon in Acts 7:

Acts 7:17–18 **"But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph.**

God had promised Abraham that he would become a great nation and that there would be many people descended from him. The time of the promise was the time that God would make the people of Israel into a nation.

Act 7:19 **He dealt shrewdly with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive.**

We have seen previously that Stephen abbreviated Israel's history here and there, sometimes skipping over details which are easy found in Genesis. There king who rose up over Egypt, who did not know Joseph, he dealt shrewdly (subtly, using artifice and

fraud) with the people of Israel, putting them into slavery. At some point in the future from that king, his enslaving the people would demand that another pharaoh limit the number of male children being born—to protect the Egyptian people. This other pharaoh was worried that the Hebrew people might become too strong, and possibly able to rise up and oppose the Egyptians.

Acts 7:20–21 *At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God's sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house, and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son.*

*At this time* refers to a time while the people of Israel were enslaved to the Egyptians and male infants were being killed.

The text in Exodus describes more completely the process of Pharaoh's daughter adopting the Hebrew infant.

Act 7:22 *And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.*

This information is new. This is not found in the Exodus account. Moses was well-trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. This did not mean that he majored in philosophy, but that he was taught a variety of subjects, which likely included geography, history, languages and war theory. Moses was raised as if he might become pharaoh one day.

### **Moses Flees to Midian** (headings come from the NKJV Bible)

Moses had been taken in by the Pharaoh's daughter when he was an infant; and she adopted him. Logically, he would have been raised to become Pharaoh at some point in time. He would have received all of the training and preparation that any royal male child would have received, with the thought that, he might become Pharaoh someday. Whatever training took place is all passed over in the Exodus text, but recounted by Stephen 1500 years later. We may assume that there were traditions of Moses' upbringing, perhaps additional texts or commentary; or that Stephen is speaking inspired by God the Holy Spirit, providing this additional information (I believe that it is one of the first two).

We now move ahead in time when Moses is around 40 years old.

Exodus 2:11a *Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens.*

The phrase *now it came to pass in those days* is literally, *And so it is in those days...* Without a specific subject and object, the verb *hâyâh* often means *and it will come to be, and it will come to pass, then it came to pass* (with the *wâw* consecutive). It may be more idiomatically rendered *subsequently, afterwards, later on, in the course of time, after which*. Generally, the verb does not match the gender whatever nearby noun could be the subject

(and, as often, there is no noun nearby which would fulfill the conditions of being a subject).

Moses apparently knew of his origin—at least enough of it to know that he was a Hebrew (the circumcision would have differentiated him from Egyptian children). It is very likely that he knew what his name meant; and he knew pretty much exactly what happened. I do not doubt that his adoptive mother told him about how he came to be her son many, many times.

Furthermore, even though he is adopted into the royal family, it is apparent that he will know his actual brother and sister (based on information which we will study later). The extent to which he knows them is unclear.

So, Moses grows up into full adulthood, carefully trained and education to become the next pharaoh. For whatever reason, he decides to go out and see what is going on with his brothers (fellow Hebrews), who are enslaved to Egypt. No doubt, he has lived somewhat of a sheltered existence, with an emphasis upon a royal education. No doubt, he knew history, geography, languages; and that he had physical and military training. But Moses would also have had some understanding of his own origins (I believe a full understanding of them). So here he is, about 40 years old, and he has (apparently) never ventured out among the Hebrew people. Or, if he had gone out among his people before, nothing really came of it.

How does this happen? How does Moses turn 40 without going out among the Hebrew people? Moses is raised under great discipline and structure; with a strong emphasis upon his education. Given that he will write and sing a song later in this book suggests that Moses probably had some musical training as well. His existence would have been somewhat isolated and posh. He would have known about the Hebrew slaves, from whom he was taken; but he may not have had any burning desire to get out there to know them. After all, as the son of the daughter of the Pharaoh, he enjoyed a wonderful upbringing, which included intensive training.

Furthermore, each one of us is born into a specific environment, which we begin to have memories of somewhere between the ages of 2 and 4. We simply accept that environment and the norms and standards of that environment. For many years, in fact, we simply assume that this is the way things *ought* to be. Moses would have been raised apart from the Hebrew people. He would have had contact, possibly, with some Hebrew slaves who worked at the royal palace—perhaps, even those who tutored him. But there is no indication of any further contact with his birth family.

We do not know when (or how) Moses became fully aware that he was of a Jewish heritage, when (or why) he decided to take a walk out among his people; or even if this is the first time that he does this. About the only question above that we can reasonably answer is, his adopted mother told him of his heritage; which included his specific family (which family she came to know when Moses was very young). Given his name, Moses had to know.

I would guess that, at a certain point, once Moses was weaned, that he no longer had contact with his Jewish family—something either required from his adoptive mother or from his grandfather). All of this is conjecture on my part, based upon the little that we know about Moses' youth.<sup>28</sup>

Exodus 2:11 Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.

Although the NKJV is an excellent translation, now and again, they miss the mark. Why do they use the word *brethren* right here? Why did they not update this to *brother* or *brothers*?

One of the things which catches Moses' eye is, he see an Egyptian beating a Hebrew man, and this bothers Moses greatly. Given that the Egyptian is in charge of so many men; and given that the Hebrew man is a slave; such a beating was probably common, so that order might be maintained among the slaves. However, this could not have been pleasant to Moses, recognizing that, he is uniquely related to that slave being beaten. The man being beaten was of his family—not immediate family, but this was a man he was related to. Let me suggest that Moses had not been acquainted with the true ugliness of slavery.

Sometimes seeing how things really are can be quite affecting. Even though Moses was raised among the Egyptians, seeing an Egyptian beat a Hebrew affected him. Although Moses no doubt had interactions with slaves (perhaps Hebrew slaves, perhaps not), he would be exposed to the best of slaves, so that little or no discipline was required (being a slave in the royal palace would have been the A #1 best gig for any slave).

Moses would have not necessarily been familiar with the inhumanity of slavery. So, Moses sees this beating, which probably shocks him; and it is all based upon these Hebrews—his relatives—being slaves to the Egyptians.

One way a movie or a television show draws us in is, they have one or more characters that we identify with or sympathize with, so that we are concerned with their lives and what happens to them. In this real life situation, Moses identified and sympathized with the beaten man; not with the Egyptian taskmaster—despite his upbringing as Egyptian royalty. Let me suggest that this was a very serious beat down, and the Hebrew man no doubt suffered great physical damage.

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**Lesson 014: Exodus 2:11–13 Heb. 11:24–26      Messiah to the Early Hebrews**

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Moses is now about 40 years old and he decides to go out among his people, the Hebrews. He knows that he was originally a Hebrew, but brought up by his adoptive

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<sup>28</sup> All I am doing is asking, *what sort of a backstory makes sense and does not contradict what we know about Moses?*

Egyptian mother, the daughter of Pharaoh. Moses has no doubt learned some history of his people. There has to be at least an *official* history of them presented from the Egyptian point of view. Given the general intelligence of the Hebrew people, it is my guess that perhaps Moses even had a Hebrew tutor for some subjects, and it is what he said that helped to motivate Moses (this is conjecture on my part).

Exodus 2:11 [Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.](#)

Moses had not seen the ugly part of slavery. In the palace, the slaves there would have been erudite, cooperative, and happy to have that position. But, when it came to Pharaoh's building projects, those Hebrews were not nearly as happy about what they were doing. Therefore, sometimes a Hebrew slave needed to be beaten down to show him his place. Moses observed this and found himself sympathizing with the Hebrew slave rather than identifying with the Egyptian taskmaster, who was maintaining discipline and order.

Exodus 2:12 [So he \[Moses\] looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.](#)

Moses looks around, and, seeing no one, he kills the Egyptian and apparently buries him in the sand. Moses assumes that he is being quite surreptitious here. Although he believes that no one has seen him, people not only have seen him, but they know who he is and who the taskmaster is.

We do not know if Moses was observed; or whether the beaten Hebrew man knew who Moses was and told others about him.

I am reminded of Jesus, when He healed a man from leprosy, and then, afterwards, charged the man not to tell anyone (Mark 1:41–44). Maybe there are times for you (or me) when we should keep our mouths shut.

Exodus 2:13 [And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, "Why are you striking your companion?"](#)

So Moses goes out the second day, and he comes across two Hebrew men in a fight.

Moses feels a kinship with his fellow Hebrews, and so he is confused when he finds two Hebrews fighting with one another. He asks them why are they fighting. It is apparent that one man is the initiator here.

Before moving forward in this narrative, let's look at this history that we have been studying from a New Testament perspective. This will lead us into a study of the Messiah as understood by Moses' generation.

Heb. 11:24–25 **By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.** (The ESV; capitalized is used throughout)

Let me suggest that there are some additional details here, more than what we studied in Exodus. Moses, as a royal son, would have studied languages, history and geography—certainly from the Egyptian point of view. Let me suggest that Moses, perhaps, was taught by a Hebrew tutor, who at Moses' insistence, gave Moses the true background of his own people. Although this is conjecture on my part, it logically fills in much of the backstory of Moses in the palace of Pharaoh.

We know that Moses was raised up in the palace of Pharaoh (Exodus 2:10) and educated there (Acts 7:22); and that something led him out among the Hebrew people (Exodus 2:11 Acts 7:23). How or why that came about is not revealed to us. I would suggest that Moses heard the non-Egyptian historical perspective. Was this from a Jewish tutor? Did Moses get a copy of Genesis (which he was able to read)? We don't know exactly what took place, but I believe that it was related to Moses' education and the Scriptures, as they existed at that time (likely, the books of Genesis or Job).

What the writer of Hebrews is telling us is, as an adult, Moses identified with the Hebrew people to the point where he took the side of a Hebrew slave against his Egyptian taskmaster who was beating him. *Enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin* would mean that Moses would accept his lot in life as an Egyptian, and turn his back on this Hebrew slave.

Heb 11:26 **He [Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.**

Now, this may seem weird to you that Moses would have considered anything about Jesus Christ back 1500 years prior to these words written by the author of Hebrews; so, how do we make sense of this? The word used here is: *Christ*; which is the Greek word for *Messiah*. This suggests that the Hebrew understanding of the Messiah goes way, way back. This suggests that Moses had some understanding of the Messiah back then—even as a son of the Pharaoh's daughter. This suggests that the Hebrew people had an understanding of the Messiah which goes all the way back to nearly their beginnings.

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We should know that Jesus was descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (like all Hebrews), and He specifically came from the tribe of Judah (which eventually became the ruling tribe—but it was not so recognized by Moses during this time period).

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As we study this, we should bear in mind that the Scriptures reveal God and His plan progressively. Someone who has read and understood the book of Genesis understands a great deal of information; but if that same person reads and understands Job, then he knows a great deal more.

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The ESV; capitalized is used below, unless otherwise noted.

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## The Messiah of the Early Hebrew People

1. The prophecy of the Messiah goes all the way back to Gen. 3:15. God is speaking to the serpent, after the fall of Adam) "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring [lit., seed]; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."
  - 1) It is a very odd thing indeed to speak of the seed of the woman, as it is only the seed of the men which was recognized (which is planted in the woman).
  - 2) God here speaks of the serpent's seed and of the woman's seed—both references are quite extraordinary.
  - 3) Messiah would be born of the woman alone—which is not something that anyone in that era would have fully understood. Despite the hundreds of prophecies found in the Old Testament, let me suggest that the Hebrew understanding of Messiah was always somewhat murky.
  - 4) The woman's Seed would bruise (crush) the head of the serpent (a deadly blow); and the serpent would bruise the heel of the woman's Seed (not a deadly blow).
  - 5) In that era, they would have known the Messiah would be the woman's seed (whatever that means) and that He would crush the serpent who tempted the woman.
  - 6) Today, we understand this as the final conflict between Jesus and Satan.
2. Abraham has an encounter with Melchizedek after defeating an alliance of kings. Gen. 14:18–20 **And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.** Melchizedek is not the Messiah; but he is typical of Messiah. At this time, I honestly do not know if this was well understood or even slightly understood among the Hebrew people or Hebrew theologians. It is my opinion that we today understand that Melchizedek is a type of Christ; then, this would not have been understood.
3. There are many prophecies about Abraham and his seed. I believe that some of these prophecies may be seen in two ways (or have, if you will, a double fulfillment).
  - 1) God tells Abraham that He would give this Land of Promise to his seed. Quite obviously, this refers to Abraham's descendants, who would live on this land for many centuries; but, ultimately, Jesus Christ, the Seed of Abraham, would rule over this land from Jerusalem. Gen. 12:7 13:15 15:18
  - 2) God's covenant is made with Abraham's descendants; but we may also read the same passages and understand this to be a specific descendant of Abraham's—namely, the Messiah. Gen. 17:19
  - 3) It is also clear that, many references to Abraham's seed specifically refer to his descendants. God said that He would make Abraham's seed as the dust of the earth or as the stars of the sky—that clearly refers to

## The Messiah of the Early Hebrew People

- Abraham's descendants and not to Messiah. Gen. 13:16 15:5 16:10 35:12
- 4) Abraham's seed would be a stranger in a strange land, referring to the descendants of Abraham living in Egypt. Gen. 15:13 32:12
  - 5) There are many times that related pronouns which are in the plural but referring back to the word *seed* are clearly a reference to Abraham's descendants. Gen. 17:8–9
  - 6) Paul makes an interesting argument in Gal. 3:16 **But the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his Seed (it does not say, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," which is Christ).** *Genesis 3:15; 21:12; 22:18, Rom. 9:6; Heb. 11:18 (LitV).*
    - (1) All of these passages have *seed* in the singular.
    - (2) Some of those passages clearly refer to the Hebrew people.
    - (3) However, Paul's point is, there are times when this refers to Christ (the Messiah).
4. Abraham met with God and 3 angels prior to the birth of his son Isaac. I doubt that a Theophany was understood to be the Messiah. Gen. 18
  5. There are similar promises made to Isaac and to Jacob concerning their seed:
    - 1) There are times when a passage may be interpreted in two ways. Gen. 24:7, 60 26:3 28:13
    - 2) And there are passages where this clearly refers to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: Gen. 26:4 28:14
  6. Jacob made the marvelous prophecy/end-of-life blessing of/to his sons, which included these words directed to Judah: **"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawmaker from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and the obedience of the peoples to him [or, *Him*]."** (Gen 49:10)
    - 1) Judah, who is not the firstborn, would become the ruling tribe of Israel; and this rulership would not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes. Many understand Shiloh to be a reference to the Messiah.
    - 2) Shîylôh (שִׁילֹה) [pronounced *shee-LOW*] means, *he whose it is, that which belongs to him; tranquility* (meanings uncertain); transliterated *Shiloh*; possibly a reference to Messiah. Strong's #7886 BDB #1010.
    - 3) The people would be obedient to Judah (to whom this blessing is addressed) and also to Shiloh.
    - 4) A brilliant theologian in that era would have understood from this that Judah would become the ruling tribe and that Messiah would come from his tribe.
  7. Interestingly enough, even though there are numerous mentions of Abraham and his seed; we do not find any similar references to Moses (*we never hear about Moses and his seed*). Abraham is the father of the Hebrew people; Moses is the father of the Hebrew nation. The Messiah will not be descended from Moses.
  8. In what we find in these passages in Genesis is not enough information to support Moses choosing the Messiah (as we understand the Messiah) over the treasures of Egypt, as we find stated in Heb. 11:26.

## The Messiah of the Early Hebrew People

9. Job, on the other hand, provides a rather complex view of Messiah, in the most amazing chapter Job 19:
  - 1) Job speaks of the harm brought against him by God: “God has put me in the wrong and closed his net about me. Behold, I cry out, 'Violence!' but I am not answered; I call for help, but there is no justice. He has walled up my way, so that I cannot pass, and he has set darkness upon my paths. He has stripped from me my glory and taken the crown from my head...He has kindled his wrath against me and counts me as his adversary...He has put my brothers far from me, and those who knew me are wholly...All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved have turned against me. estranged from me...Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me! Why do you, like God, pursue me? Why are you not satisfied with my flesh?” (Job 19:6–9, 11, 13, 19, 21–22)
  - 2) In that description, Job is describing himself, and the pain and suffering that he has endured. However, you could go back and capitalize each and every *Me*, and it is Jesus Christ, Jesus the Messiah, describing His Own pain, where God the Father has laid upon Him, God the Son, the penalty for our sins.
  - 3) And after all of that, Job makes the wonderful proclamation: “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!” (Job 19:25–27)
  - 4) His Redeemer is the Lord, Who will stand upon the earth. The Redeemer pays for him; the Redeemer purchases Job!
  - 5) Given Job’s age in the book of Job, and that there is no mention of the Law; it is reasonable to suggest that Job lived around the time of Abraham, give or take a generation or two.
10. Moses also speaks of the Messiah (this is future from our narrative):
  - 1) Even though the slain lamb for each family during the Passover speaks of Jesus, the people of Israel would not have understood this. Exodus 12
  - 2) The most famous testimony that Moses gave of Messiah is found in Deut. 18:15–16 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to Him you shall listen—just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' ” (Exodus 20:19)
  - 3) Moses does *not* prophesy about his *seed*; but about a *prophet* like himself.
  - 4) God’s prophecies of Messiah for Eve (Adam’s woman) and for Abraham are all about the word *seed*; but Messiah will not be from Moses’ seed (Moses is a Levite; Jesus is from the tribe of Judah). Jesus will be raised up from among Moses’ brothers.
  - 5) As an aside, it is remarkable that the people of Moses could not listen

## The Messiah of the Early Hebrew People

directly to the words of God (see Exodus 20:18–19); but they will hear the words of Jesus (some will accept those words and some will not). You may recall that He often spoke in parables in order to be heard.

11. Balaam's testimony to Balak was of the Messiah—something that Moses was somehow aware of (as this is recorded by Moses). Num. 24:15b–17 “The saying of Balaam the son of Beor, and the saying of the man whose eyes are opened; the saying of him who hears the bulls of God, and he knowing the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down, yet with open eyes: I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not near. A star marches out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel and shall dash the corners of Moab, and break down all the sons of tumult.”
12. Even though Moses did understand that God would raise up the Messiah (Moses called Him, *a prophet like me*); I think that we need to adjust our interpretation of what the author of Hebrews is saying (Heb 11:26 **He [Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.**). I don't necessarily think that Moses was thinking about the Messiah at this point in time and chose Him over the wealth of Egypt. I think *Hebrews* is saying that Moses eventually chose God over a high political position in Egypt. A series of events and a series of decisions made by Moses led him to the point of choosing God over a high position in Egypt.
13. Perhaps we should understand this as also meaning, the author of Hebrews is saying that Messiah is God.

We must certainly bear in mind that what I have pulled together here still rests, to some degree, on hindsight. I would suggest that even Moses did not have half this amount of insight on Messiah.

I realize that this was a long way to explain an interpretation; but, unless there was more information about Messiah that Moses knew, but is not found in Genesis (or Job); then I believe the more general interpretation which I expressed is the accurate view.

### Lesson 015: Heb. 11:24–27 Acts 7:20–29 New Testament on Moses Leaving Egypt

We previously stopped at a difficult verse in Hebrews to explain it. We are looking at a portion of the history of Exodus 2:11–3:10 in the New Testament, with the emphasis being on the end of chapter 2. However, these two passages in the New Testament also take into account Moses' actions far later, compressing his life events in Exodus 2 with those when he actually confronts Pharaoh (which we have not covered yet).

Heb. 11:24–25 **By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.** (The ESV; capitalized is used throughout)

The writer of Hebrews and Saint Stephen both give a lot of Old Testament history, but they tend to abbreviate that history somewhat, in order that their point not be lost in a long historical narration. Neither person covers in great detail each and every event of Moses' life. Neither person covers every historical verse on Moses.

Reread the passage in Hebrews, and then know this: Moses did not, at age 40, say to himself, "I am going to go out and live with the Hebrew people and forsake the palace of Pharaoh. I will become a slave along side of my people." He did not do that. But, he did have a strong identification with the Hebrew people, and he did go out among them. Moses did not need to do that. He did not need to go out among the Hebrew slaves of the Egyptians. This does not mean that, the moment Moses stepped into the realm of the Hebrew slaves that he renounced his life as an Egyptian and said, "Listen, I am never going back to the palace." Because, apparently between Exodus 2:12 and 2:13, he returned to the palace.<sup>29</sup>

The writer of Hebrews combines a number of events together—things which happened to Moses and decisions which he made—and presents them in summation. **By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.** There is nothing in Exodus 2 to suggest that this happened all at once. He went out among his people, took the side of a Hebrew slave over his master, and killed his Egyptian master. When Moses went out among the people the next day (presumably from the palace again), and spoke to two Hebrew slaves having an altercation. At that point, Moses finds out that his crime is not hidden, and he leaves Egypt. He is not leaving Egypt because he refuses to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he is not leaving Egypt to get away from enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin; he is leaving Egypt so that he will not be executed (Exodus 2:14–15a).

Now, what happens in Moses' life subsequently, leads him to lead the people of Jacob out of Egypt. This was not a singular decision or a singular event. His opposition to Pharaoh, to the Egyptians, as God's spokesman for the Hebrew people—this is Moses, who, by faith, no longer considers himself to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter; and he chooses to stand with the people of Jacob against the royalty of Egypt. Again, not a singular decision, nor a singular event; but a series of events and decisions which lead him to that place. All of it is summed up by the writer of Hebrews as if a singular event (the purpose of this author was not to confuse or mislead the reader, but to sum up Moses's history—which history nearly everyone in his audience of readers knows).

Heb. 11:24–25 **By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.**

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<sup>29</sup> One could certainly read that passage and suggest that he remained among the Hebrew people during the entire time.

So, over a period of time—beginning when Moses first stepped out among his people, the Hebrew slaves, and then taken in conjunction with Moses speaking in opposition to Pharaoh on behalf of God and behalf of his people the Hebrews—**Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter**, but he stood in opposition to Pharaoh, **choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.**

This was not a one-shot decision, but a series of decisions combined with a series of events. We can historically examine this by each decision and each event, or we can look at what Moses chose to do, over a period of time, in terms of its final results. That is the way that the writer of Hebrews presented this information.

Heb 11:26 **He [Moses] considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.**

We studied the concept of the Messiah (= the Christ) previously. I believe that Moses had some understanding of the Hebrew Messiah. In our study, it is clear that his understanding could not have been extensive. He may have known Messiah as the Seed of the Woman, Who would crush the head of the serpent, and Who would proceed from the tribe of Jacob (Moses is from the tribe of Levi). Did Moses understand that the burning bush of Exodus 3 to be Messiah? I doubt that He did. But God the Holy Spirit knows this; and so, that is reflected in the Scriptures (Moses being the human author of those Scriptures).

Once Moses developed some trust in God, *he considered the reproach of God of greater value than the treasures of Egypt; and that his value in life would be to follow God.* Do you see how that is very much what Heb. 11:26 says? The only difference is, the writer of Hebrews has the name/title *Christ* rather than *God*; but the Messiah is God! So the writer of Hebrews is taking information known about the history of Moses and infusing it with correct information about Messiah—that the Messiah is Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is God.

Heb 11:27 **By faith he [Moses] left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing Him Who is invisible.**

The writer of Hebrews, like Saint Stephen, abbreviates the history. We have to unpack and un-abbreviate it, so that we do not misinterpret the writer's words. We should not understand the writer of Hebrews to present a study of Moses than can be laid side-by-side this same set of verses in the Old Testament. It was not the point of the writer of Hebrews to present the entire history of Moses and Pharaoh; the writer of Hebrews is making a point about faith and how Moses exercised faith in God, and this led him to take certain positions and to act on these decisions. That is what this whole *faith* chapter is all about.

Even though exercising faith in Jesus Christ is an initial decision which places us into Christ, with an unbreakable relationship to Jesus Christ; this is not the only time that we will exercise faith in our lives; nor is our faith necessarily static. As we grow spiritually (if we grow spiritually), our faith in God and God's plan becomes greater.

At the beginning, Moses left Egypt because he was afraid of the anger of the king of Egypt (Exodus 2:14–15). And, 40 years after leaving Egypt, Moses was, at first, was reticent to speak for God in front of the king because he believed his ability to speak to be not on par with what God was telling him to do (we have yet to study that).

However, at some point, in these 10 confrontations with Pharaoh, Moses developed great confidence in speaking to the king of Egypt. At some point, Moses went boldly before Pharaoh's throne during the final warnings of plagues to come. Moses was no longer in fear of Pharaoh; he was, instead, in awe of God.

Moses was unable to see God, only the manifestations of God (the burning bush, for instance). Moses will later be able to sort of see God, when he is in the cleft of the rock (Rock). Moses saw manifestations of God, Who is invisible.

Now let's allow Saint Stephen to review us of what we have studied so far in Exodus 2:

Acts 7:23–25 "When he [Moses] was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand.

Both Stephen and the writer of Hebrews abbreviate the history of Moses, so we interpret their words in light of this entire episode. V. 25 is quite interesting about God giving the Hebrew people salvation by Moses' hand—is Stephen placing this within this time frame, or is he looking further down the road?

Acts 7:26–28 And on the following day he [Moses] appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?' But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'

At this point, we might want to break this passage down more carefully.

Saint Stephen actually describes this same incident, adding a few details not found in Exodus (which is by means of the power of the Spirit). Stephen goes back to the birth of Moses. All of what follows are the words of Saint Stephen, and so should be understood to be a long quotation. The text is from the ESV; capitalized.

We go through this passage again, but with more detail.

## The parallel passage in Acts

| Scripture   | Text/Commentary   |
|---|---|
| Acts 7:20–21 <b>At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God's sight. And he was brought up for three months in his father's house, and when he was exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son.</b>  | Moses' parents had him, and kept him at home for 3 months. However, he had gotten to an age where, they could not hide him any more. There was an edict to drown all male Hebrew children at this time. His mother places him in a watertight basket, and places it in the Nile. The pharaoh's daughter found him and brought him up as her son.  |
| Quite obviously, Stephen has skipped over the part where Miriam, his older sister, follows him in the ark and offers to find a nursing Hebrew woman.  |   |
| Acts 7:22 <b>And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.</b>   | Moses was brought up with an excellent Egyptian education. He would have been brought up as a potential pharaoh. Therefore, he needed to know history, languages, geography and politics. Being mighty in words and deeds suggests that he was strong in academics and in athletics.  |
| Acts 7:23–24 <b>When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian.</b>   | Moses apparently knew of his origins <sup>30</sup> and, at age 40, went out among the Hebrew slaves. When he saw a Hebrew brother being beaten, Moses defended him, killing the Egyptian. He hid the body of the Egyptian, believing that no one saw what he had done. He thought that this would be the end of it.   |
| Acts 7:25 <b>He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand.</b>  | <p>Saint Stephen may be speaking on two levels here. (1) Moses assumed that other Hebrews would understand that he was simply defending this Hebrew man against such cruel treatment. But, apparently, they did not understand that.</p> <p>(2) In addition to this, Moses would eventually deliver them as a people, with God using him—but they would not fully appreciate that either.</p> |
| Saint Stephen is making a very important point here. Moses is God's man. Every Jew in his audience understands that. Moses saw manifestations of God, God worked through Moses, and Moses let the Hebrew people out of Egypt. Every person listening to Saint Stephen understands and believes all of that. |   |

<sup>30</sup> I have speculated that this was the result of having a Hebrew tutor for some subjects.

## The parallel passage in Acts

### Scripture

### Text/Commentary

However, the Hebrew people at that time did not appreciate Moses; nor did they understand his actions. In that one case of protecting the Hebrew slave, the Hebrew people used that against Moses. They did not appreciate that Moses was delivering that man.

Furthermore, we will study in the future Moses leading the Hebrew people out of Egypt and it is going to be quite clear that they do not understand or appreciate what Moses is doing by giving them this deliverance from Egypt.

This is Saint Stephen's brilliant, yet unstated point: "Some of you in the audience do not recognize that God, by the hand of Jesus, has given you salvation. We are all familiar with the hard-hearted generation that Moses led out of the desert—well, if you have rejected Jesus, you are just like them!"

Perhaps you have had the experience of speaking with someone or hearing a speaker deliver a message, but you did not fully appreciate what that person said until a few hours (or days) later. Then you say to yourself, "Oh, I get it now!"

That is how Saint Stephen was speaking to his audience. Furthermore, this was a very big point made by the early evangelists—they speak of the Exodus generation on many occasions and how much they resisted God and resisted Moses. Their whole point was, many in their audience (or those hearing their epistles being read) are just like the Exodus generation. They hear the truth of God, and yet, they reject it. They are hard-headed like their fathers.

Acts 7:26 **And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?'**

Moses goes out the next day, and he tries to intervene in a quarrel between two Hebrew men. He asks them why they are at odds with one another. This strikes Moses as odd. He understood altercations between slaves and their masters; but not between two slaves who were *brothers*. Oh brother, did he have a lot to learn!

Acts 7:27–28 **But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?'**

The aggressor appears to push Moses out of the way. The quote is almost exactly from the original Hebrew text. The aggressor demands of Moses, "Just who do you think you are? Are you doing to kill me like you killed the Egyptian yesterday?"

The aggressor is telling Moses, "You don't get to judge me; you don't get to tell me to back off. And if you try it, then this is what I know about you!"

## The parallel passage in Acts

### Scripture

Acts 7:29 **At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.**

### Text/Commentary

When Moses realizes that his actions are known, he does a runner, going to Midian. In Midian, Moses would meet his future wife and future father-in-law (he will get along best with the latter).

It is clear that Saint Stephen had some additional information, beyond the Biblical text which we work from.

## Lesson 016: Exodus 2:13–15b

## Moses Flees to Midian

On the first day that Moses went out among his people, he killed an Egyptian taskmaster because the taskmaster (slave driver) was giving a beat-down to a Hebrew slave. Moses hides the body, believing that he secretly killed this man.

**Moses Kills the Egyptian** (1873 by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld) (a graphic); from [Villains Wikia.com](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses_kills_the_Egyptian); accessed June 26, 2018.

On the second day, Moses finds out that this is known among the Hebrew slaves. However, Moses is not seen as a great liberator or a defender of his people.

Exodus 2:13 **And when he [Moses] went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, “Why are you striking your companion?”**



Moses goes out among the people on the second day, and he finds out that he has been found out. Some folks know who he is and what he did.

Exodus 2:14a **Then he said, “Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?”**

The aggressor questions Moses. “Who gave to the authority to rule over us? Do you intend to execute me as you did the Egyptian?”

The aggressor is telling Moses, “I know who you are and I know what you did.” The implication is, he will use this information against Moses if necessary.

This surprises Moses. He thought that he had killed that Egyptian in secret; and that, even if the body was found, it would not be traced back to him. Now he finds out that this is not the case; and that even these two random guys know about what he did.

Exodus 2:14b [So Moses feared...](#)

Moses was suddenly taken back. Being so recognized was unexpected. He had no idea that anyone else knew about this. Now he asks himself this question: *if this random Hebrew bully knew what he did, then many other people also knew about what happened?*

Exodus 2:14c [...and said, “Surely this thing is known!”](#)

Moses is not saying this aloud; this is what he is thinking (the word for *said* can also mean *think*). He has committed a murder; and it is apparent that many people know about it. Moses quickly reviews his options in life.

Exodus 2:15a [When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses.](#)

We do not know how Pharaoh found out about this. Did the man that Moses questioned decide, “If you are going to interfere with my business, then I will interfere with yours”? And so he told Pharaoh (or perhaps a taskmaster who told Pharaoh). Or was this so well known that the information finally came to Pharaoh? This information appears to have traveled very quickly, so I would guess that someone hurriedly reported this incident to Pharaoh.

Throughout the Old Testament, we simply have the title *Pharaoh*. Nearly 40 years have passed since Moses was born. He was raised up in the palace as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. This Pharaoh in v. 15 would not be the Pharaoh who gave in to his daughter to allow her to raise Moses. This Pharaoh was likely a contemporary of Moses and it is very likely that he saw Moses as a rival for the throne. This killing gave Pharaoh the opportunity to dispose of his rival legally and legitimately. All of this is logical deduction (given the age of Moses’ adoptive mother and the age of her father), but it is not stated explicitly in Scripture.

In the land of Egypt, and for the surrounding lands, there is no more important and powerful a figure than Pharaoh—but, in the Bible, during the early history of Israel, his birth name is never given. He is simply called Pharaoh (pharaohs’ names will be named in Kings, Chronicles and Jeremiah—1Kings 11:40 14:25 2Kings 17:4 19:9<sup>31</sup> 23:29

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<sup>31</sup> King of Cush.

2Chron. 12:2, 9 35:20 Jer. 44:30 46:2). As I have mentioned earlier, we know the names of the midwives in Exodus because they feared God; we do not know the names of the pharaohs, as they did not.

During this narrative, there are a number of things that occurred about the same time. Moses tries to break up a fight; he realizes that it is known that he killed the Egyptian; and Pharaoh hears of the matter (there would certainly be informants among the Hebrews).

Exodus 2:15b [But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh...](#)

It seems reasonable that, after Moses broke up the fight, he may have made himself scarce, listened to find out what was going on, realized that Pharaoh knew and would pursue him for the crime of homicide. Therefore, Moses fled. However, it is possible that Moses simply fled, and Pharaoh found out about it afterwards. There is first a missing taskmaster; and then Moses comes up missing—and an investigation is launched knowing these two things. Moses' crime and his disappearance would have been known by Pharaoh around the same time—no idea which is known first.

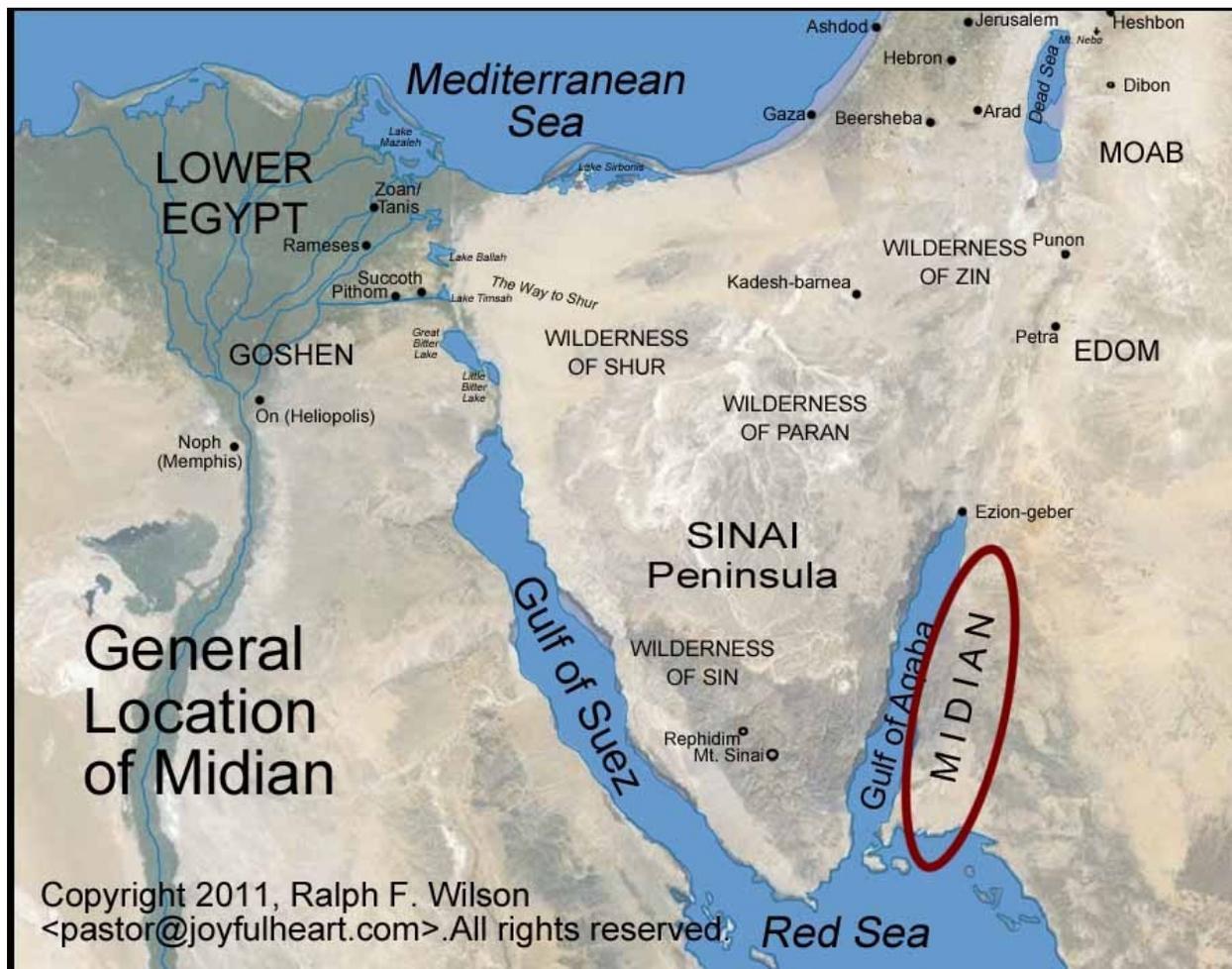
It is reasonable to suppose that Moses was being prepared to be the king's successor. In retrospect, we know that he is a genius and a serious man. Apart from this crime, he probably showed the most inherent talent and abilities in the palace.

Exodus 2:15b-c [But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian;...](#)

In preparation to become Pharaoh, Moses would have studied geography, languages, history, international relations, and a variety of other subjects, with the best education available to a person in his time. For this reason, it is unlikely that Moses simply fled aimlessly, but that he determined what his various options were, the relationship between Egypt and the other countries, and chose the place where he would have been least likely to be found. Moses fled to the land of Midian. There were two significant bodies of water between Egypt and Midian—the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba.

Perhaps of the neighboring countries, Midian was the least like Egypt. Or, perhaps Moses knew that it would be easy to disappear there. Moses would have known the political connections between Egypt and Midian, he would know how to get to Midian, and he would know enough about Midian to figure out what to do when he got there.

**Map of Egypt and Midian;** taken from [danasoki.top](http://danasoki.top); accessed May 11, 2016.



Exodus 2:15b-c But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian;...

Moses has fled Egypt. He killed an Egyptian taskmaster there, and there is a warrant out for his arrest. When his crime was clearly known, Moses acted quickly, and left his life in Egypt behind.

Exodus 2:15d ...and he [Moses] sat down by a well.

What a person needs, when walking through the desert-wilderness, is water. It would be very natural for Moses to stop and take a rest next to a well.

Interestingly enough, there is a passage where Jesus sits down by a well—and He is also outside of the land and among the gentiles. John 4:4–6 And He had to pass through Samaria. So He came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as He was from His

journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. This is where He teaches the gentile woman that He provides the drink that one will never thirst again after drinking.

Moses is now among the gentiles, sitting down by a well; and he will meet his future wife here. If you will recall, Jacob met his future wife at a well as well. Perhaps this is the ancient singles' scene or simply a common place to socialize.

It is my opinion that Moses had a plan which took him to Midian. At Midian he would regroup and consider his options. Since he is only a few days in travel, Moses will look like an Egyptian to any people that he meets.

### **Lessons 017–019: Exodus 2:16a Mt. 16:15–19 Heb. 4:14-16 The Priesthood in a New Era**

At this time in our narrative, Moses has escaped from Egypt and is now in Midian, which is a very rural area with an undetermined governmental authority. He has taken a break from his escape and is sitting by a well.

Exodus 2:16a *Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters.*

Although the NKJV reads *the priest of Midian*; this is actually *a priest of Midian* in the Hebrew. There is no definite article here. Before the Law of Moses, there was a legitimate priesthood, some of whom may be found in the book of Genesis. The pre-Israelic priesthood goes relatively undefined for that era, prior to the giving of the Law. These does not mean that there were no customs or that his duties were undefined; it simply means that we do not have a full delineation of such duties. However, we know enough about the priestly duties from the book of Leviticus to be able to project backwards.

In any case, there is something which needs to be pointed out: throughout the Bible, priests are married and they have children (no matter which era we are speaking of). These are men whose lives are dedicated to God *and* they are married with children. There is a passage where the Apostle Paul says that he has the right to lead around a wife, as Peter does (1Cor. 9:5). Furthermore, there is no passage which specifically links a priest to celibacy (some *Christian* religions view priests as a special class of believers who are celibate).

As an aside, there are several *Christian* denominations who have a confused view of the priesthood: Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy; Anglican or Episcopalian; Methodism; and the Latter Day Saints.

I use the descriptive term *Christian* not so much to speak of Jesus Christ or a legitimate churches; but simply to describe churches which see themselves as related to Jesus Christ.

Martin Luther attempted to change these false views of the priesthood.

## Christian Traditions Regarding Priests

| Group                                   | Their traditions for the priesthood   |
|---|---|
| Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy | <i>In neither tradition may priests marry after ordination. In the Roman Catholic Church, priests in the Latin Rite, which covers the vast majority of Roman Catholicism, must be celibate except under special rules for married clergy converting from certain other Christian confessions. Married men may become priests in Eastern Orthodoxy and the Eastern Catholic Churches, but in neither case may they marry after ordination, even if they become widowed. Candidates for bishop are chosen only from among the celibate.</i>   |
| Anglican or Episcopalian                | <i>The role of a priest in the Anglican Communion is largely the same as within the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Christianity...Whilst Anglican priests who are members of religious orders must remain celibate (although there are exceptions, such as priests in the Anglican Order of Cistercians), the secular clergy—bishops, priests, and deacons who are not members of religious orders—are permitted to marry before or after ordination...[but] Most Continuing Anglican churches do not ordain women to the priesthood.</i>  |
| Methodism                               | <i>Clergy in The United Methodist Church are individuals who serve as commissioned ministers, deacons, elders, and local pastors under appointment of a bishop (full- and part-time), who hold membership in an annual conference, and who are commissioned, ordained, or licensed. The word clergy comes from the Latin clericus, meaning priest.<sup>32</sup></i>   |
| The Latter Day Saints (Mormons)         | <i>In the Latter Day Saint movement, the priesthood is the power and authority of God given to man, including the authority to perform ordinances and to act as a leader in the church. A body of priesthood holders is referred to as a quorum. Priesthood denotes elements of both power and authority. The priesthood includes the power Jesus gave his apostles to perform miracles such as the casting out of devils and the healing of sick (Luke 9:1)... There is some variation among the Latter Day Saint denomination regarding who can be ordained to the priesthood. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church), all worthy males above the age of 12 can be ordained to the priesthood.</i> |

<sup>32</sup> From <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/glossary-clergy> accessed July 24, 2018.

## Christian Traditions Regarding Priests

| Group       | Their traditions for the priesthood   |
|-------------|---|
| Lutheranism | <p><i>The general priesthood or the priesthood of all believers, is a Christian doctrine derived from several passages of the New Testament. It is a foundational concept of Protestantism. It is this doctrine that Martin Luther adduces in his 1520 To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation in order to dismiss the medieval Christian belief that Christians were to be divided into two classes: "spiritual" and "temporal" or non-spiritual.</i></p> <p><i>...[However.] Much of European Lutheranism follows the traditional Catholic governance of deacon, priest and bishop...In some Lutheran churches, ordained clergy are called priests as in Sweden and Finland, while in others the term pastor is preferred.</i></p> |

All of this information is not really necessary for Christian growth. However, for this study, I did not want anyone to think that I am going after the Catholic church in particular in these lessons. There are clearly some protestant denominations which misuse and even abuse the terms *priest* and *priesthood*.

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Except for the information on the Methodist priesthood, the other quotations are from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest> accessed July 24, 2018.

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Point in fact, the Levitical priesthood (the priesthood of the Age of Israel) was passed down from generation to generation, which means that the Old Testament priests of God *had* to marry and have children in order to continue the priesthood. A celibate priesthood would have ended the Levitical priesthood overnight.

The so-called priests in Catholicism deviate from Scriptures in many areas: (1) they do not marry (something which is *never* suggested for priests in the Bible); (2) they separate themselves from the world (the Apostles Paul and Peter were constantly out in the world, evangelizing, establishing churches, teaching in churches and writing letters to churches); (3) and the Catholic priests believe that they have this special status of being a priest, whereas, all believers in the Church Age are priests. (4) Furthermore, these Catholic priests somehow lay claim to being spiritually descended from Peter, but Saint Peter had a wife. And I am fully aware of the passage that Catholics point to, when claiming apostolic succession from Peter but, first of all, there is no apostolic succession; secondly, there were 12 Apostles, not one super special one (except, perhaps for Paul); and thirdly, the passage claimed by Catholic doctrine to represent apostolic succession doesn't. It is actually a play on words, which the Catholic interpretation ignores.

Allow me please to go off on a tangent here, and present that particular passage from the AUV:

Matt. 16:15 He [then] said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Jesus is speaking directly to Peter. Jesus is leading Peter in a specific direction. Jesus often taught His Own disciples by means of dialogue. Jesus would guide them towards the correct response. Often, when we come to a conclusion by means of our own thinking, that conclusion remains with us longer.

Matt. 16:16 **And Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ [i.e., God’s specially chosen one], the Son of the living God.”**

This is Peter’s great confession. He knows Who Jesus is. Jesus is the Christ (that is, *Jesus is the Messiah*); He is the Son of God. This is a marvelous revelation.

As an aside, *Jesus Christ* is not our Lord’s first and last name; but it is His given name (which means *savior*) and His prophetic title, *the Messiah*. It is actually quite humorous to hear critics refer to the LORD as *Jesus Christ*, because they are unknowingly acknowledging Him as Messiah when using those two names together.

Matt. 16:17 **Jesus replied, “Simon, son of Jonah, you are fortunate [indeed], for this [truth] was not revealed to you by human beings but [rather] by my Father who is in heaven.**

God the Father revealed this to Peter. Our understanding of that which is *truth* is revealed to us by God (in our age, by means of the Scriptures, as guided by a pastor-teacher and the Holy Spirit).

Jesus is not saying that God the Father spoke to Peter in a dream and told him this; but that Peter, based upon what he knew previously and what Jesus had taught him, that Jesus is the Christ. This knowledge is attributed to God the Father because God’s plan ultimately is from God the Father. It is in God’s plan for Peter to know this.

Matt. 16:18 **And I also tell you, [although] you are Peter [i.e., a stone], it is on this rock [i.e., the truth you have just confessed] that I will build my church and [not even] the gates of the unseen place of departed spirits will win out over it [i.e., all efforts to stamp out the church by killing Christians will fail].**

The AUV is very helpful to the average reader. We see that this is the play on words. Peter’s name, given him by the LORD, is Petros (πέτρος) [pronounced *PEHT-ross*]. His name means *stone, large stone, piece or fragment of a rock*; transliterated *Petros, Peter*. This is a *stone* a man might pick up and throw. This is not *Peter’s* original name, but one given him by Jesus (Peter’s name at birth was *Simon*; John 1:42 Matt. 10:2 Mark 3:16). Thayer, Zodhiates. Strong’s #4074.

Now, the church is *not* built upon Peter, but *upon his confession*; the church is built upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus (and our faith in Him) is the *Rock* (the solid foundation) upon which the church is built. That Rock is Jesus the Messiah—not Peter.

The word *rock* is *petra* (πέτρα) [pronounced *PEHT-ra*], which means *a rock, cliff or ledge; a projecting rock, crag, rocky ground; a rock, a large stone; metaphorically a man like a rock, by reason of his firmness and strength of soul*. Thayer, Zodhiates. Strong's #4073.

If the church was built upon *Peter*, then Jesus would have said, "Upon this *Petros* I will build My church." But the church is built upon Jesus Christ, Whom Peter has just confessed to be the Messiah, the Son of God. "Upon this *Petra* I will build My church," is what Jesus actually said. We find such plays upon language throughout the Bible; and employed by our LORD many times.

As an aside (another tangent), there is a great deal of discussion about the disciples and Jesus and what language did they speak. There is one faction which teaches that they all really spoke Aramaic, and not in Greek (the language of the New Testament). There is even a movie out where the disciples and Jesus are all speaking Aramaic and not Greek.

However, what we read here in this particular passage only makes sense in the Greek. Jesus here makes a distinction between *stone* (*petros*) and *rock* (*petra*), something which the Aramaic does *not* do. So, at least in this particular passage, Jesus is teaching Peter in the Greek. There are other clues that Jesus and the disciples spoke Greek. The fact that the Scriptures—particularly the epistles—are written in Greek, suggests that is the language which they all used. Secondly, when Aramaic words are found in the gospel, we often find them associated with the words, *which is translated* and then followed by *the Aramaic word*.

In any case, there is abundant Scripture to indicate that the Rock upon which the church is built is Christ Jesus. Matthew 21:42 Acts 4:11 1Peter 2:6–8. *Petra* is the sure foundation of Jesus Christ. See also Matt. 7:24–27, where the wise man builds his house upon a rock (*petra*), rather than upon sand.

Matt. 16:19 [And] I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven [i.e., for opening up the way into it]. And whatever [truth] you [and the other apostles. See 18:18] require [people to believe and practice] here on earth will have already been required of them [by God] in heaven. And whatever [truth] you do not require [of people] on earth, will not be required [by God] in heaven." (An Understandable Version)

Peter (and the rest of the disciples) will be teaching the fundamental doctrines of the church (Church Age doctrines); which are the doctrines to which we adhere. This doctrine was revealed to them by God. Almost everything that we know as believers in the Church Age is from the doctrines taught in the epistles, the letters written by Apostles to various churches.

The priest had a very specific purpose, which is carefully described in the Old Testament. Generally speaking, a priest represents man to God. In the Old Testament, a priest would offer up a sacrifice on behalf of an individual (or on behalf of a family). This man of a specialized priesthood was, in this way, representing these individuals before God. It was required by the Law of Moses that people bring these animal sacrifices (which represented

Jesus) to the priests (who also represented Jesus). Essentially, we are taught in the Old Testament that there *must be* a go-between man and God. In the new era, which began in Acts 2, we believers may now represent ourselves directly to God—because we are believer-priests. As believers, we have already gone through Jesus to obtain a relationship with God.

We do not travel somewhere and talk to a priest in order to speak to God. If you need to make a request of God or confess your sins, then you do this directly. You don't need to have a priest in front of you (or beside you in a booth); you don't need to be inside of a church or at some sort of sanctuary—you can be driving, you can be walking along the pathway, you can be shopping at a store, you can be at work, you can be studying the Bible at home—in any of those circumstances, you have immediate access to God (provided, of course, that you have first believed in Jesus Christ, Who has given you direct access to God).

Why did the priesthood change from the Old Testament to the New? The Old Testament priests were representative of Jesus. You had to go through them to get to God—there was no direct route for man to go to God. Now that Jesus has come, we believe in Him and we have direct access to God. He promised us, “**I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but through Me.**” (John 14:6) Jesus is our true High Priest (Heb. 4:14). Therefore, we no longer have any need to have human priests offer up sacrifices on our behalf, as Jesus is our sacrifice (Heb. 7:27 10:10–12, 18). We no longer offer up animal sacrifices *and* we no longer go to priests with these sacrifices. The priests were a *type* of Christ (that is, they represented Christ), but when the real thing has come, then there is no need anymore for the type. Consequently, in the Church Age, there are no animal sacrifices and there is no specialized priesthood to whom we take the animal sacrifices. There is not a New Testament priest who is some sort of a class A believer. In fact, it is misleading for any church to suggest too big of a distinction between clergy and laity. God has a plan for every believer; and this does not mean that every believer must be a pastor, a missionary or a deacon.

In fact, I am convinced that some believers do not pursue spiritual knowledge, worried that God is going to make them do something super religious at the end.

References to the priesthood in the New Testament epistles specifically apply to Christ Jesus or to the universal priesthood of the believer.

Heb 4:14 **Since then we [Christians] have [such] a great Head Priest, who has passed through the skies [i.e., ascended to heaven. See Acts 1:9], Jesus, the Son of God, we should remain true to our profession [of faith in Him].**

In the new era, there is no longer a succession of high priests, as found in the Old Testament. Our True High Priest is Jesus, the Son of God. Since every believer is *in Christ*, we have automatic access through Him to God the Father (Rom. 8:1–2 12:5 1Cor. 15:22 2Cor. 5:17 Eph. 1:3; compare John 14:6).

Heb 4:15 For we do not have a head priest who is incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but One [i.e., Jesus] who has been tempted in every way that we have, and yet without sinning.

Furthermore, Jesus, because He is a man, faced all of the temptations which we do, but without sinning.

Jesus is often referred to as a Mediator, because He may perfectly mediate between God and man, being equal to both parties. He is both fully man and fully God.

Heb 4:16 So, with confidence we should approach God's throne of unearned favor, so we can receive mercy and obtain that favor to help us when we need it. (AUV)

Some of us are more familiar with the KJV:

Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Because Jesus is in heaven, at the right hand of God the Father, we now have direct access to God, and we may go to Him—God the Father—for help when we need it. We no longer need to go through a priesthood as those in the Jewish Age had to. Instead, we go to the throne of God with boldness (the AUV, the NASB and the NIV use the word *confidence* here; the KJV uses the word *boldness*).

If you understand these passages, then it is clear that this is a place where denominations that teach a present-day specialized priesthood—where priests are separate from regular, everyday Christians—are clearly far off the mark.

Peter himself clears all of this up for us in 1Peter 2:9–10 **But you** [the people to whom Peter was writing, who are Jews and gentiles] **are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His Own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.** (ESV; capitalized; emphasis mine)

1Peter 2:9 **But you people are especially chosen [by God]; you are a royal body of priests; you are a nation especially set apart for God's use; you are a people who belong exclusively to God, that you may express the virtues of the One who called you out of darkness [i.e., of sin and error], and into His marvelous light [i.e., righteousness and truth].** (AUV; emphasis mine)

Read that as many times as you need to. Peter, writing to Jews and Gentiles, to those who have believed in Christ Jesus, says, *you are a royal body of priests.*

Do you see the great status change? In the Old Testament, the chosen race was the Jewish people; their priesthood (which was not royal) was passed along in the Levitical

family; and the holy nation was Israel in the Old Testament. That was *then*. Now, those to whom Peter wrote are the holy nation (those scattered about in **Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia**—1Peter 1:1b). The people for God's possession are now those who have believed in Jesus. Before, they were not a people; but now, they are God's people! From Pentecost and forward, believers are a *royal body of priests*.

What we want to take from these words of Peter is, he calls the people to whom he is writing *a royal priesthood*. He is not telling them that among them there is a new priesthood; or that some of them might attain to a status called the priesthood; but that they are, right now, *a royal priesthood*.

Even the priests who were descended from Aaron were not a royal priesthood. Judah was the royal family; a subset of the Levites were priests. But believers in Jesus Christ are *a royal priesthood*. If a Catholic ought to pay attention to anyone, it should be Peter and these are his words—you are a *royal priesthood*. If you have believed in Jesus Christ, then you are a priest. Therefore, you are able to represent yourself directly to God, and you are able to **go boldly before the throne of grace**. If you were raised a Catholic, ask yourself, who do you believe? Catholic doctrine or the very clear words of God? If you have sinned, where do you go? It is proper today to go boldly before the throne of grace to name those sins (1John 1:9). If you have a petition, where do you go? Boldly before the throne of grace to make your petitions known to Him (Philip. 4:6). There is no place in the plan of God for a specialized priesthood in the Church Age. Nowhere in the New Testament epistles are believers told, "Have you sinned? Go find a priest and tell him. Do you have a request for God? Go find a priest and tell him to make this request for you." That is *not* found in the teaching of the New Testament.

There is no longer a need for a specialized priesthood in the Church Age. Animal sacrifices were types; but now, since the reality has come, we no longer offer up animal sacrifices. Likewise, the Levitical priesthood and the High Priest were all types; now, since the reality has come, that priesthood no longer exists; it is no longer relevant to us.

One more thing: since there is no more need for a specialized priesthood, there is no need for a poppa (pope) over the whole thing. There is no such office or gift so described in the Old or New Testaments. There was a High Priest in the Old Testament. He was a type of Christ; but now that the reality (or the antitype = Christ) has come, there is no more need to have the type (which looks forward to the antitype).

The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament disappeared because these were types; they looked forward to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross (the antitype). Similarly, the specialized priesthood (called the Levitical priesthood or the Aaronic priesthood) is also a type. The priest represented man to God. A person would bring his animal sacrifice to the priest (who stood between the person and God) and the priest would offer up the animal sacrifice to God. All of this represented Jesus Christ going to the cross and paying for our sins. Now it is Jesus Who stands between God and man. **"I am the way, the truth and the life,"** Jesus said to His disciples. **"No man comes to God except through Me."** (John 14:6). The animal sacrifices are types; Jesus dying for our sins is the antitype (the thing which the

animal sacrifices point to). The priest standing between man and God to offer the sacrifice is a type; Jesus is the antitype, the thing which the priest represents. Jesus, as the antitype, fulfills the promise of the types.

At this point, I will give a basic exegesis of several passages in the book of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews was written to explain to Jewish believers at the beginning of the Church Age what has changed and why; and how these changes are legitimate ones.

Much of the book of Hebrews takes various Old Testament practices and institutions and explains how they revealed the truth of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. When the types have been fulfilled by their antitype, there is no longer a need for the type (or, there is no longer a need for the type in its original form). So, animal sacrifices disappeared; and the specialized priesthood disappeared. However, the universal priesthood—the fact that all believers are priests—replaces the Levitical priesthood. All that is different is this: there used to be a priest who stood between us and God, and he represented us to God. But now, since we have believed in Jesus, there is no more any need for a priest. In fact, because we are *in Christ*, we may act as our own priest and represent ourselves directly to God the Father.

Essentially in this table, we will review huge sections of the book of Hebrews, but the intention is to focus in on Jesus as our High Priest, as our sacrifice for sins. As a result, there is no more a need for animal sacrifices to be offered on our behalf; nor is there a need for some sort of specialized priesthood.

Unless otherwise noted, the ESV; capitalized is used below.

| Old Testament Priesthoods Are Types; Jesus is the Antitype   |   |
|--|---|
| Scripture  | Commentary  |
| <p>Heb. 5:1–5 For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.</p>   | <p>Those descended from Aaron were priests, and, at any given time, there was one man chosen from among them to be the High Priest. Here, the writer of Hebrews tells us the purpose of the High Priest, to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. The priest represents us to God. The priest stands between us and God.</p> |
| <p>He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people.</p> | <p>The High Priest is a man beset by sins, so he also offers up a sacrifice to God on his own behalf. The animal sacrifices were designed to symbolically take away sin.</p>  |

## Old Testament Priesthoods Are Types; Jesus is the Antitype

| Scripture   | Commentary  |
|---|---|
| <p>And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by Him who said to Him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten You"; as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 2:7 110:4)</p> | <p>Jesus was not a member of the Levitical priesthood. Because He was from the tribe of Judah, He was in the royal line, but not the priestly line.</p> <p>Jesus was called in eternity past by God the Father to be a priest. He became a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was the priest to whom Abraham deferred in Genesis.</p>   |
| <p>Heb. 7:11–17 Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?</p>  | <p>If we could have attained true forgiveness of sins by the Levitical priesthood, then Jesus would not have needed to offer Himself for our sins.</p> <p>During the time of Christ, the Levitical priesthood had become incredibly corrupt.</p>  |
| <p>For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.</p>           | <p>The tribe of Judah was the royal tribe (Gen. 49:10 Psalm 60:7 2Sam. 2:7 7:8–16); the tribe of Levi was the priestly tribe (Exodus 38:21 Num. 3:6–10). Jesus is descended from the tribe of Judah. Judah became the royal tribe, but it was never the priestly tribe.</p> <p>Moses and his brother Aaron were Levites; and the priesthood began under Aaron (it is his descendants who are specifically priests).</p> |
| <p>This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life. For it is witnessed of him, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4)</p>                        | <p>Jesus was not a Levite; he was not descended from a Levitical priest. Jesus was descended from David, not from Aaron.</p> <p>Melchizedek is a priest and a type of Christ. Jesus is a priest forever (He represents man before God forever) after the order of Melchizedek—and that Jesus was a priest according to the order of Melchizedek comes to us from the OT. .</p>  |

## Old Testament Priesthoods Are Types; Jesus is the Antitype

| Scripture   | Commentary  |
|---|---|
| <p>Heb. 7:22b–28 Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but He holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever.</p>   | <p>Levitical priests were constrained by death. As one generation died off, a new generation had to rise up in their place. However, Jesus is the High Priest forever because He has eternal life in His humanity. Jesus and His priesthood are forever.</p>                          |
| <p>Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.</p>   | <p>Jesus, at any time, can save any man who believes in Him. His priesthood is forever; and He is always there to make intercession for us. Jesus stands between God and man.</p> <p>Jesus is our true priest, as He is holy, innocent and sinless; yet exalted from the heavens.</p> |
| <p>He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for His Own sins and then for those of the people, since He did this once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.</p> | <p>Jesus is superior to the OT priests, as He does not have to offer up a sacrifice for His Own sins.</p> <p>The Mosaic Law appointed fallen men as priests (all men are fallen); but God appointed His Son—unblemished and untainted by sin—instead of these priests.</p>            |
| <p>Heb. 8:1–9 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a High Priest, One Who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.</p>   | <p>The point that the writer of Hebrews is trying to make is, Jesus is our true High Priest, Who is seated on the right hand of God, which is the perfect place for Him to be to make intercession for us. With this set up, there is no need for us to go to a human priest.</p>     |
| <p>For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. <b>They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.</b> (Emphasis mine)</p>                    | <p>It is the job of a Levitical priest to offer up sacrifices on behalf of those who came to him. A priest offering up sacrifices is a shadow of what God has planned for the future. When the reality come, the shadow fades away.</p>   |

## Old Testament Priesthoods Are Types; Jesus is the Antitype

| Scripture  | Commentary  |
|--|---|
| <p>For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant He mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. (Exodus 25:40)</p>  | <p><i>Pattern</i> is the masculine noun τυπος (τύπος) [pronounced <i>TOO-poss</i>], which means, a <i>form; an example; a type, i.e. a person or thing prefiguring a future (Messianic) person or thing</i>. Strong's #5179. This is this Greek word which is used in the Doctrine of Typology.</p> <p>Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant based upon better promises.</p>   |
| <p>For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For He finds fault with them when He says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in My covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord." (Jer. 31:31–32)</p> | <p>The first covenant refers to the covenants between God and Israel (they are taken as a whole, but in reality, it is a single covenant between God and Israel). But that was a flawed covenant because the sons of Israel were sinful, as were their priests.</p> <p>The concept of a New Covenant was not invented by the disciples; it is found in the Old Testament.</p> <p>The New Covenant would be permanent because it is based upon the sinless perfection of Jesus Christ.</p> |
| <p>Heb 9:6–15 These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.</p>  | <p>The Tabernacle (and later, the Temple) was divided into two sections. The public did <i>not</i> go into either, as we go into a church. The priests would go into the front section to perform their priestly duties; and the High Priest, once a year, would go into the Holy of Holies (the second section) and sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat, which is over the Ark of God. This represents the Lord offering Himself once and forever for our sins.</p>                         |
| <p>By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened as long as the first section is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age).</p>   | <p>The Temple, at the time of the writing of the book of Hebrews, still stood. It was symbolic (that is, it was a type). We would, because of Jesus Christ, have access to the Holy of Holies.</p>  |

## Old Testament Priesthoods Are Types; Jesus is the Antitype

| Scripture   | Commentary   |
|---|--|
| <p>According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.</p>   | <p>All of the Levitical ceremonies could not truly cleanse a man from his sins. These were regulations imposed <i>until</i> the time of the New Covenant, <b>the time of the reformation</b>. All of these ceremonies were types, looking ahead to us being truly cleansed by the Son of Man.</p>  |
| <p>But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His Own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.</p> | <p>Jesus Christ is our true High Priest, with the promise of good things which have come. Jesus, as the true High Priest, enters into the Holy of Holies (into the Throne Room of God), having offered up His own blood (that is, His spiritual death) for our sins. This secures us our eternal redemption.</p> <p>Jesus entering into the Throne Room of God indicates that His sacrifice was acceptable to God.</p> |
| <p>For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.</p>                 | <p>All of the animal sacrifices offered before did not actually cleanse defiled man. They looked forward to the LORD Christ, Who offered Himself as a lamb without blemish to God. It is through Jesus Christ we are cleansed before God; it is because of Jesus Christ that we may serve the Living God.</p>  |
| <p>Therefore He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.</p>  | <p>By His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus is the Mediator of this New Covenant. It is by this New Covenant that we have an eternal inheritance. This completely supercedes the first covenant (God's original covenants with nation Israel).</p>   |

## Old Testament Priesthoods Are Types; Jesus is the Antitype

| Scripture  | Commentary   |
|--|--|
| Heb. 9:19–28 For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." (Exodus 24:8)   | <p>God, through Moses, had set up a number of ceremonial laws, the first being immortalized by the Passover.</p> <p>Blood was used throughout the worship of the Jewish people from the deaths of millions of animals to represent the spiritual death of our Lord.</p>  |
| And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.  | <p>Everything was purified with blood in the Old Testament, because <b>without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins</b>. Again, all of this looked forward to Jesus Christ dying for our sins.</p>  |
| Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.   | <p>All of the Tabernacle furniture were symbolic of their heavenly counterparts. This does not mean that there is some larger, better loaf of bread in heaven; but that all of these articles of furniture and all of the rituals represent specific truths and doctrines.</p>   |
| For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer Himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then He would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. | <p>Jesus, as our High Priest, does not enter into the Holy of Holies made by man, but He enters into heaven and before <b>the Presence of God on our behalf</b>. Jesus is the true High Priest, Who has offered Himself to God, which is represented by the Levitical high priest who enters into the holy place each year, but with the blood of animals.</p> |
| But as it is, He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.   | <p>Jesus appears at the end of the Age of Israel, and He puts sin away forever by sacrificing Himself.</p>   |

## Old Testament Priesthoods Are Types; Jesus is the Antitype

| Scripture  | Commentary  |
|--|---|
| <p>And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him. (Isa. 53:12)</p>   | <p>In His 1<sup>st</sup> advent, Jesus came and offered Himself once for our sins. He will appear the second time to deliver those who are waiting upon Him.</p>  |
| <p>Heb. 10:1–14 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?</p> | <p>The ceremonial portion of the Law is the shadow-form of the reality. The animal sacrifices, year-after-year, could never make anyone clean. These types, these symbols, these shadows no longer have a purpose. They have been replaced by what they represent and so, there is no reason for them.</p>  |
| <p>But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.</p>  | <p>Offering up these animal sacrifices reminds us of our problem with sin, but they do not remove out sins from us. They are only symbolic.</p>   |
| <p>Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, "Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body have You prepared for Me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings You have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God, as it is written of Me in the scroll of the book.'" Psalm 40:6–8</p>  | <p>God the Son is speaking to God the Father in this OT quote from Psalm 40.</p> <p>The animal sacrifices are not what God desires; the body that God the Father prepared for God the Son would be the living sacrifice for our sins.</p> <p>Jesus agrees to do God the Father's will.</p>  |
| <p>When He said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then He added, "Behold, I have come to do Your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. Psalm 40:6a, 8a</p>   | <p>Jesus is restating what has already been said, but the idea is to tie together the idea that the animal sacrifices and offerings are set aside, so that Jesus can do the will of the Father, meaning, that He will go to the cross. That being done away with are the representative animal sacrifices; that being established is Jesus dying on the cross for our sins.</p> |

## Old Testament Priesthoods Are Types; Jesus is the Antitype

| Scripture   | Commentary   |
|---|--|
| <p>And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.</p>   | <p>The priest offering up these same sacrifices cannot take away our sins. These animal sacrifices can never remove our sins. We are sanctified by Jesus Christ.</p> <p>God does away with the first (animal sacrifices) in order to establish the second (the offer of Jesus Christ for our sins).</p>  |
| <p>But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.<br/>Psalm 110:1</p>   | <p>Jesus, by offering Himself on the cross, has done what all of these animal sacrifices could not do—this was a single sacrifice for sins. Now He sits down at the right hand of God, because He is finished with that part of His ministry.</p> <p>The reference to enemies being made a footstool for Jesus' feet is from Psalm 110:1, quoted many times in the New Testament.</p>                |
| <p>Heb. 10:19–22 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a Great Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.</p> | <p>Entering into the Holy Place through the curtain is a reference to entering into the Holy of Holies.</p> <p>Our Great Priest is Jesus Christ. We may draw near to God, as we have been cleansed by His sacrifice. Our entering into the holy places does not mean that we now can walk into the Temple and into the Holy of Holies; but that we now have access to God through His Son Jesus.</p> |

Over and over again, the writer of Hebrews tells us that the first covenant, of animal sacrifices offered up by priests (which is a type), is to be set aside in favor to the second covenant, the reality, the antitype, which is Jesus Christ dying for our sins.

Let me repeat what Peter wrote:

1Peter 2:9 But you people are especially chosen [by God]; you are a royal body of priests; you are a nation especially set apart for God's use; you are a people who belong exclusively to God, that you may express the virtues of the One who called you out of

darkness [i.e., of sin and error], and into His marvelous light [i.e., righteousness and truth]. (AUV)

*You people* are the people to whom Peter wrote, who are believers scattered all over the Roman empire. He says that they are chosen and that they are a royal body of priests; and that they are a nation set apart for God's use. They are a people who belong to God, called out of darkness into the light.

Peter refers to the priesthood of the believer also in 1Peter 2:5 (...you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.) Also, twice, there are references to Church Age believers as being priests in Rev. 1:6 5:10. But, none of these passages are as perspicuous as 1Peter 2:9 above.

These are, by the way, all of the epistle passage references to the priesthood. There is no description anywhere in the Bible of some new kind of priesthood, somehow based upon Peter and/or of a bunch a guys who are celibate and living together. This is not found in the New Testament; it is not found in the early church; and it is not found in the early Catholic church. Saint Jerome, a great man of history, who translated the Bible from Greek to Latin, never claimed to be an Apostle or a member of some special priesthood descended spiritually from Peter. All of that New Testament specialized priesthood was a perversion added later. This was not a result of anything that Saint Jerome did.

All of this confusion about the priesthood has grown out of a misinterpretation of one passage in Matthew and a whole lot of tradition—none of which has any support in Scripture. The new priesthood in the Church Age consists of all believers. There is not some elite group of believers who are priests, and we are all non-priests who just are not as holy or as spiritual or as dedicated. There is no support for this anywhere in Scripture.

I have gone into great detail here on this particular point for a very important reason:

As a Christian, you have to determine whether you believe what the Bible says or do you believe the traditions of man (or some church) instead. As an aside, every believer faces this same challenge at some point in their lives. "I always thought that \_\_\_\_ was true; but it is clear that the Bible teaches just the opposite." Every believer faces that decision sometime in their lives, and where you go from that point is what is important.

## Lesson 020: Exodus 2:16

## Priesthood Addendum

The previous lesson may have seemed to be too strong and dogmatic. Many who receive these lessons have grown up with the idea that there is some sort of specialized priesthood, and that is just the way it has always been. This is true for all Catholics and many Protestants.

One of the things I heard in a Bible class early on as a new believer is, if the Bible clearly teaches something which contradicts what you see, hear or know to be true, the Bible is correct and what you believe to be true is wrong. The Bible may contradict what you see with your own eyes; and still, the Bible is right and what you see is wrong. For many who read this, that statement may seem to be a bit extreme. When I first heard this point of view expressed, I felt the same way. Yet, interestingly enough, even the Bible makes such a statement about itself.

As an addendum to our study of the universal priesthood of the believer, let me go to the words of Peter—who better to be our source for this particular topic?

2Peter 1:16–21 For we did not use cleverly conceived stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, because we were eyewitnesses of His Majesty [i.e., the apostles had personally seen the miraculous power of Jesus]. For Jesus had received honor and glory from God, the Father, when [God's] voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory saying, "This is My dearly loved Son, and I am very pleased with Him." And we heard this voice coming from heaven when we were with Him in the holy mountain. And we have the message of the prophets [confirmed to us] as more certain [than ever]. So, you will do well to pay careful attention to it, as [you would] to a lamp in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts [Note: This probably refers to the beginning of the Gospel age, when people would become enlightened to its message]. Above all, [you should realize] that no prophecy of Scripture originates from a person's own initiative [Note: This passage is discussing the source of Scripture, not the understanding of it]. For prophecy was never produced by the will of man, but people spoke from God, as they were carried along [i.e., inspired] by the Holy Spirit. (An Understandable Version—2005)

Let's break this down, verse-by-verse, using the Analytic Literal Translation:

2Peter 1:16 For not having followed having been cleverly made-up myths, we made known to you<sup>p</sup> the power and Arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ, but having become eyewitnesses of the magnificence of that One.

In the ALT, you<sup>p</sup> means *you [plural] or you all*. Peter, along with the other Apostles, were eyewitnesses to Jesus Christ in the 1<sup>st</sup> advent. In fact, Peter saw Jesus glorified. This passage briefly describes the magnificence that he saw with his own eyes.

2Peter 1:17 For having received from God [the] Father honor and glory, such a voice being brought [fig., uttered] to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My Son—the beloved—in whom I am well-pleased." [Matt 17:5]

In the context of Matt. 17:5, Peter was saying something that was ill-informed (the sort of thing that he so often did), when God the Father cut him off—a voice from heaven—and said these words: "This is My Son—the beloved—in whom I am well-pleased." [Matt 17:5]

So, Peter not only saw the Shekinah Glory, but heard the voice of God the Father.

2Peter 1:18 **And this voice we heard, being brought [fig., uttered] out of heaven, being with Him on the holy mountain.**

We do not know exactly where Jesus and the disciples were, as it took them 6 days to travel to and then up this mountain, so it is simply called the Mount of Transfiguration today. Many translations entitle this section of Matthew *The Transfiguration of Christ*; but it is more properly referred to as *Jesus Exhibits His Shekinah Glory*.

Peter both saw the glorified Messiah and he heard the words of God spoken from heaven. The mountain that they were on was holy because Jesus stood upon it in His glorified form (also known as the Shekinah Glory).

2Peter 1:19 **And we have the prophetic word [made] more certain [or, confirmed], to which you<sup>p</sup> do well [to be] paying close attention to, as a lamp shining in a dark place, until [the] day dawns and a morning star arises in your hearts [fig., inner selves];...**

But more important than what Peter (James and John) saw and heard is the *more certain prophetic word*. What is this word *more certain* than? It is *more certain* than what Peter saw and heard! The word of God is what his readers need to pay attention to, as if they are seeing a lamp in a dark place or seeing the sun rise up. The Word [of God] is like a morning star rising up in your right lobe (that is, in your thinking).

It may be difficult to understand the gist of what Peter is saying, but he (and James and John) saw Jesus Christ transfigured (transformed); they saw Him displayed as the Shekinah Glory, something that no other human being has seen occur. But then Peter talks about *a more certain word of prophecy*, which is the Word of God (we know this as the Bible). So, what is more certain than what Peter, James and John saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears? The *word of prophecy*; also known as the *Word of God*; also known to us today as the *Bible*.

Then Peter tells us *why* the Bible is more certain than what you can see with your eyes or hear with your ears.

2Peter 1:20 **...knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture comes of private interpretation,...**

The *prophecy of Scripture* does not refer to specific prophecies, as we understand them, but generally to the divinely inspired Word of God. Nor is the Word of God subject to a private interpretation; but it means what it says, in its grammatical, literal and historical context.

2Peter 1:21 **...for prophecy never came by [the] will of a person, but holy men of God spoke being moved along by [the] Holy Spirit.**

God's words did not come from some guy sitting down and thinking and coming up with some really great things to say; God's words came from the holy men of God who are

carried along by God the Holy Spirit. The Bible is more than just a book of some great sayings or interesting thoughts; these are the words of men set apart for this task of writing. They are carried along or moved by God the Holy Spirit.

To put this in another way: there is nothing more important to your life than the Word of God. We won't see the Person of Jesus during our lives—as He appeared in His public ministry and certainly not in His Shekinah Glory. Nor will God speak to us from the sky (or from a burning bush). But what we have in this dispensation is far greater than these things—we have the complete Word of God. Many believers go through their entire lives and never realize just how important the Word of God is; but there is nothing more important to you in this life.

Heb. 4:12 **For the word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** (Webster)

This is why we give heed to this more certain word of prophecy—these are the very words of God meant for us to correctly guide us in this life.

Back to the original digression: there is no doubt the question, *well, so what if I believe in a specialized priesthood, even if it is not in the Bible; what is wrong with that?* The Bible has a vocabulary and that vocabulary is designed for us to understand spiritual principles. There was, at one time, a specialized priesthood. This was under the Jewish economy, where God worked through nation Israel. The specialized priesthood was designed to foretell Christ, who would stand between man and God, much the same way that the specialized priesthood stood between man and God. Man, in the Age of Israel, went to the priest for his spiritual needs (to offer up animal sacrifices). That is because there must be a middle man between God and man (often called a *mediator* in the Word of God). However, when the reality came to be, then the shadow image was set aside. Now, in the Church Age, there continued to be a priesthood, but that was the universal priesthood. This is because we are *in Christ* (a phrase which occurs about 90 times in the New Testament) and therefore, we are able to go straight to God. Because we are *in Christ*, we have complete and total access to the Father. There is nothing in between us and God (apart from our sins). There is not some special person somewhere that we can go to and he can somehow provide us better access to God because of his exalted position. As believers in Jesus Christ, we are *in Christ*; access to God does not get any better than that (in this life)!

So you see, the words *priest, priesthood* is fraught with meaning. To some degree, these words explain our position in Christ. They explain the change which has come because Jesus died on the cross for our sins. That historical event changed everything. So when a particular faith tries to convince you that there is some group of men who are better than you, and therefore, should be called priests, that faith is wrong and it is misleading you.

This does not cancel out the concept of spiritual gifts. God has given one or more spiritual gifts to each and every believer in the Church Age. So there are men with the gift of

teaching; other men with the gift of evangelism. Those men are certainly priests; but then, so are you!

Let's now return to our passage:

This passage describes where Moses will meet his future wife. He is in Midian, having run away from Egypt where he killed a man. A warrant had been issued for his arrest; had he been found, he would have been executed. Moses made himself scarce.

Exodus 2:16a **Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters.**

There is a priest in Midian, and, like nearly all priests in Scripture, he was married and had children. This is important to our narrative because Moses will meet these daughters and marry one of them. However, his friendship with the father will be stronger than the relationship to his future wife.

Exodus 2:16b **And they [the priest's seven daughters] came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock.**

Water was at a premium in the ancient world.

As we have seen throughout Scripture, women and slaves often drew water; and both watched over sheep and livestock, taking them to water. Obviously, livestock must be given water; and there would be no source of water right at the ranch.

A well would be in one place; but, maybe 100 feet away (or more) would be watering troughs. Animals were not brought down to the well because they would foul the well and the ground around the well. So they were given water to drink in troughs set up a reasonable distance away. If the animals are too close to the well, a rain could carry the filth of the animals to the well; so, by this time, every well and every watering trough were set far enough apart to avoid the fouling of the well.

These women would have gathered up water into containers from home; and they would have given their animals water to drink in the nearby troughs. Afterwards, they would load up some water to use at home and return there.

Exodus 2:16 **Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock.**

This sort of responsibility was often given to women and to slaves. It appears that this particular priest had only daughters.

Moses has come to a well in Midian, and 7 women with their flocks have also come to this well so that they might water their livestock and get water for their home.

Recall that there are watering troughs a distance away from the well, and that gals would fill these up for their sheep and goats to drink from.

Exodus 2:17 [Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.](#)

There is nothing in this passage which indicates that these young ladies did not have a reasonable claim to this water. Who dug this well and who exactly owns it and who exactly controls it, we do not know. However, the entire context suggests that the women had rights to this water as do the shepherds in v. 17.

Some shepherds came, who also drew from this water, and they apparently chased the women away every day, it appears. What might be the case is, the shepherds have a route and they come to daily give water to their sheep and goats, and they were not going to wait around for the women to complete watering their own sheep and goats—so they simply chase them off. Perhaps, they did it to be mean; perhaps they did it simply because they could.

There is also the possibility (and this is what I think actually happened) that these shepherds gave the women time to fill up the troughs, and then they would show up and chase them off. This would have saved them the trouble of filling up the troughs themselves.

Moses is on the scene and sees this, and stands up for the women, who were there first, and he helps them to water their father's flock. It is the shepherds who will have to wait around (the shepherds do not move in and share in the use of the well, because their sheep could too easily become mixed together).

Since the priest's daughters are not chased away this time, they get water for themselves and for their flocks more quickly and return home at an earlier time.

Exodus 2:18 [When they came to Reuel their father, he said, "How is it that you have come so soon today?"](#)

The flock had to be watered at least daily, and there apparently was one well which serviced many families (or ranches). Despite there being 7 women, it appears that they were chased off each time that they came to water their flock. As a result, their father was used to them taking the flock out and then returning at the same time each day—which included an extra hour or two during which they waited for the shepherds to be gone before returning to the well. Given what their father says here, it appears that daily they endured being run off. After being run off, they would go off at some distance from the well; and when the shepherds were done and gone, they would return to the well to finish watering their sheep. This day, since they could water all of the sheep at once, they returned home

earlier than was customary. Because of Moses, they did not have to wait for the shepherds to finish first.

Exodus 2:19 *And they said, “An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock.”*

Their answer reveals two things: (1) their father knows about the problems with the shepherds running them off and (2) Egyptians have a very specific look, which distinguishes them from other people. Moses does not really blend in to Midian with his look (despite being an Hebrew, Moses looked like an Egyptian<sup>33</sup>).

Midian is close enough to Egypt so that these people would know what Egyptians look like and talk like. We do not know what gave Moses away. Did he dress, talk or walk like an Egyptian? Or did he simply identify himself as an Egyptian? Reliefs and paintings of ancient Egyptians show them without hair; and certainly without beards. I would suggest that this is how Moses looked. Whether there were other specific peculiarities of that time period, I could not say.

Exodus 2:20 *So he [Reuel] said to his daughters, “And where is he? Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.”*

This father has 7 daughters; and this Egyptian who has helped them seems like a pretty decent fellow. He has stood up for his girls. The father sees this as a big plus.

As we will find out in the future, Reuel is a very intelligent man. No doubt, he has figured that an Egyptian in his neck of the woods is a very unusual thing, with the only likely explanation being, there is a problem with the law. Something unusual has to be the explanation for an Egyptian wandering around alone in Midian. However, Reuel weighs this fact against Moses standing up for his daughters. So, in his estimation, despite the reason for being there, this man Moses can't be all bad.

A father with 7 daughters may actually have a desire for a son; or another younger man around, to do things that women would be unable to do. Perhaps he had been giving a lot of thought to the marriage of one of his daughters.

It is also possible that Reuel simply wanted to pay his respects to this man and to thank him.

In any case, the women went and fetched Moses, and that was the beginning of a very beautiful relationship.

Exodus 2:21a *Then Moses was content to live with the man,...*

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<sup>33</sup> Just as Joseph did back in Genesis.

**Moses: His Conversion and His Spiritual Growth:** I don't know that we know when Moses became a believer in the Revealed God; nor do we know when or where he experienced spiritual growth.

It is possible that Moses left Egypt as an unbeliever. Although Joseph's bones were a witness to the Hebrew people and one of the things in their life which they associated with the Revealed God and the Land of Promise, Moses had not been brought up under that environment. Instead, he was brought up in the Pharaoh's palace, very likely cut off from his birth mother after the age two (or so), and would have had no reason to have believed in the Revealed God.

Actually, we do not know if there were many believers among the Egyptians (some will join the Hebrew people when they leave Egypt). Based upon what is coming in the future, there appear to be very few Egyptian believers at this time. Things were quite different 400 years previous; there were quite a few believers when Joseph was prime minister of Egypt (I base this upon their attitude towards Jacob). Many of the Egyptians of Moses' era were probably evangelized through the mighty works of God.

At the same time, it appears that almost all of the Hebrews at this time and at the time of the exodus believed in the Revealed God. Here is how we know this: when the Passover is instituted, the Hebrews had to splatter blood on their door sills to keep their firstborn safe from God—generally speaking, this is a ritual that you will participate in if you are a believer and you believe the words of God.

I have thought that it is very possible that Moses was influenced by a Hebrew teacher. Certainly he was exposed, when in the palace, to a variety of teachers and a variety of subjects. A Hebrew teacher would have been no different than any other teacher, despite being a slave. He would have had areas of expertise, and my guess is (this is conjecture), Moses may have had a Hebrew teacher and he may have spoken of the God of the Hebrews. Something had to have taken Moses out among to Hebrew people. Whether his knowledge of his relationship to them was all he had, or if he knew more, we don't know.

In any case, I think that it is very likely that this priest in Midian is a believer in Y<sup>e</sup>howah, as were his daughters.

Did Moses believe at this time, under their influence? Or did Moses believe in the God of the Hebrews in Egypt? We really don't know. However, it seems most like that Moses experienced spiritual growth while in Midian with this family. When Moses speaks to the Burning Bush, he is clearly a believer in the Revealed God (this is 40 years into the future from where we are now in this narrative). It seems reasonable that Moses experience some spiritual growth while he is with this family (otherwise, why else would God guide Moses to this particular place?).

Throughout the Bible, God tends to use prepared people. For anyone of importance in Scripture, there appears to have been a time of preparation, which preparation must involve the teaching of the existing Scriptures.

Reuel is another example of a believer in Jesus Christ with a public ministry which had practically no response. This priest had a congregation of eight—his seven daughters and Moses. Apparently, he had been unable to even evangelize the shepherds in his periphery. He had one convert outside of his family that we are aware of; a spiritual failure by anyone's standards today. Yet it was his witness to Moses and his teaching to Moses which gave Israel its greatest leader. ["Who has despised the day of small things?"](#) (Zech. 4:10) Moses' late conversion may have been one of the reasons that God spared him judgement for killing the Egyptian. Our sins from the past are wiped out once we become believers in Jesus Christ. This in no way made what Moses did right nor does it mean that we should set free prisoners who believe in Jesus Christ. Such men often have a ministry to others who are also in jail.

To be sure, we do not know many of the things which I have just written. They are speculation based upon logic. I do believe that this is a priest to the True God; and I also believe that he had an influence on Moses. Did Moses grow spiritually under his direction? Let me put that in a different way, which may help to answer this question: do you believe that Moses randomly ran into this family when running from Egypt?

Exodus 2:21 [Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses.](#)

Time passes. Moses has no set future agenda with his life. He has no place to be; no specific place to go. He is hiding out, on the run from Egypt to save himself. At this time, in Egypt, the current Pharaoh would have gladly executed him (I am assuming that there is a sibling rivalry going on there between Pharaoh and Moses, but that is not specifically stated in the narrative. The Pharaoh could have been the father of Moses' rival as well.).

The word translated *content* by the NKJV actually has nothing to do with *contentment*; it simply means that Moses *willingly chose* to live with Reuel.

*Zipporah* means *bird*, and we will find out in subsequent chapters that she was rather flighty. It was a very apropos name for her. It would not surprise me that many names given in Scripture were not necessarily the birth names, but perhaps a play on these names, giving us a better idea as to who this person is.

Although we are told quite a bit about Zipporah and her interactions with Moses, the Bible never speaks of her beauty (or lack thereof). The Bible does, on many occasions, speak of the beauty of this or that woman, but not of Zipporah.

Exodus 2:22 [And she bore him a son. He called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."](#)

Gershom, the first son of Moses, has a name that means *exile*; and Moses is exiled from Egypt, which is his home. Moses is the one who names the child, and this name defines Moses' situation at this time—he is in exile; he is *a stranger in a foreign land*.

The KJV translates this: *I have been a stranger in a strange land*. This, like many phrases found in the Bible, has become the title of a book. In fact, there are at least [186 books](#) whose titles have come straight out of the Bible.

**Books with Titles from the Bible** (a graphic); from [Good Reads](#); accessed January 31, 2018. That link takes you to these and 175 more books which received their titles from Scripture.

In v. 22, we are in Midian with Moses and his wife. In v. 23, we suddenly find ourselves returning back to Egypt. In the final 3 verses of this chapter, the narrative is in Egypt.

Moses spent 40 years living with this family (Acts 7:30). This was Moses' extended vacation. He had a completely different kind of family, doctrine was taught to him by his father-in-law and God prepared him for forty plus years struggling with a group of hard-headed, obstinate Jews (maybe that is why God gave him Zipporah, to prepare him). It is possible that his father-in-law had portions of Scripture from prior to Abraham. We do not know how the Word of God was transmitted during that time period. The popular theory is that it was handed down almost in its entirety as oral tradition, and later committed to writing by Moses.

In any case, Moses was prepared and trained for what he was about to do.

- 1  **Absalom, Absalom!**  
by William Faulkner  
★★★★☆ 3.96 avg rating — 33,367 ratings  
score: 1,385, and 14 people voted

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- 2  **East of Eden**  
by John Steinbeck  
★★★★☆ 4.35 avg rating — 349,581 ratings  
score: 1,367, and 14 people voted

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- 3  **The Sun Also Rises**  
by Ernest Hemingway  
★★★★☆ 3.83 avg rating — 312,554 ratings  
score: 959, and 10 people voted

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- 4  **Stranger in a Strange Land**  
by Robert A. Heinlein  
★★★★☆ 3.91 avg rating — 236,752 ratings  
score: 852, and 9 people voted

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- 5  **Song of Solomon**  
by Toni Morrison  
★★★★☆ 4.02 avg rating — 66,709 ratings  
score: 782, and 8 people voted

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- 6  **The Children of Men**  
by P.D. James  
★★★★☆ 3.69 avg rating — 33,279 ratings  
score: 754, and 8 people voted

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- 7  **A Time to Kill**  
by John Grisham (Goodreads Author)  
★★★★☆ 4.04 avg rating — 625,254 ratings  
score: 664, and 7 people voted

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- 8  **Go Down, Moses**  
by William Faulkner  
★★★★☆ 3.93 avg rating — 8,053 ratings  
score: 660, and 7 people voted

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- 9  **The Violent Bear It Away**  
by Flannery O'Connor  
★★★★☆ 4.14 avg rating — 8,155 ratings  
score: 569, and 6 people voted

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- 10  **Chariots of Fire**  
by William J. Weatherby  
★★★★☆ 3.95 avg rating — 308 ratings  
score: 566, and 6 people voted

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- 11  **A River Runs Through It**  
by Norman Maclean  
★★★★☆ 4.16 avg rating — 5,317 ratings  
score: 489, and 5 people voted

Since the Midianites were sent out during the time of Abraham, Reuel may not have had any information on the Jewish race and the immediate heritage of Moses. It is possible that he did not have the last 35 chapters of Genesis. He may have only had the first ten chapters of Genesis, or a reasonable knowledge of the events that took place during those years. It is possible that Moses learned about his family history from a Hebrew teacher; and maybe he sees this history once again from Reuel—and maybe not.

What I am saying is, we do not know the nuts and bolts of Moses' spiritual growth (and we have only scant details concerning his growth in the human realm as a leader of men).. I believe that the best guess we can make is, Moses experienced spiritual growth in Midian, based upon two things: (1) his erratic actions in Egypt and (2) his father-in-law was a priest.

It is clear that there are things which we read which indicate that Moses and the Hebrew elders all know their genealogical background. That had to come from somewhere (logically from the preservation of the Genesis Scriptures, which would have been preserved by memory). I would not be surprised if nearly every Hebrew man knew his exact lineage going back to a particular son of Jacob.

When God speaks to Moses in the desert-wilderness of Midian, God does not take some extra time to give Moses a little background on who he is and who he is descended from. That suggests that, whether Reuel had the full set of Scriptures or not; Moses did.

## Lesson 022: Exodus 2:23

## Meanwhile in Egypt

In the previous lesson and in the previous verse, Moses is in Midian. Suddenly, we return to Egypt.

Exodus 2:23a [Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died.](#)

Although we are not told much about this particular king of Egypt, it is possible that he and Moses were both potential candidates for the throne of Egypt—rivals, if you will. Or, he may have been the father of a potential rival to Moses. He was no doubt interested in the execution of Moses, but he died first. But, as the Bible says, [No weapon formed against you will prosper](#) (Isa. 54:7). God has a purpose for Moses and nothing is going to hinder that purpose, apart from Moses' own negative volition.

We have a limited amount of time on this earth, as determined by God. As believers, we should make it count. I knew a gal who had 4 young children, when she was stricken with cancer. Her most current husband/boyfriend left her—let's just call her Joan. She was renting a house that I had put her into (back when I was a real estate agent). The couple leasing a house to her could not see any option beyond evicting her. Fast forward 7 years; I had kept in touch with the woman and she finally did succumb to cancer. I called up the couple who originally rented the house to her, because they were concerned about the woman, and told them that she had passed. In that phone call, I was surprised to find out that the husband, Joan's former landlord, had passed away 3 years earlier. At the time

when we were all interacting and trying to figure out a solution, anyone would have assumed that Joan had another year or two; and that her landlord at that time might have another 10, 20 or even 40 years left to live. But he died before she did. We do not know what is in front of us. We are alive today, and therefore, God has a plan for us today. Everyday, that plan should include taking in some Bible doctrine.

We do not know what God has planned for us; we may live for another year, another 10 years, or another 40 years. Our future is unknown to us, despite our assets, our health and every other condition.

However, let me suggest that there is one clear way to extend your life: increase your spiritually productive life, which set of actions will include inner happiness as a spiritual by-product. Here is how you do that: remain in fellowship, learn the plan of God, determine your spiritual gift, and then allow your spiritual gift to function. You get back into fellowship by naming your sins to God; and the latter 3 items require you learning Bible doctrine. Would you prefer having a shorter life and one which is up and down (sometimes, many times in a day)? Here is how you can accomplish that: get out of fellowship by means of sin; do not learn any Bible doctrine; do whatever you feel like doing. Let your emotions guide you through life. Assume that the values of popular culture are the correct ones. That is the quickest way to unhappiness and an unproductive life, spiritually speaking; and a shorter life.

Moses has had a great reversal of fortune in life—thrice, in fact. He began as a child condemned to death; but he was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and then brought up in the palace, preparing to become a Pharaoh. Now, he finds himself hiding out in Midian from the current Pharaoh, with a warrant out for his arrest. He will later leave this life of obscurity and lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt, becoming one of the most famous men in Jewish history. Condemned to death at birth ⇒ being raised as the grandson of Pharaoh ⇒ living in Midian in exile, in obscurity ⇒ leading his people out of Egypt as the great leader of Israel. Moses led 4 very different lives, with 4 very different paths ahead for each life. But all of these lives lived by the same man.

We are studying the early life of Moses, and he is in Midian at this time. He killed a man in Egypt and made a run for it, hiding out in Midian from the Pharaoh who desires to execute him.

The Pharaoh who made the Hebrew people into slaves had died a long time ago, and those who succeeded him continued with this practice. When a person is born into an environment, they often accept many of the things just as they are, without question.

Let me offer up an example: social justice warriors today, had they been brought up during a time of slavery, would likely have voiced no dissent. There is slavery all over the world today. These social justice warriors do not tackle that problem; instead, they complain about the slavery which no longer exists in the US; and they tear down confederate soldier statues, claiming that anyone who is not on board with this must be a supporter of slavery. Self-righteousness does not require a real cause; just a sufficient amount of arrogance.

The reason that I know these *warriors* would not voice dissent is, there are more slaves today in the year 2018 than there were back in the 1800's. Global Slavery Index [estimates](#) that there are 46 million slaves in the world today (and these numbers do not include the millions of people without freedom in communist regimes). Most of these current social justice warriors want for us to live in a Marxist state—which certainly indicates that slavery is not really their issue, since Marxism is a form of slavery to the state. They have accepted Marxism, a failed political philosophy, as utopia, even though it fails whenever it is tried. But that is the environment into which they have been born, and they accept it.

Unlike these social justice warriors, Moses will become a true agent for change. Moses is living for 40 years in Midian. Then this happens:

Exodus 2:23a [Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died.](#)

This is the king of Egypt who wanted Moses executed. Apparently, the statute of limitations in Egypt runs out when the Pharaoh passes.

Exodus 2:23b [Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out...](#)

We do not like suffering; no one likes to suffer; no one likes to hear or see others suffer. But this suffering was absolutely necessary. The sons of Israel had to suffer; they had to come to a point where they would cry out for relief. As we will find out later, the sons of Israel on many occasions, when in the desert-wilderness, will propose to return to Egypt. They propose to return to Egypt *after* enduring all of this suffering; and, if they did return, they would have been killed (if there were enough Egyptians remaining to do that). These are the very same people who are crying out here, in this verse, because of the harsh treatment that they received as slaves to the Egyptians.

The Exodus generation (whom I will nickname Gen-X, for generation Exodus), those over 21 who will leave Egypt under Moses, are a very hard-headed bunch who did not seem to understand anything without suffering. There are some children who can be told, "The stove is hot, do not touch it;" and they won't touch it. But there are also more hard-headed children (not unlike myself) who are told, "The stove is hot" and they immediately press their hand against it, to find out for themselves.

Two generations of Hebrews will leave Egypt: Gen-X and the GoP (the Generation of promise—they are the ones 21 and younger who leave Egypt). Even though the Bible does not give them clever designations as I have, they will still be distinguished in the narrative of Exodus–Deuteronomy.

What will appear to be the case is, all of the sons of Israel will exit Egypt with Moses. It is reasonable to suppose, had they not suffered so much, many would have remained behind in Egypt, seeing no reason to leave their lives there. God's plan was for them to return, as a people—every single one of them—to Canaan. Remember from Genesis that every single child of Jacob moved to Egypt; no one was left behind. Now, every single

descendant of Jacob (also known as Israel) must move to the land God had given Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is only because of their intense suffering that they were all willing to leave Egypt.

You may say, “Well, why didn’t God simply tell them to leave Egypt?” God allows us our free will; but without the suffering, they would not have exited Egypt.

The interaction in our lives between nature and nurture is always an interesting one. We have so many potentials set in our lives from birth; and environment can obviously play a part; but our environment cannot make us do anything—at least, not in the spiritual realm. Let me suggest that a person who is solidly against God cannot be forced or coerced to change his mind about God. Our decisions, even though often related to personal suffering and difficulties, still have their origins in our free will.

I knew one person who had been given an idyllic life in retirement; but he did not turn to God, even though he had the chance to on many occasions. That same person was given some strong suffering; and yet, he did not turn to God. People have free will; and for many of them, there is no amount of coercion that will change that. However, there are people who are just hard-headed; but given enough motivation in life, they will go the direction that God has for them. I know that because I am one of those people. Suffering and difficulties have pushed me in the correct direction at least twice in my life; I did not like the suffering, but the choices I had to make in the end resulted in moving me in the right direction.

Personally, I know that, without the suffering, I would not have moved from where I was to where I live today—the *smartest* decision I have ever made. The suffering—which was not severe by any means—caused me to rethink my location, and so I changed it. It was the best thing that ever happened to me. But, it could only have been the result of some suffering and pressure. It was a decision that I would have never made without that pressure. Pressure and suffering also caused me to leave my profession of teaching. It was the right decision at the right time, but it took personal difficulties in my life to make it happen.

Back to our narrative: we have temporarily left Moses in Midian and we have returned to Egypt in v. 23:

Exodus 2:23 [Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.](#)

Interestingly enough, the text does not say that they *cried out to God*; but merely that they *cried out* and that *their cry came up to God*. It is unclear how much they revered God when in slavery, if at all.

People are certainly odd. Some do not believe in God; yet they will cry out into the sky, I guess expressing their innermost feelings to the cosmos. We had a recent presidential election in the United States (I write this in 2018); and about half of America was unhappy

with the new president—some of them desperately so. On the year anniversary of his election, some of them gathered [to scream into the sky](#) in frustration (many of these screamers do not believe in God). With whom they were communing remains unclear to this day.

When the sons of Israel leave Egypt, they will all be believers. However, it is not clear from the text that these people believe in the God of Jacob or not.

Exodus 2:23 [Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.](#)

Like all kings, this king was concerned about his power and about those who threatened the throne. Moses was a clear threat to Pharaoh, and when Pharaoh was ready to arrest and execute Moses, Moses made a run for it, into Midian, far enough away from Egypt. Moses was sufficiently off the grid in the desert wilderness, so that he would not be bothered. No one would have any idea where Moses went. However, Moses certainly had a knowledge of the geography of the area, based upon his early training. He undoubtedly knew geography and determined where to run to.

During Moses's 40 years in the Midian desert, the King of Egypt died—the one who would have put Moses to death.

All the while, all during this time, the sons of Israel cried out because of their bondage, because of the oppressive slavery that they endured.

Now, I have, from time to time, presented a different side of slavery. There are some kinds of slavery which are not necessarily evil or wrong. A young person, without money or family, in the ancient world, could sell himself to a family, and function as their personal servant. Some young men, through no fault of their own, ended up being sold as slaves, and, in the case of Joseph, as we have studied, the end result was quite remarkable. Joseph, 400 years earlier, had become the 2<sup>nd</sup> top man in Egypt, having first started out as an Egyptian slave. So, even though how Joseph was forced into slavery was wrong (his brothers sold him into slavery); God was able to take that circumstance and make it beneficial to him.

My point being, under certain conditions, slavery is not always the terrible thing that it has been made out to be. When God gives the Law to Moses, He will not outlaw slavery; but slavery will be better regulated among the Hebrew people in order to protect their own slaves from being abused.

Because of the nature of slavery, the slave owner must provide each slave with a *living wage*. It is of no benefit to a slave owner if his slaves die prematurely for lack of food, shelter or medical care. Therefore, a smart slave owner had to find a *sweet spot* between complete and utter tyranny and a paternal protection and provision for his slaves.

Interestingly enough, slavery is the only profession in the world which consistently *pays a living wage*. The master must make certain that his slaves are fed and housed and clothed and given medical care when necessary in order to keep them alive. A slave who is abused to the point of death is not productive and, therefore, not profitable for the slave owner. A slave who is healthy and cooperative is profitable to his master.

Quite obviously, slavery can be inhumane; and that is obviously what we have here in our narrative. Furthermore, these are not slaves who have volunteered themselves into slavery. A previous pharaoh forced them into it.

**Lesson 023: Exodus 2:23–25** **Meanwhile, back in Egypt**

Moses' life; the big picture:

Moses' life conveniently divides up into three 40 year periods.

| <b>Dividing up Moses' Life</b>  |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Time Period   | What Happened  | References                                  |
| First 40 years  | Moses lived in Egypt and was brought up in the Pharaoh's palace, for the first 40 years. It appears that he was raised to become a pharaoh.  | Exodus 2:1–15a                              |
| For the first couple years, Moses lives in Goshen until he is weaned from his mother.           |  |   |
| Interim Event: he kills an Egyptian taskmaster and flees for his life. Exodus 2:15              |  |   |
| Second 40 years   | He will then spend 40 years in Midian, a stranger in a strange land, having been guided by God to a well, where he met 7 daughters trying to water their father's flock. He married one of those daughters and had two sons. | Exodus 2:15b–4:19                           |
| Interim Event: God calls Moses to return to Egypt and to lead God's people out. Exodus 3:1–4:17 |  |   |
| Third 40 years  | Moses will lead the people of Israel into the desert wilderness between Egypt and Canaan, where they will live for 40 years. They do not take Canaan because of their negative volition.                                     | Exodus 4:20<br>t h r o u g h<br>Deut. 34:12 |

At this point in the Exodus narrative, the second of the first two 40 year periods of time is almost complete, and Moses will begin the third period of 40 years. During this 3<sup>rd</sup> period of 40 years, he will return to Egypt and lead the people of Israel out of Egypt.

Exodus 2 has covered a lot of ground. We follow Moses, from his birth to the birth of his first son, a period of about 45–50 years (Exodus 2:1 to Exodus 3:1 is a period of about 80 years).

V. 23 could have begun with the words, *meanwhile, back in Egypt...*

Exodus 2:23 Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.

There is a new king in Egypt; but the children of Israel are still enslaved to the Egyptians. It appears that their situation is getting worse and worse for them.

The sons of Jacob cry out, but it is not completely clear that they are crying out to God here. We do not have the words *and they cried out to God* in the original text. Do they know to Whom they are calling? Are they calling out just into the sky out of frustration or do they know the God of their fathers? At this point, the answer to that is unclear.

I have known unbelievers—flat out atheists—and they have cried out in pain or in heartache, even though they believed that no one could hear them. A few of them, in very difficult circumstances, even turn to God—but only until the suffering stops.

In any case, God hears these sons of Jacob. Whether their cries were directed towards Him or not, God still heard their cries. That's because these are His people.

Almost every single one of us, at one time or another, has addressed God or has addressed something out there which is beyond ourselves. This usually happens under great pressure, and we cry out (sometimes, only in our minds), *please, help*; or, *please make it stop hurting*; or, whatever. We have all come to a point in our lives where we did not have the strength ourselves, and we called to Someone, something, to somehow intervene and help us. This is the most natural thing in the world for a person to do when under great pressure. Someone in the military in battle might do this on many occasions. Many men in the military have found God in this act of desperation, being gripped by pain, fear and/or despair.

There is so much pain and pressure laid upon the Hebrew slaves that they call out, to Someone, anyone, *help us!* And God heard them.

**Application:** God *hears* the cry of the unbeliever; and if the unbeliever is positive towards God, then God must provide him with the gospel—to allow him to make a choice. This is true, no matter where the unbeliever is located. This is God's guarantee to the human race.

Exodus 2:24 So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

Although it reads, *so God heard their groaning*, this does not mean that God had lost track of the Hebrew people, but on one of His less busy days, He heard them and decided to respond. This is an anthropopathism, where human characteristics are assigned to God which He does not have. When God created the universe, He was aware of the Hebrew people and their situation. However, at this point in human history, God will act. So, the human approach here is, God hears these calls for help and He responds. But God knew in eternity past at what time He would intervene in human history on behalf of His people.

When it says that God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He did not forget about it for a time, and then, suddenly, think, “Oh, yeah, the sons of Jacob. I wonder what they are doing right now?” This is known as language of accommodation. It may appear as if God had forgotten about them, and then, because it is clear that He is now working in their lives, it appears as if He remembers them. God seemed to work closely with the people of Israel during the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and with Jacob’s sons; and there has been, apparently, no direct contact for about 400 years.

God knew every single son of Jacob in eternity past; and knew everything about their daily lives. There was never a time that God did not know every son of Jacob and everything about their individual lives.

At this point, all things considered, it is the right time for God to step in and intervene.

Exodus 2:25 *And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.*

That final verb in the Hebrew is *yâdaʿ* (יָדָע) [pronounced *yaw-DAHG*], and it means, *to know, to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted with, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something; to see; to learn; to recognize [admit, acknowledge, confess]*. Strong’s #3045 BDB #393. The above translation is the NKJV.

Literally, this final verse reads, *And so God sees the sons of Israel and so God knows*. This is what is known as an anthropomorphism. It was not that one day, God knew this about the sons of Israel, which He did not know the day before. In eternity past, prior to the creation of man, God knew this. When we have anthropomorphisms like this, it is explaining God’s behavior in human terms. Have you ever told your son, “God sees what you are doing, boy”? God knew what your son was doing in eternity past; and God knows everything that you have done and will do in eternity past.

What this verse means, is, God is going to spring into action. God is going to do something about the situation of the sons of Israel.

Of all the various translations, *The Message* appears to have gotten this right. Note the actual structure below:

*The Message*

Many years later the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery and cried out. Their cries for relief from their hard labor ascended to God:

God listened to their groaning.  
God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.  
God saw what was going on with Israel.  
God understood.

As an aside, there was a time in my Christian life when I disparaged translations which were not completely literal (paraphrases or thought-for-thought translations, like The Message, the Good News Bible, or the New Living Translation). However, there have been many times when I did not have a complete feel for a verse or a passage, and it has been the less-than-literal translation which has helped to lead me in the right direction. Sometimes, it takes a less-than-literal translation to give us the gist of a verse or passage.

So, why did God wait? Why did He allow this slavery to go on for perhaps 100 or 200 years (or more)? To answer that, let's go back to the days of Noah, when the population was eating, drinking and marrying and giving in marriage. They were too preoccupied with the details of life to give much thought to God. Even though the Hebrew people were under slavery to Egypt, as we have seen, they continued to marry and to have large families. They continued to be preoccupied with the details of life. God had allowed increasing pressure to be put upon them by the Pharaoh until they finally cried out to Him.

God is glorified when we come to Him with our problems. This is a tricky point here. We are to live our lives with knowledge and to deal with our problems by using God's Word in our life. Our souls should be inundated with doctrine and our lives should reflect this. However, there will always be problems and situations that we cannot resolve; it is with these things that we go to God in prayer. God is glorified when we recognize His omniscience and omnipotence, so that we call to Him to deal with the situations which are beyond our own control. He is also glorified when we deal with the situations within our control as a result of intake of His Word. He is glorified when we recognize when we should act and when we should wait upon Him. The slavery of the Jews had to come to a point where they would depend entirely upon Him. In v. 23, it got to the point where they had to call upon God and God could answer their prayers. Recall from v. 23, that some seemed to just call out from personal suffering—perhaps unsure to whom they were calling.

More importantly, why did God move the Jews out of the land of Canaan and into Egypt; and then out of Egypt, back to the land of Canaan?

### **Why did God Move the Jews out of the Canaan to Egypt and then back to Canaan?**

1. The land of Canaan had become more and more degenerate as time progressed. In the past, God already had to level Sodom and Gomorrah due to their tremendous degeneracy.
2. The peoples of Canaan were clearly very degenerate.

3. These peoples of Canaan had a far reaching, negative influence upon the Hebrew people and the Hebrew people needed to be removed from that environment.
4. We saw how Lot and his family were affected by the Sodomites; his wife would look back to their place of residence, despite being urged to leave quickly. Lot's daughters saw no other way to continue their seed without committing incest with their father. This is how corrupted they had become.
5. We studied how Jacob's family nearly intermingled to the degenerate family of Hamor in Gen. 34. Hamor's son raped Jacob's daughter, then kidnaped her, and then proposed intermarriage between the two families. Somehow, he seemed it was reasonable to rape this woman and then marry her afterwards.
6. Separating from the Canaanites would allow the sons of Jacob to progress spiritually without the horrible influence of the degeneracy of the Canaanites.
7. The Egyptians were better disciplined and had a better sense of morality, despite the whole slavery thing.
8. The Egyptians also favored a clear differentiation between themselves and the Hebrew people.
9. God gave the Canaanites additional chances—that was the reason behind the famine for the land of Canaan. Sometimes our last chances with God come in the form of great natural catastrophes.
10. Despite the warnings that the Canaanites undoubtedly had, they fell into deep degeneracy.
11. 400 years earlier, God had told all of this to Abraham:
  - 1) Gen. 15:13–16 Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." (ESV; capitalized)
  - 2) The land that is not theirs is Egypt. The ESV has the word *servants* here, but it ought to be *slaves*.
  - 3) The judgment that God will bring against Egypt is what we will study in Exodus 5–13.
  - 4) During Abraham's day, the Amorites were not degenerate enough to require that God destroy them. No doubt that some of them, in that era, still believed in the Revealed God; and some of them were living, more or less, according to the laws of divine establishment.
  - 5) By the time that Joshua will invade Canaan, their degeneracy will be complete; and very few of them will believe in the Revealed God (some, however, like Rahab, will believe).
12. The Hebrew people will return to the land of Canaan and they will destroy the degenerate Canaanites. They will then possess the land given them by God

Israel had to remain entirely separate from the Canaanites, and there was no way that could happen in the land of Canaan.

### The Glorification of God

As an aside, some people do not like the idea that God is glorified by this or that. They believe that God wanting to be glorified is some sort of massive, deified ego trip. The purpose of God being glorified in this or that situation is so that, other people might recognize that things are made better by a relationship with God and His Word. His being glorified points them in the right direction for life.

If you had the choice between being allowed to raise yourself or be raised by your parents, which is preferable? Most of us were greatly helped by being raised by and guided by our parents, despite our parents being imperfect creatures. Developing a relationship with God, our Creator, is even more important than the relationship with our parents.

Let's approach this from a different parallel situation. I am not sure if you have ever tried to tame a feral cat (or any kind of abused animal, such as a rescue dog from the pound), but part of this process is making that animal understand that you will provide for it, no matter what. The animal needs to know that it can look to you for comfort and care. You do this—generally with food, affection and a soothing voice—but with the care of the animal being the thing which you are trying to achieve. In a very real sense, you are glorifying yourself to this animal, so that you may provide it with the proper care and attention. By your actions, you are setting yourself apart from all other human beings, with the care of the animal being the foremost thing in your mind. The animal is benefitted by a relationship to you, which relationship is partially established by you glorifying yourself to the feral cat (or to the rescue dog).

God is not desiring glorification so that He can enjoy great fame like a rock star or a movie star, but so that you know that you can go to Him for comfort and care. Our relationship with God in a fallen world is how we live in peace from day to day.

## Lesson 024: Exodus 3:1–4

## Moses at the Burning Bush

In chapter 3, we return to Moses in Midian. Time has passed. Moses is nearing the age of 80. He will be called into service by God in this chapter.

### **Moses at the Burning Bush** (I continue to retain the NKJV subheadings)

During the first 40 years of his life, Moses was being trained to become Pharaoh over all Egypt. However, when he killed an Egyptian, the authorities looked for Moses to execute him (probably at the behest of a rival family member). Exodus 2:1–15

In the second half of Exodus 2 and all of 3, this is the second 40 year period of Moses' life, where he is in a Midian desert-wilderness area, living with his father-in-law Jethro, his wife, and two sons. As discussed previously, I believe that this is where Moses enjoyed most of his spiritual growth. This is never stated outright, but there are clues.

The writings of Moses do not lend themselves to a chiasmatic organization as easily as the book of Genesis.

### Chiasm of Exodus 3:1–4:17 (by Hajime Murai)

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| A(3:1-3)    | An angel of the LORD  |
| B(3:4-5)    | God called out Moses  |
| C(3:6)      | "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob"<br>(3:6) (בקעיקחציםהרבא)                       |
| D(3:7-10)   | "lead them out of that land into a land flowing with<br>milk and honey" (3:8) ( בדובלח )                |
| E(3:11-12)  | "it is I who have sent you" (3:12)  |
| F(3:13-14)  | The name of God   |
| E'(3:15)    | "The God has sent me to you" (3:15)   |
| D'(3:16-22) | "lead you up out of the misery of Egypt into the land<br>flowing with milk and honey" (3:17) ( בדובלח ) |
| C'(4:1-9)   | "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob"<br>(4:5) (בקעיקחציםהרבא)                       |
| B'(4:10-12) | "you have spoken to your servant" (4:10)  |
| A'(4:13-17) | Aaron became Moses' spokesman   |

From [http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02\\_Exodus\\_pericope\\_e.html](http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02_Exodus_pericope_e.html) accessed October 18, 2017 and slightly edited.

Exodus 3:1a Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro [= Reuel] his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.

You will recall the Moses came across the daughters of Jethro and he stood up for them against some shepherds who were giving the women a hard time at what appears to be the community well. Jethro was impressed and Moses eventually married one of his daughters.

Jethro is called Reuel back in Exodus 2:18.

Throughout the book of Exodus, it will become clear that Moses has a better relationship with his father-in-law than he does with his wife. There are indications that Moses' wife resisted his authority and did not respect Moses as she should have. There is a case to be made that she may have prepared Moses to deal with a constantly rebellious generation of Israelites.

Exodus 3:1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

The flocks had to be led around the desert-wilderness to find vegetation to eat, to be exercised, and then watered. I believe that this area of the world was much greener than it is today. This verse does suggest that taking the flocks out was far more than a single daily walk. Moses might be gone for a week at a time. No doubt he enjoyed the beauty and the solitude.

**Mount Horeb - Sinai by Francis F. Frith** (an 1858 photograph); from the Museum of Photographic Arts on [Flickr](#); accessed February 28, 2018.

Horeb appears to be the name for the entire mountain range, of which Mount Sinai is a part. This range is called Jebel Musa today.<sup>34</sup>



It is unclear why this is known as the Mountain of God at this point in time. I believe that it is more like that Moses, recounting these events at a later time, knew this as the mountain of God from his later experience. There is no reason to suppose that Moses has a diary that he is keeping right at this time. Later, when in the desert, leading his people, Moses will perhaps have the time to write about the events leading him to that point. By that time, Sinai would be known as the mountain of God. I believe this to be the most logical explanation for this designation being introduced at this time.

If there was any reason for this to be known as the Mountain of God during this period of the narrative, it is not explained to us. I don't believe that there was.

As a shepherd in Midian, this set of mountains meant one thing to Moses; but when he led the children of Israel here, Sinai took on a much different meaning (this seems like a logical assumption to me).

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<sup>34</sup> M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Horeb.

Exodus 3:2 *And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed.*

This is probably a fairly dry desert. If brush is fairly isolated, it would make sense that a bush might catch fire, but it would reasonably burn out in a very short amount of time. However, for some reason, Moses is looking at this bush (it would be unusual for any bush to somehow be on fire with no one around); and as he watches it, he sees that it does not go out.

God's miracles and the way that He makes Himself known are always appropriate to His audience. Moses is alone in the desert-wilderness. Therefore, God does not have to manifest His Presence in a big way (as He would for the sons of Israel when they are camped out in front of Mount Sinai, several months into the future). A relatively small sign—this burning bush—is good enough to capture Moses' attention.

Exodus 3:3 *Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."*

This strikes Moses as being a pretty amazing sight, so he detours off of the path he is on to get a closer look, as the bush does not burn up. It is not unlikely that he is leading his sheep and goats along, this fire catches his eye, and he keeps an eye on it as he walks. After 5 minutes, perhaps, Moses sees that the bush is not burned out; so he goes to investigate it.

Like many people who spend a lot of time alone, Moses talks (or thinks) to himself.

Exodus 3:4a *So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!"*

We are told immediately that God begins to speak to Moses, from the bush, and He says, *Moses, Moses.*

God, on many occasions, has spoken the name of a saint twice.

### **Repeated Names (from the Wells of Living Water Commentary)**

| <b>Repeated name</b>                   | <b>Text/Commentary</b>   |
|--|--|
| 1. "Abraham, Abraham."<br>(Gen. 22:11) | This repetition of Abraham's name displays God's intensity, first in His approval toward Abraham; and, secondly, to stop Abraham from actually killing his son to God as a human sacrifice. God's calling to Abraham is God stopping him from going any further. God will provide Abraham with a substitute sacrifice. |

## Repeated Names (from the Wells of Living Water Commentary)

| Repeated name                       | Text/Commentary   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 2. "Jacob, Jacob" (Genesis 46:2).   | This repetition occurred on the night in which Jacob, as an aged man, was journeying with all that he had to move to Egypt to be with his son Joseph. That night Jacob offered a sacrifice, and the God of Israel with love toward His servant, and in anticipation of the history of the Chosen Nation, said, "Jacob, Jacob."  |
| 3. "Moses, Moses" (Exodus 3:4).     | This occurs when Moses turns aside to see the great sight of a bush burning without being consumed. The Lord cries out, " <b>Moses, Moses,</b> " and continues with, " <b>Do not come near; remove your shoes from your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground.</b> "   |
| 4. "Samuel, Samuel" (1Samuel 3:10). | This repetition marked God's intensity as He beheld the form of the youth, Samuel, eagerly listening for the voice of God. God was intent because, being compelled to set Eli aside, and to refuse his sons as priests over Israel, He had found in Samuel a man to fill in the gap.  |
| 5. "Martha, Martha" (Luke 10:41).   | Here is God's intensity made manifest toward a good woman who meant well, and who loved Him, but who was encumbered with much serving. In "Martha, Martha," is the tinge of sorrow and disappointment toward the sister of Mary, and, with Divine approval toward Mary, who had chosen the good part.<br><br>The problem was not so much that Martha was involved in the varied preparations, but that she judged her sister Mary for wanting to sit at her Lord's feet to hear the teachings of Jesus. |
| 6. "Simon, Simon" (Luke 22:31).     | This time we have the intensity of God, our Lord, toward one of His servants, who was about to be temporarily overcome by Satan. It was then that Christ said, " <b>Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.</b> "  |
| 7. "Saul, Saul" (Acts 9:4).         | We have now God's intensity toward one who was persecuting His children, and therefore, persecuting Him. God was also intent, because the hour had come that Saul's antagonism towards Christ should be set aside so that the one who persecuted, should become the one who would proclaim the name of Jesus.   |

In every case above, the volition of the person to whom God spoke was important in God's plan. What they would do next was important.

We also find this used in Exodus 34:6 (Yahweh, Yahweh); Matt. 7:21,22 (Lord, Lord); Matt. 23:37 (Jerusalem, Jerusalem); Mark 15:34 (Eloi, Eloi) and even by the disciples in Luke 8:24 (Master, Master).

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From <http://www.studydrive.com/commentaries/lwc/view.cgi?bk=0&ch=22> accessed December 8, 2014 (heavily edited).

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Exodus 3:4a So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!”

God speaks to Moses audibly.

Exodus 3:4b And he said, “Here I am.”

Moses responds, identifying himself. He responds to the Divine apparition.

One of the things that we will observe in the book of Exodus is, God gives miracles and signs appropriate to His audience. At this point, out alone in the desert-wilderness, Moses does not require an earthquake where he is left staring down into a 1000 ft. chasm. Moses does not need to view a tremendous lightning storm, with lightning bolts coming down on all sides of him. This burning bush gets his attention. He hears God and he listens to God. This is what God was after.

## Lesson 025: Exodus 3:5–6a

## Moses Speaks with the Burning Bush

Moses is out in the desert with his father-in-law’s flocks, and he sees a very odd thing—a bush that is burning, but would not burn up. He approaches the bush and God speaks to him from the bush.

**Moses Before the Burning Bush** (a graphic); from [Diocese de Uniao da Vitoria](#); accessed September 19, 2018. There were a massive number of graphics to choose from.

Exodus 3:5 Then He [God] said, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.”



The concept of *holiness* is a strictly a concept from God. Something is set apart for divine function because the Lord sets it apart. We find many references to that which is set apart to God in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers (large portions of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers are quotations from God). We only find this word a few times in Deuteronomy, as these are all Moses’ words in Deuteronomy.

God tells Moses that he is standing on holy ground and to remove his sandals. I am assuming that this is done for two reasons: (1) to show that Moses was responsive to God's commands and (2) to establish the concept of God's holiness. Holiness means that God is set apart from this fallen world.

Moses, quite obviously, knows that he will obey the voice of God; and God, being omniscient, knows this as well. So, why does this occur? Why does God say, "Take off your sandals and why does Moses record this? All of this takes place before a great audience of angels, and angels observe and learn from what God says and Moses does. This may be out in the middle of nowhere, and there is probably not a single human being within miles to witness this; but the angels do. Angels are always gathered by God for important events.

Moses' sandals represent the corruption of coming in contact with the world. The sandals were in touch with the dirt and the sand and the offal of both man and beast, and that muck would be carried everywhere by a man's sandals. The analogy being set up is, God is holy and He cannot come into contact with any of the filth of the world.

Jesus, in the New Testament, used a similar concept to represent *rebound*, which is the temporal cleansing of the believer through naming his sins. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, which was a representative analogy. We come into contact with sin in this world. This is represented by the feet being dirty, but in reality, we come into contact with sin through our own volition. Jesus washing the feet of His disciples indicates that He is cleansing them from their contact with the world. This does not mean that we should, prior to entering a church, engage in some kind of foot washing ceremony. It does mean, however, that we need to keep short accounts with God when it comes to the confession of sins (we name our sins to God, not to some person who calls himself a priest). According to 1John 1:9, when we name our sins, then we are cleansed from all unrighteousness.

Even though there are several religions and sects which emphasize the washing of feet or the removal of one's shoes before entering into a religious temple, we need to keep in mind that this is not a mandate laid down by God, but a representative analogy. The person who takes off his shoes for some religious reason does not get it; the person who regularly names his sins to God, gets it.

Saint Stephen recalls this incident when he spoke to a hostile crowd some 1500 years later.

Act 7:30–32 "Now when forty years had passed, an Angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and as he drew near to look, there came the voice of the Lord: 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and did not dare to look. (ESV) (Exodus 3:6, 15)

The Angel is Jesus Christ in His Preincarnate form, appearing to Moses not as an angel, but as a burning bush. That is, regardless of what angels look like, Moses saw a burning bush.

Quite obviously, Moses did not expect to hear anything or anyone speak to him, so when God spoke to him from the fire, this shook him up.

Act 7:33 **Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. (ESV; capitalized) (Exodus 3:5)**

Stephen was going back to accepted Scriptures and events in order to bring his audience to Christ. He was explaining to them that the God of the Bible (that is, the Old Testament; there was no New Testament where Stephen spoke) is Jesus Christ.

The point that Stephen eventually makes is, the Hebrew people were often in rebellion against God. He cites several examples of their rebelliousness, and then says, **"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."** (Acts 7:51–53) (ESV) The Righteous One is, of course, Jesus Christ. The people to whom Stephen spoke had done exactly what their fathers had done.

Back to our narrative. God identifies Himself.

Exodus 3:6a **Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."**

God clearly identifies himself to Moses. Now, Moses had been studying the history of the Hebrew people as he advanced in his preparation in the Pharaoh's palace and he knew about their background and their God.<sup>35</sup> Moses also knew that he was a Hebrew who had been adopted by Egyptian royalty. I think that these are reasonable conclusions that we can draw from Exodus 2:11, when the Hebrews are called *his people*.

Remember that Moses wrote the book of Exodus, and he clearly has a sympathetic view of the Hebrew people who are slaves. When he sees a man beating a slave, Moses takes the side of the slave and kills the man (Exodus 2:12). We may take that incident for granted, but Moses, by that impulsive act, was taking the side of the Hebrew people—whom he barely knew—over the side of the Egyptian people, who raised him. This natural siding with the Hebrew people suggests that Moses knew more than the fact that he was adopted into the Egyptian royal family.

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<sup>35</sup> It is conjecture on my part that Moses was exposed to the teachings of Genesis while in the Pharaoh's palace. There is reasonable evidence that Moses was so taught at some point in his life—and I suspect several times.

God tells Moses, “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” There is no additional explanation recorded, which suggests that Moses understands what God just said to him. This suggests that Moses knows who Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are.

This does require some speculation. Recall that Moses has been raised up in the palace of Pharaoh. Did he know the Scriptures (which would be Genesis and Job)? Did he have access to them? Had they been incorporated into the royal library?

Or, does Moses know his heritage from this priest in Midian?

Or did Moses have later contact with his mother or family (while he is being raised in the palace); and they told him about his background?

Let me suggest that the younger Moses was not well-versed in Genesis and Job; but when he is told that he is an adopted Hebrew child, out from the slaves who live in Goshen; an intelligent and naturally curious Moses would have found out more information.

Clearly, this is speculation, to some degree, but reasonable speculation. Otherwise, why would God introduce Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Why would the Bible tell us the Moses ventured out of the palace to observe his people?

Moses had a natural understanding that he was descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He knew of their God. I assume here that he saw the God of Abraham as his God as well.

Personally, I believe that Moses was taught by a Hebrew scholar when in the palace as a part of his education. Moses would have had many teachers in many disciplines; and no doubt, there would be learned Hebrew men who were teachers as well. It is not out of the question that a Hebrew man taught Moses more than he was commissioned to do; and it is possible that Moses asked him a lot of questions to find out more about his people and his background (this is all speculation on my part).

The second half of Moses’ instruction would have occurred while he was in Midian at the hand of his father-in-law, who understood the Scriptures of that time and possibly even had access to them (or he knew them<sup>36</sup>). Although this is also speculation, Reuel is called a priest. Furthermore, Moses is clearly not a new believer at this point in time.

Knowing that the burning bush was a manifestation of God, Moses could not look upon it. He was afraid.

Jesus refers back to this incident in order to answer a question posed by the Sadducees.

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<sup>36</sup> As I have suggested on many occasions, I believe that the Scriptures were handed down at first by recitation and memorization.

Matt. 22:31–32 [Jesus is speaking to those who do not believe in the resurrection from the dead] **And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living."**

Mark 12:26 **And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?**

Luke 20:37–38 [Jesus is speaking to the Sadducees] **"But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now He is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him."** (ESV; capitalized)

The Sadducees, who do not believe in the resurrection after death, pose the question to Jesus, "If a woman marries, her husband dies; remarries, and her second husband dies; and she eventually marries 7 men; then to whom is she married to in the resurrection?"

The idea here is, the Sadducees are not after information. This is not some theological question that has been bothering them for years. They did not believe in the resurrection in the first place. However, they did figure to trip Jesus up with this question.

Jesus goes back to His meeting with Moses. He said to Moses, **'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'** Jesus then makes the point, **"He is not God of the dead, but of the living."** This means that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive at this time that Jesus is speaking—in the resurrection. What Jesus has done is, He first answered the question of the Sadducees (that men and women are not married in the resurrection), but He emphasizes the fact that the resurrection is real to the Sadducees, who did not believe in it.

## **Lesson 026: Ex. 3:6–10 Acts 7:30–39, 51–54 Moses the Burning Bush/St. Stephen**

Back to Midian. Moses is out in the Midian desert speaking to God.

Exodus 3:6a **Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."**

Moses has approach the burning bush, and God speaks to him out of the midst of the bush.

Exodus 3:6b **And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.**

When Moses realized that he was speaking to God, he hid his face; he was afraid to look at the burning bush.

To be clear, Moses is not really seeing God but a *manifestation* of God. Seeing God is like *seeing the wind*; you cannot actually see wind. You can see its effects; you can see when it moves objects around (like rain or leaves); and you can feel it; but you cannot see the wind. Nor can we see God.

Moses clearly has some understanding of what is going on; and he is also fearful.

Exodus 3:7 *And the Lord said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.*

Moses has seen some of the oppression endured by the Hebrew slaves in Egypt; and God says that He has seen this as well; and that He knows their sorrows and difficulties.

At this point, it is not completely clear that the Hebrew slaves prayed to their God; that they called out to Him for deliverance. God says, "*I have heard their cry*" but He does not say, "I have heard them cry out to Me." Again, this suggests to me that the people of God did not necessarily believe in Him at this time. They may have known of God; and they no doubt they knew their Scriptures. They may have continued to meet and to hear the reading of the book of Genesis; but I think that it is likely that very few of them believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (this is conjecture on my part). Perhaps some of them felt abandoned by their God; perhaps some of them had come to doubt this God. God seemed very active in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and Joseph. The people may not have distinguished between God's activity in Jacob's life and what He did in Joseph's life (God appeared on several occasions to Jacob; but not to Joseph). I think that it is very likely that the sons of Israel felt abandoned by their God; and that many doubted Him because He was not directly involved in their lives as they believed that He ought to be.

Some of the Exodus generation may have become Hebrew deists, believing that God interacted with their forefathers, but has since then, left His people to fend for themselves. This would explain why the Scriptures speak of the people crying out, but not necessarily to God.

Exodus 3:8 *So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.*

God continues to speak to Moses. God says that it is now time for Him to deliver His people out of the bondage of slavery and take them to the Land of Promise.

This is the first time that there is a reference to Canaan as a land flowing with milk and honey, but it will be repeated on many occasions: Exodus 3:8,17 13:5 33:3 Lev. 20:24 Num. 16:13,14 Deut. 6:3 11:9 26:9,15 27:3 31:20 Jos. 5:6 Jer. 11:5 32:22 Ezek. 20:6,15.

The list of peoples currently living in the land occurs here; but God first spoke this promise to Abraham.

Gen. 15:18–21 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites."

You will notice that there are more peoples in the land when God spoke to Abram. The Kenizzites and the Kadmonites are never mentioned again. The Kenites may have migrated to Midian; and Moses' father-in-law may be a Kenite (Judges 4:11). Others of the Kenites may have become immersed in the Amalekites, but Saul convinces them to separate out in 1Sam. 15:6.

Exodus 3:9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.

The cry of the sons of Israel has come to God, but this does not mean that they have prayed to Him specifically. Their lives are so miserable that they are crying out.

On the year anniversary of President Trump's election, some of those on the left gathered [to scream out into the universe their frustration](#). They were not calling to God; they were crying out into the air. The sons of Israel faced great difficulties each day, being enslaved to Egypt; and they cried out in frustration, in sadness and in desperation. It is not clear if they knew that God was listening.

Exodus 3:10 Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

God will send Moses to deliver His people. This comes completely out of left field for Moses. His life in Egypt is long in the past. Furthermore, he did not see himself as a leader, despite his royal training.

Here is how Saint Stephen speaks of this history. Bear in mind that Stephen is making some important points to his hostile audience. He is quoting, paraphrasing and summarizing existing Scriptures.

### Acts 7:30–39, 51–54

| Scripture  | Text/Commentary  |
|--|--|
| Acts 7:30 "Now when forty years had passed, an Angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. | Moses has now lived in Midian for 40 years. The Angel is Jesus Christ, the Revealed Member of the Trinity, presents Himself to Moses as a burning bush that will not burn out. |

## Acts 7:30–39, 51–54

| Scripture   | Text/Commentary  |
|---|--|
| Acts 7:31 When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and as he drew near to look, there came the voice of the Lord:   | Moses saw the burning bush, and noticed that it did not burn out; so he approached it. From the bush came the voice of the LORD.   |
| Acts 7:32 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and did not dare to look.  | God spoke to Moses, telling him Who He was. This clearly frightened Moses. Apparently, he looked away, primarily out of fear.  |
| Acts 7:33 Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.'  | God tells Moses to remove his sandals, as anywhere close to the bush was sacred ground. Moses' sandals would have been covered in dirt and whatever filth he stepped in.   |
| Acts 7:34 I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.'      | God told Moses that he observed His people, as slaves in Egypt, and their groanings. He tells Moses that He will deliver His people; and He will begin by sending Moses back to Egypt.   |
| Acts 7:35 "This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?'—this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. | The people had previously rejected Moses. He tried to stop a fight between two men, and one of them essentially blackmailed Moses, causing Moses to do a runner. He will become the ruler and redeemer of Israel, by means of the Angel Who appeared to him. |
| Acts 7:36 This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.  | Here, Stephen sums up many chapters of the book of Exodus with this summary statement. <i>This man</i> is a reference to Moses, of course.   |
| Acts 7:37 This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.'   | Stephen is obviously well versed in the Scriptures, because he jumps ahead to Deut. 18:15, which he quotes from there. The prophet that God would raise up is Jesus. This is one of the many prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament.                       |

## Acts 7:30–39, 51–54

| Scripture   | Text/Commentary  |
|---|--|
| <p>Acts 7:38–39 This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him in Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received living Words to give to us, to whom our fathers did not desire to be subject, but thrust him away, and turned their hearts back to Egypt,...</p> | <p>As we will study in the book of Exodus, the congregation in the wilderness—the ancestors of those to whom Stephen is speaking—rejected the authority of Moses and, on many occasions, wanted to return to Egypt. Do you see how Stephen connects those people who are calling out in suffering to what they do and say in the desert-wilderness? A few months later, they express their negative volition towards Moses and towards their God.</p>  |
| <p>Now let's jump ahead to the conclusions which Stephen draws.</p>   |  |
| <p>Act 7:51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.</p>   | <p>Stephen calls his audience, who are Jews, a stiff-necked people, meaning that they resisted God with their volition. They are uncircumcised in their heart and ears. This means they refused to hear the truth. These people, to whom Stephen was speaking, do just as their fathers did.</p>   |
| <p>Acts 7:52–53 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."</p>  | <p>Stephen asks, "Were there any prophets that your fathers did not persecute? This has been Israel's history and Stephen is saying, "Look at your own history and then look at yourselves."</p> <p>The ones who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One are the prophets. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies concerning Jesus; yet the fathers rejected and harmed the prophets, and the people standing before Stephen rejected the Righteous One, whom they murdered.</p> |
| <p>Act 7:54 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him.</p>   | <p>Now and again, when you correct someone, they listen, they recognize, "Yeah, you are right about that." But, more often it seems, when you correct someone, they hate you for it. That is the response of this audience.</p>  |
| <p>Stephen was then stoned to death by his audience, the stiff-necked Jews, who were uncircumcised of heart and ears.</p>   |  |

Moses is leading the people out of Egypt in v. 36. I used purple text whenever Stephen appeared to be quoting directly from the Old Testament. I use red text for the NT.

Now, let's return to Moses, who is still in Midian speaking to God, Who has revealed Himself as the burning bush.

Exodus 3:11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

By this interaction, it is clear that Moses is accepting that this is God to Whom he is speaking. However, he expresses some question as to whether he is all in on the plan of God in all of its details. Essentially, Moses will tell God, “I think you have got the wrong guy for Your mission.”

Moses seems to take the attitude, “Surely you have someone more qualified than me to do this.”

**Application:** The amazing thing is, in the Church Age, *you* are a Moses. God has a specific plan for you; a plan that is important. Even though neither of us are going to lead the people of Israel from point A to point B, what God has for us is vital and fulfilling. The idea is, at the end of our life, we ought to be thinking (or saying), “Damn, that was a good life—thank You, God!” What it takes to ascertain that plan is, the regular application of rebound (naming your sins to God) and the daily intake of Bible doctrine (ideally under the same pastor at a brick and mortar church<sup>37</sup>). Spiritual growth will lead to the apprehension of your purpose in this life.

Exodus 3:12 So He said, “I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

God's signs often make me smile. “Here is the sign that you will lead My people out of Egypt: you will lead My people out of Egypt and serve God right here on this mountain. At that point, you will take in your surroundings and recognize that I did what I said I would do.” The fact that this will all come to pass is the sign that Moses will be able to do what God has called for him to do. “The fact that, a few months from now, you will find yourself back here, at this mountain, leading the people of Israel in worship—that will be your sign!” God certainly has a sense of humor.

I recall praying to God about something—in fact, on a number of occasions. I recall sometime later—actually, many years later—looking up at my surroundings (I think I was listening to R. B. Thieme, Jr. on an MP3 recording at this time), and I realized that God had answered that prayer.

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<sup>37</sup> Whereas, I believe that it is possible for some people during some portions of their lives to grow spiritually from afar, I believe that God designed the structure of the local church to continue and to service 95–99% of all believers, even in this age of the internet.

## Lessons 027–029: Exodus 3:11–14 Pronouncing God’s Name in the Old Testament

This is going to be an unusual set of lessons. You may or may not find it edifying. God has a name in the Old Testament; and the pronunciation of that name has been lost—more or less—to history. We are going to examine that in great detail. I will even offer you what I believe is the accurate way to say God’s name from that era, when we come to the end of this treble lesson.

Whereas, most of these lessons can be read while sitting down for coffee, this is a much longer lesson (14 pages) and will require more time to digest it all.

Moses is out in the desert-wilderness of Midian, at the Mountain of God, speaking to God, Who has manifested Himself as a burning bush.

Exodus 3:13 Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”

Moses apparently was not that pleased with the sign that God gave him (“But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”—Exodus 3:12b; ESV). God’s sign to Moses that he will lead his people out of Israel, is this: a month or so in the future, Moses is going to find himself at this mountain serving God, having brought the people of Abraham from Egypt to here. “This is your sign, Moses,” God tells him; “you are going to do the things which I ask you to do.”

So, not really impressed with the sign that God offers, Moses tries a different approach. “Okay, let’s say I go to them, and I tell them God spoke to me. What should I say Your Name is?” Bear in mind, the last time that Moses spoke to the Hebrew people, he realized that he needed to swiftly leave Egypt or be executed. Several of them did not really take kindly to him then.

Moses is obviously apprehensive. This meeting with God is sudden and what God wants Moses to do seems like way too much. Therefore, Moses searches for a way to step back and exit from this whole deal (this is my opinion on his thinking). He has no idea on how he will be received. He is thinking quickly on his feet, trying to get out of what God has told him to do.

Exodus 3:14 And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

God’s response is interesting. He does not even say, “I am God” or “I am Y<sup>e</sup>howah.” He said, “I am Who I am.” Or, “I am that I am.”

A lot has been said about God's name. There are even movements and cults based upon God's name and how some perceive it. Don't worry—at the end of this lesson, I am not going to ask you to join anything.

## A Discussion of God's Name—It's Meaning and Pronunciation

The Hebrew copyist reverently transcribed the letters *JHWH* or *YHWH*, which is the personal name of any of the three individual members of the Godhead. These are not two different Hebrew forms but two different English forms. Such reverence for God's name (also known as the Tetragrammaton) is clearly refreshing when compared to the familiarity with which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is used today.

Unfortunately, this Jewish reverence for God's name changed from respect to legalism. The reader of the Scriptures was enjoined, apparently by the religious class, to never pronounce this sacred name, but to substitute in a less sacred name, *Adonai* (or *Elohim*) when reading a passage of the Bible aloud. In this way, the Sacred Name never was spoken by a sinful mouth and its sound reached the ears of a sinful hearer (that was the idea). This was not at the insistence of any passage in the Bible; it just became a Jewish tradition, as an extracurricular attempt at some sort of piety.

Originally, the Hebrew language, whether narrative or poetry, was simply written in all consonants; but, it was read aloud on many occasions (entire books were read aloud during specific feast days). But, every time the sacred name of God was found in the Scripture, the reader said the word *Adonai* instead. As a result, the pronunciation of the sacred name was lost forever, because there were no vowels in the manuscripts to tell us how the word sounded. But, when they stopped reading the name of God; its pronunciation was lost—all as a result of false piety.

You see, the people of Israel had the Old Testament Scriptures, but they were written only with consonants. Just so you understand, there were no vowels anywhere in the original Hebrew Scriptures; but they were read and reread so many times, that everyone knew what they were reading. Their language was such that, they could read aloud an entire book which lacked vowels, spaces, punctuation or paragraphs. Originally, a Hebrew book was just a series of consonants.

The Jewish people knew how to say all of the words because they knew all of these words and they had heard the passage spoken aloud many times. But at some point, a generation came on the scene who had never heard the sacred Tetragrammaton spoken aloud and they had no vowels in the Scriptures to help them with the pronunciation.

The Scriptures were not fully vocalized in the text until the Middle Ages by the Masorites, who added vowel points to the text of the Hebrew Scriptures. These vowel points were dots and dashes and small markings made above or below the consonantal text, so that the proper pronunciation was introduced, but without changing the sacred text which lacked vowels. If one ignores all of these *jots and tittles*, one still sees the consonantal

## A Discussion of God's Name—It's Meaning and Pronunciation

text exactly as it has been preserved for thousands of years.

You may have heard of the Masorite text or the Masorite manuscripts. These are the primary Old Testament Hebrew manuscripts which we use to make our current translations. We draw upon these manuscripts made between A.D. 800–1300. We have other manuscripts which we look back on, if a passage is difficult to unravel, or has a questionable rendering. But, perhaps 95% or more of the English text which we read is based upon a handful of Masoretic texts from this era.

[As an aside, some consonants in the Hebrew text served double-duty as consonants and vowels for many centuries, but they did not provide a full vocalization of Hebrew words.]

The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT Scriptures) further concealed this Sacred Name by using the Greek word κύριος (kurios, meaning "Lord") to translate YHWH. They did not know how to pronounce the LORD's sacred name, so instead of providing a Greek transliteration, they used a different word altogether (virtually all Hebrew proper nouns are transliterated—in the Greek Septuagint or if they are found in the New Testament).

The Greek translators did nearly a letter-by-letter transcription of all proper names, from Hebrew letters into Greek letters. However, Hebrew and Greek are not equivalent languages. There is no such thing as an *h* in the Greek. There is a *rough breathing* before some words beginning with vowels, and we sound that out as an *h*, and often use the *h* when giving the English equivalent; but, there is no such thing in the Greek as an *h* at the end of a word. Well, many Hebrew names end in *ah* (Zechariah, Elijah); so the Greeks finish those names off with an *as* instead (Zacharias, Elias).<sup>38</sup> But, apart from a number of exceptions, Hebrew proper names are given a nearly exact representation in the Greek, letter-for-letter.

[It is significant to note here that Jesus Christ did not anywhere concern Himself with the correct way to pronounce YHWH; He most naturally accepted the title LORD (κύριος).]

The Latin Vulgate did the same thing as do most of our English translations. However, there are visual clues in the English translations: when we find the words "Lord" or "God" written in small caps, then we know that the Hebrew word behind the word LORD is YHWH.

To further add to the confusion, although YHWH occurs nearly 7,000 times in the Old Testament, it is translated *Jehovah* less than a dozen times in the RSV and in the AV.

One problem, when it comes to the correct pronunciation of the name of God, is, there

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<sup>38</sup> We are generally not aware of this as, almost every English Bible provides us with a transliteration that is consistent between the Old and New Testaments.

## A Discussion of God's Name—It's Meaning and Pronunciation

is no *J* in the Hebrew (or in the Greek). Even though there are dozens of names like of Fire old Bible guys like Jacob, Joshua, Judah, Jediah, James, Jude, etc. there is no letter *J* in either language. This *J* has been inserted instead of a *Y* (and, occasionally, instead of other letters).

In the original Hebrew manuscripts, the words were in all capital consonant letters. When read, the vowels were appropriately vocalized by the speaker, but not with the tetragrammaton, because the reader said LORD instead of God's proper name. Therefore, the pronunciations of God's proper name has been lost forever to history. The vowel points were added well after the birth of Christ, millennia after some of the Scriptures were written. Now the vowel points are put in, but it is too late for them to recapture the pronunciation of *YHWH*. What has been done is the vowel points for "Adonai" have been placed within *JHWH* (more or less) for the present day translation Jehovah. This occurred as late in history as 1520 AD by Galatinus. Even several of his contemporaries objected to this pronunciation as being historically and grammatically inaccurate. Many modern era scholars prefer the pronunciation/translation *Yahweh*.

*"Yahweh* is almost always regarded as the 3<sup>rd</sup> person, singular, masculine, imperfect tense from the root hawah, an old form of the root hayah" [*The Emphasized Bible*]. *Hayah* is the word *to be* in the Hebrew.

This is a reasonable theory—possibly correct and possibly not.

Hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced *haw-YAW*] means *to be, to exist, to become*. Some scholars do not believe that this name for God is tied to the imperfect tense [*The New Bible Dictionary* by J.D. Douglas, p.478—the imperfect tense in the Hebrew often begins with a *y*] but regard it as strictly a substantive built upon the word hāwâ. When God told Moses to **say I AM has sent you**, this is written 'eh<sup>e</sup>yeh (אֶהְיֶה) [pronounced 'e-h<sup>e</sup>-YEH] (the superscript *e* is sometimes the way that the Hebrews indicated that there was not to be a vowel there). This is not the same as the tetragrammaton *YHWH* (יהוה), although there are some similarities. As Rotherham pointed out, God's Name is closer to the verb *to become*, which is hâwâh (הָוָה) [pronounced *haw-WAW* or *haw-VAW*].

One of the odd results of this confusion about God's name is that Jehovah's Witnesses have distorted the missing Proper Name of God and have touted this discovery as though they had suddenly found something that no one else knew about. Then they have distorted *JHWH* and do not realize (even as the Jews did not realize) that Jesus Christ is *JHWH*.

Strictly speaking, as Douglas points out, this is the only *name* for God used in the Old Testament. When anyone would **"call upon the name of..."**, the next word would always be *YHWH*. God will say, **"This is My Name forever"** (Exodus 3:15). In the incarnation, we now call on the name of the God-Man, Jesus Christ (which is an English transliteration from the Greek).

## A Discussion of God's Name—It's Meaning and Pronunciation

God's name is tied directly to this passage of Scripture in Exodus that we are studying. In the authorized version, this is translated "I am that I am." *The Emphasized Bible* translates this "I will become whatsoever I please." The verb *hâyâh* in this verse is repeated, twice in succession then at the end of the verse. It means *to be, to exist, to become*. Verbs are repeated in the Hebrew to give great significance to their meaning. This could be translated, *I am that I am; I am the one existing [eternally]; I keep on being the one existing [eternally]*.

### A discussion of John 8:58:

What will help us in this translation is an examination of John 8:58. Of all the disciples, John seemed to be the only one to have a full grasp as to what was occurring during our Lord's earthly ministry. He may well of been one of the simplest disciples, or, at the very least, the least literate in the Greek language (his Greek is simple enough for the first year Greek student to translate), yet John understood that Jesus Christ claimed to be equal with God and he understood that the cross was necessary (he was the only disciple at the crucifixion). These two points seem to have eluded the other disciples during our Lord's earthly ministry, therefore we find Jesus' deity emphasized primarily in John's gospel. John 8:57–59 reads: *The Jews therefore said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said unto them, "Truly truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM." Therefore, they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus was hidden and went out of the temple.* One important significance of this passage is, this is a clear reference to Jesus in the New Testament being JHWH in the Old. Certainly, many who read this in the English do not grasp this, but the Jews understood what Jesus was saying. They understood this statement to be blasphemous (in their minds), and they took up stones with which to stone our Lord.

A portion of the Greek from this passage reads: *πρὶν ἂβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμί* (or, *prin Abraam genesthai ego eimi*). *Γίνομαι* (*to become*) is in the aorist middle infinitive, the aorist tense referring to a point in time. It is a deponent verb, which is why it is called the middle voice. The infinitive often states purpose. The word itself, in its most simple derivation means *to become*; however, *to be born* or *to come into existence* are also accurate renderings. The point in time referred to was Abraham's lifetime.

Ego is "I" and it is added for emphasis, because grammatically it is not needed. The final word is the absolute status quo verb "to be" in the present active indicative, which is continuous action in the present time. This puts our Lord outside of time, prior to Abraham and continuing up until that moment. Literally, this reads, *"Prior to Abraham coming into being, I [even I] AM [or, I kept on existing]."*

So, there is a point in human history when Abraham was born and lived (= *came into being*); but prior to that time, Jesus continued existing [= *I AM*]. Jesus is claiming to be eternal, existing prior to Abraham *and* standing right before the people in John 8:58.

## A Discussion of God's Name—It's Meaning and Pronunciation

In the Septuagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament, when Moses asked our Lord what is His name so that he could tell it to the Hebrews, God said, "Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν." The additional two Greek words are the definite article and the present participle of *I am*. The participle is a verbal adjective, which, in this case, functions as a substantive. Or (now I am translating the Old Testament passage from the Greek Septuagint), "I, even I, keep on being the one being." Or, "I, even I, am, the I am." Or, "I, even I, keep on being the one who exists [eternally]."

To sum up, what Jesus said in John 8:58 is a direct reference back to God identifying Himself by name to Moses (this is the passage that we have been studying in Exodus 3); and in making this reference, Jesus made Himself equal to God.

Jesus, when speaking to the Jews, is saying, "What God said to Moses—that is Me speaking."

Exodus 3:14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

The New Testament passages is presented below using *An Understandable Version* (a translation of the NT). The insertion and commentary is theirs.

### Jesus Speaks of Himself as the *I am* (the AUV)

We find similar phrasing used by our Lord in John 8:52–59:

The Jews [i.e., the authorities] replied, "Now we know that you are dominated by an evil spirit. Abraham and the prophets [all] died and [yet] you are saying, 'If a person obeys my message, he will never experience death.' Are you greater [i.e., more important] than our forefather Abraham and the prophets, who [all] died? Who do you think you are?"

Jesus answered them, "If I were to honor myself, that honor would be worthless. [But] it is my Father who honors me [and] you say He is your God. Now you people have not known Him [i.e., to be your Lord], but I know Him. And if I should say, 'I do not know Him' I would be a liar like you. But I [do] know Him, and I obey His message. Your forefather Abraham was glad that he could look forward to my day [i.e., by faith he anticipated the coming of the Messiah. See Heb. 11:13ff]. And he saw it [by faith] and was glad."

So, the Jews said to Him, "You are not even fifty years old [yet] and have you seen Abraham?"

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am." [Note: The words "I am" were probably construed as a reference to being Deity. See Exodus 3:14].

## Jesus Speaks of Himself as the *I am* (the AUV)

So, they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself [or “was hidden,” suggesting a miraculous departure] and left the Temple [area]. (AUV)

Even though people even argue about this today—whether Jesus told people that He is God—the Jews who spoke His language understood both what He said and how He was referencing back to God’s original words to Moses; and therefore they picked up stones to stone Him for this blasphemy—*He made Himself equal to God!* The Greek-speaking, Jewish crowd fully understood that He was making Himself equal to God.

There are some religious groups (both Jewish and Christian) who do not write out the word *God*, but they write *G-d* instead.

## Is *G-d* more respectful than *God*?

There has been a great deal of confusion over God’s name; and this confusion has been perpetuated for thousands of years. The Jews, at some point, decided that the proper name for God was holy (It is); but then they decided that they could no longer say it aloud (perhaps the idea is, they are speaking from their corrupt mouths). So when reading Holy Scripture aloud, they said *Adonai* rather than *Y<sup>e</sup>howah*. By their calculation, *Adonai* was more of a title for God, and, therefore, less sacred than *Y<sup>e</sup>howah*. This is taking some true information and making a confused application to it. God did not want His Word changed; and saying *Adonai* rather than *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* is not better, holier, or more spiritual. This was strictly a tradition of men. Nowhere in the Old Testament did God propose that they do this. If I were to guess, this all took place during the intertestamental period (the 400 year period time between when the Old and New Testaments were written<sup>1</sup>).

The original manuscripts of the Old Testament were written with consonants only. Because these words had been read many times, generation after generation, people knew what those words were and how to pronounce them, even without the vowels being found in the text (there were no spaces between words or paragraphs either). However, since God’s holy name was no longer spoken aloud, after a few generations, exactly how His name was pronounced was lost to history.

Hundreds of years later, the Masorites inserted vowel points (little dots and dashes above and below the text), which help us today to pronounce these words. The addition of these vowel points (*jots and tittles*), does not actually change the consonantal text. Block out the vowel points (above and below) and you have the original text right before your eyes (except for the fact that there were no verses, chapters, or even separations between words).

Centuries later, this has affected some Judaistic and Christian groups, so that, instead of *God*, they write *G-d*, because, somehow, that is more spiritual. Phony intellectuals often do that same thing (people who do not necessarily subscribe to the teachings of

## Is *G-d* more respectful than *God*?

the Bible). I have exchanged ideas with some atheists who carefully write *G-d* rather than *God*. They think that they are privy to some inside intellectual information when they do this, but they actually reveal their abysmal ignorance by writing *G-d* (perhaps I am being somewhat hyperbolic here). They are not in possession of knowledge that you lack; they are simply confused about the limited knowledge that they have.

The reason that we know that this is silly is, the Jews originally left the vowels out of all words, not just the words for Deity. Since they decided to no longer say the proper name for *God*, they lost the pronunciation of His name. However, when the Masorites added vowels, these vowels are added for *all other* names and titles of God. So, leaving out the vowels of the Divine Name at the point was not due to some deep holy respect for God, but simply because they did not know how to say the name, and therefore, they had no idea what vowels should be inserted in His Name. So the traditional Masoretic text for the Old Testament does not leave out any of these vowels for names like *Elohim* (which is most often translated *God*).

As an aside, all divine names in the Greek text of the New Testament has vowels in it; only *YHWH* lacks vowel points in the Greek Septuagint (also call the LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament) *because they don't know what these vowel points are!*

There is a legitimate reason why the vowels are often left out of the Sacred Tetragramaton *YHWH* today. It is because we are not completely certain of how to actually say that name. The Masoretic text has the vowels for *Adonai* and *Elohim* and *El* (as well as all other names for God), because we have a reasonable idea of how to say those words. Translators know what vowel points to insert.

It is legitimate for a modern translation to give the rendering *YHWH* (or, *JHWH*) when referring to *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* in the Old Testament.

Given all of this information, it is completely illogical to spell some names and titles of Deity with dashes instead of using the vowel or vowels which belong there. It is not more holy, it is not more intellectual, it is not more spiritual.

Bear with me, as I am going to say something which borders on blasphemy. Some preachers do not say *God*, they say *Gawd*, almost pronouncing it as having two syllables. Saying *Gawd* with almost two syllables is the verbal equivalent of writing *G-d*. It is not more holy, it is not more intellectual and it is not more spiritual. It is like saying *Gawd* rather than *God*.

The vowels are missing from *YHWH* because the Masorites do not know how it was pronounced. They did not leave the vowels out to be more respectful of the Name. The other titles and names for God were spoken aloud, so Masorites knew how to say those words and, thus, they put in the vowels for *all other* names and titles for *God*.

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Do the same people write J-s-s and Chr-st? There is absolutely nothing in the Bible which suggests that this makes sense.

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<sup>1</sup> The Old Testament was actually committed to writing over a period of about 1000 years. I believe that there is a period of time before that—1000 years or even more—when the books of Genesis and Job were *written*, their text being transmitted orally from generation to generation. Then there was 400 years, when there are no revelation given by God. And then Jesus was born and the entire New Testament was written in about 60 years (from A.D. 40–100, give or take).

There are several questions to be answered: How should we deal with God's proper Old Testament in a translation? What should our pronunciation of God's name be? Should the Unspoken Name be spoken?

The ESV; capitalized is used below:

### How Should We Deal with the Pronunciation of YHWH?

1. There seems to be general agreement that YHWH has been built upon the Hebrew verb "to be." There is disagreement upon whether or not His proper Name is built upon the imperfect tense. However, it seems to be clear that, somehow, God's Name is based upon or related to the Hebrew verb for "to be." Verses like Exodus 3:8 and John 8:58 seem to suggest that.
2. YHWH or JHWH depends upon the transliteration of the Hebrew letters. Over time, many have taken the Hebrew *y* (yodh) and have substituted in a *j*.
3. YHWH does seem to be the only proper name for God in the Old Testament. Elohim (God) is more of a title or designation. Elohim also refers to the Godhead. It is in the plural and sometimes refers to the Trinity. JHWH refers to individual members of the Trinity.
4. Jesus Christ is YHWH.
  - 1) Jesus testifies as to Who He is. Exodus 3:14 **God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" Compare this to John 8:58 **Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."** Jesus makes Himself equivalent to the God of Exodus 3:14. Those who heard Him understood this and took up stones to stone Him for blasphemy in John 8:59.**
  - 2) Both Peter and John identify Jesus with YHWH of the Old Testament. Isaiah 43:14–15 **Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "For your sake I send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King."** Note these names by which God identifies Himself. Peter calls Jesus *the Master Who bought them*: 2Peter 2:1 **But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. John writes, in Rev. 5:9 **And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for****

## How Should We Deal with the Pronunciation of YHWH?

- God from every tribe and language and people and nation,... God is the Redeemer in the Old Testament and Jesus is the Redeemer (Purchaser) in the New. See also Gal. 3:13 (which is Paul's writing).
- 3) Isaiah 43:3a **For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.** Then God testifies: Isaiah 43:11 **I, I am the LORD, and besides Me there is no Savior.** God is Savior and Redeemer in Isa. 49:26 60:16. Jesus is Savior and Lord in Luke 2:11; Savior of the world in John 4:42; He is the Savior of all people 1Tim. 4:10; and Jesus is called *Savior* in many passages, including Philip. 3:20 1Tim. 1:1 2:3 Titus 1:4 2:13 2Peter 1:11. If God's testimony is, **"There is no other Savior besides Me,"** then Who is this Jesus?
  - 4) Jesus is called *God* in John 1:1–3, 14; and in 2Peter 1:1.
  - 5) Many other titles and passages could be offered here. See also Mark 1:24 Luke 1:49 Isa. 43:11 Hosea 13:4 compared with Luke 2:11 John 4:42 1John 4:14.
  - 6) We need not worry too much about how we pronounce YHWH as He is Jesus Christ (and our pronunciation is somewhat different than found in the Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic). We transliterate *Jesus* and *Christ*; giving them an English spin. If we heard His name in the Greek or Aramaic, most of us probably would not recognize it.
5. I should add this point: the Holy Spirit is YHWH. Ex 17:7 Heb 3:7-9 Num 12:6 2Peter 1:21
  6. Also, the Holy Spirit is God. Heb 10:15-17 compared with Jer. 31:33-34; Heb. 3:7-11 compared with Psalm 95:7-11; Isa. 6:8-10 with Acts 28:25-27.
  7. God the Father is YHWH Psalm 143:1 (all prayer is directed toward God the Father).
  8. God's Word is placed above His Name Psalm 138:2.
  9. Despite all of the discussion in this special study, **Jesus Christ nowhere makes an issue out of His name YHWH.** Some of offered up poor explanations for this.
    - 1) One of the poorer explanations for this which I have heard for this is that, Jesus was not a scribe or a literary critic. He was not learned in textual criticism.
    - 2) Another explanation is that He did not want to confuse the religious people of that day by bringing up deep theological issues. He was being accommodating to the populace by not using God's true name but instead He followed the conventions of the day.
    - 3) To refute these positions, it is certain that Jesus Christ is YHWH and therefore He knows His Own name. He often taught things which were difficult for the disciples and for others to understand. He knew the Scriptures. Jesus Christ was neither illiterate in the Scriptures nor was He necessarily condescending to man. Jesus did not leave out the deeper theological points. And He was certainly not ignorant of His Own Name.
    - 4) Furthermore, Jesus did not accept the religious conventions of His day. We are saved by believing in *Jesus Christ*. To press a point, this was not

## How Should We Deal with the Pronunciation of YHWH?

the way the early Jews or Greeks pronounced His name. This is not how His name is pronounced in Mexico. This is not how His name is pronounced in France or Germany or in Japan. The pronunciation is a matter of regional significance. We believe in Jesus Christ, in His work and in His Person. Just because we pronounce His name differently than those in other countries; and, more significantly with respect to this study, differently than He pronounced it, we are not any less saved. Furthermore, if this were an issue of great importance, then Jesus would have spoken about it. He did not accommodate anyone when it came to blasphemy or spiritual ignorance. My point is, when it comes to the pronunciation of *Jesus*, there is probably no one today who says it the way others said His Name in A.D. 30. However, the exact pronunciation of His Name is not an issue in our salvation. The Person and Work of Christ are the issues in salvation.

10. There is a problem if we maintain that Jesus is not God; or believe that Jesus is simply a really good moral teacher. Then we are preaching another Jesus (2Cor. 11:4).
11. Paul, who undoubtedly delves into deep theological issues, nowhere in the New Testament epistles makes an issue out of the pronunciation of YHWH nor does he make any allusions to correcting the way YHWH's name was buried in the Septuagint. The same goes for the other writers of Scripture.
12. When quoting Old Testament Scripture, both Jesus and Paul use the word κύριος to translate YHWH. They do not use a transliteration. Matt. 4:7,10 Mark 13:36 Rom. 9:28-29 2Cor.6:17-18
13. Therefore, if Jesus never made an issue out of this and Paul never made an issue out of this, we should not. That is, if we can figure out how to pronounce *YHWH*, that will not make us any more spiritual or any more mature. That does not mean, however, that we will not delve into that. In this particular doctrine, there were many things that we touched upon that were important, and yet related, at least tangentially, to His name.
14. It is important to understand that God was revealed to man in the Old Testament and that the God that was revealed to them was Jesus Christ. 95% of the references to YHWH in the OT refer directly to Jesus Christ, the revealed member of the Trinity. In His incarnation, as the unique Person of the universe, as the God-man, YHWH is now known to us by a different name: Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament prior to the cross, His name was YHWH (or, more properly, *Yahweh* or *Y<sup>e</sup>howah*). In the New Testament times, in the church age, His name is Jesus.

This information was not given to you so that you can grab the first Jehovah's witness that you see and corner him. They are like any other religious unbeliever<sup>39</sup>—this issue is Who and What Jesus Christ did and what He did for them on the cross. They trust completely in His finished work on the cross and they are saved; if they do not, then they will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire (another issue which you do not need to argue with them).

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Unbelievers who are trying to earn their way into heaven are the most difficult of all to deal with. Jesus Christ and John the Baptist called religious legalists vipers and serpents because they led the Jews astray. If a Jehovah's Witness is interested in the gospel, then they will approach you or God will call you specifically to work with them; but in general, you are wasting your time to argue with a Jehovah's Witness (or any other kind of cult member) when they are out in pairs *evangelizing* for their cult.

This doctrine might be interesting to some. It is my theory about the pronunciation of the Sacred Tetragrammaton.

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### The Actual Pronunciation of God's Name

1. The Hebrew was originally written without vowels (the vowel points being added actually quite a bit after the incarnation of Jesus Christ).
  2. The Jews did not pronounce the name of God, as that was considered too sacred for their tongues, so they, in reading, substituted in the name *Adonai*, which is more of a title than a name. Our English Bibles do much the same thing by substituting in LORD (in small caps), rather than the English version *Jehovah* (which is definitely *not* the way God's name was ever pronounced in Old Testament times). We came upon the pronunciation *Jehovah* by interspersing the sacred Tetragrammaton (JHWH) with the vowel points from *Adonai* (or, that is my understanding).
  3. The hidden pronunciation of God's proper Name was the influence of legalistic religion. Man was obviously not to use God's name in vain—for empty, cheapening phrases, such as language punctuation and emphasis (as we see constantly today). So religion essentially banned the use of His name under any circumstance, until His Name (more properly, His Name's pronunciation) was lost to history.
  4. Now this is not quite as bad as you would think, as the God of the Old Testament and Jesus Christ are one and the same Person and our God is more important to us as the one who paid for our sins and thus brought us to Himself.
  5. There was no reason to lose this Name to history except by legalism. However, we can make a reasonable guess as to how God's name was pronounced.
  6. His name is often called the sacred Tetragrammaton—which means *four letters*—because what we have are the letters YHWH or YHVH. The trick is the insertion of which vowels and the pronunciation of the third letter.
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<sup>39</sup> Some JW's are believers.

## The Actual Pronunciation of God's Name

7. The first letter is ' (yôwd), pronounced like a *y*. There is no *j* in Hebrew, so there is no way God's name was pronounced Jehovah (as you may have noticed, many Hebrew names which begin with a *j* were transliterated from names beginning with the Hebrew *y*—also known as a *yodh*).
8. There are twenty or more names in the Old Testament based upon God's Old Testament name. If these names and their translations were as lost to history as was our Lord's name, then what I am about to propose is untenable. However, if their pronunciations remained somewhat accurate, then the pronunciation of our Lord's proper Name can be ascertained with the same amount of accuracy.
9. In names based upon God's name, the second letter is a vowel known as sh<sup>é</sup>va [pronounced *sh'VAW* or *shi-VAW*]. This letter is a vowel point, often indicating that actually no vowel goes there. At other times, it represents a very short *e*. I have represented this with <sup>é</sup> or with an apostrophe to indicate a quick movement from one syllable to the next, almost a slurring together of the consonants (or crowding together of the syllables). There are rules to differentiate between the silent sh<sup>é</sup>va and the short-*e* sh<sup>é</sup>va, however, throughout most of my translations of words, I have personally inserted a very short *e* slurring of the syllables just for the sake of consistency. Properly speaking, we have a very short *e* and not a silent sh<sup>é</sup>va in God's name. Now you may be wondering at this point, how do we know the second vowel point is a sh<sup>é</sup>va and not, for instance, a pattach? After all, there were no vowel points inserted until well into the first millennium AD. Simple: we have over twenty names which mean *Jehovah* saves or *Jehovah* followed by some other verb; and all of those names have this short *e* as the second letter.
10. The second consonant (3<sup>rd</sup> letter) is an *h* followed by a chôwlem over a wâw (i.e., a dot placed above the Hebrew *w/v*). Together, these form a long *o* sound and often the *w* is silent (it is a part of the long *o* sound). Again, this is based upon over twenty other proper names found in the Old Testament.
11. The third letter is vâv [pronounced *vawv*] or wâw [pronounced *wow*]. This, in modern Hebrew, is pronounced like our letter *v* and in Biblical Hebrew like our letter *w*. As was said, this can be a silent letter also. In the half-dozen names beginning in this way, the wâw is silent.
12. In the Hebrew, the emphasis generally falls upon the last syllable, and, on occasion, on the second to the last syllable.
13. The last vowel is the only really missing vowel. In all of the Hebrew proper names, the last vowel and consonant are left off to attach to the verb. So, here, we must take an educated guess: When a word in the Hebrew ends in an *h*, the preceding vowel is often a long *a* (I use â) and the vowel point is called qâmêts [pronounced *kaw-MATES*]. This ending either indicates a perfect tense (completed action) or a feminine noun. A long *a* in Hebrew is pronounced like the *a* in *all*. For pronunciation purposes, I have been using an *aw*. Sometimes, before a final *h*, we have a short *a* instead (probably pronounced *ah*).
14. Therefore, we have several possible pronunciations: Y'ho-AWH, Y<sup>é</sup>-ho-AWH, Y'ho-WAWH, Y<sup>é</sup>-ho-WAWH, Y'ho-VAWH or Y<sup>é</sup>-ho-VAWH. In examining hundreds of Hebrew words, we often have a consonant beginning the last syllable

## The Actual Pronunciation of God's Name

when the consonant previous has a silent e vowel point below it or when the consonant has been doubled with a dâgêsh (a vowel point placed in the middle of the letter). In other words, this is not too far removed from our enunciation *Jehovah*, yet we came upon this by an approach much more logical than simply inserting the vowel points taken from Adonai.

15. I particularly like the first and third pronunciations (*Y'ho-AWH*, *Y'ho-WAWH*) because these pronunciations are onomatopoeic—they sound like breathing out, which is significant to us in two ways. (1) God breathed out into our nostrils to give us human life when we were created. And (2) when our Lord had paid for our sins on the cross, He breathed out at the very end, because His work was finished, and gave up His Spirit. Therefore, His breathing out signifies both giving us life and the completion of His work for our salvation; and leads to His giving to us our spiritual life.
16. This differs, of course, from the opinion expressed by Rotherham in *The Emphasized Bible*. Rotherham builds the name of Y'howâh upon the verb hâwâh (an old form of hâyâh) and ends with the name Yahweh and an interpretation from Exodus 3:14. You will find a fuller and rather verbose explanation of his opinion in *The Emphasized Bible*, pp. 22–29. If these names which I used were also totally lost to history, then my viewpoint does not have any foundation.
17. Certainly God's name should mean something, as Rotherham asserts, and it appears as though it would be a combination of the participle and the perfect tense of hâwâh, meaning something along the lines of *in becoming, I have become; in being, I have become* or *in being, I am*. (however, since this name is used by man, it would be in the third person masculine (*in becoming, He is; in being, He is; or in becoming, He has become*). This makes perfect sense when God dramatically steps into history as a man and removes us from our sins and from the punishment we deserve.

Knowing this information is helpful in several ways:

- a. The pronunciation of God's name means something. As the exhale of a breath, it is quite significant.
- b. The meaning of His name is significant.
- c. This cuts through the claptrap which is portrayed by the cult, the Jehovah's witnesses. Not only do they mispronounce God's name (no matter how you slice it, there is no *j* in Hebrew), but they have the same problem as the unregenerate Jew: they do not know the Lord Who bought them—they do not recognize the Jesus Christ is Y<sup>e</sup>howah, God of the Universe.

We went on quite a tangent regarding God's Ancient Name. Right now, Moses is (still) in the Midian desert, speaking to God. God has told Moses that he will lead the people of Israel out of Egypt; and Moses is balking at the idea. He thinks that God must know

someone else who would be better doing that; and he asks God, “How exactly do I tell the elders of Israel that I have spoken to You?” Another way of saying this is, “I am going to tell them that I have spoken with You and they are going to think that I’m nuts.”

Exodus 3:13 Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”

Moses specifically asks God, “Exactly *Who* should I say You are? What name should I tell them?”

Exodus 3:14 And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

No doubt that this seemed almost like a *name-game* to Moses. And many translations followed this same format, as the translator could look forward into the future when Jesus will identify Himself as the *I Am*.

God might be understood to be describing Himself as the Always-existing One; the Ever-existing One. He has existed in eternity past (actually, before time was invented); and He will exist forever in eternity future. God is not subject to time, space and matter; He is the Creator of time, space and matter. Therefore, He is outside of those things; meaning, He is not subject to those things (Jesus, by entering into human history, subjects Himself to these things).

What God said to Moses does not appear to have registered in Moses’ brain. Let me suggest that, if God let that statement just stand, Moses would ponder it for a time, and respond with, “Say, what?” Instead, God then gets specific, and He tells Moses exactly what he is to say to the leaders of Israel.

Exodus 3:15 Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me [Moses] to you [the elders of Israel]. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.’”

Most of the time when we find *the LORD God* in the Bible, that is a translation of *Y<sup>e</sup>howah Elohim*.

More literally, v. 15 reads: Elohim continued to speak to Moses, saying, “So you will say to the sons of Israel: ‘Y<sup>e</sup>howah, Elohim of your fathers—Elohim of Abraham, Elohim of Isaac, and Elohim of Jacob—has sent me to [all of] you.’ This [is] My name forever and so I will be remembered [lit., *My memory*] throughout all generations.”

We might say, in the English, *the God [= Elohim] of your fathers*; but the Hebrew does not use the definite article. This is known as the construct form of *Elohim*, where two nouns are placed together and are closely related. The construct form never uses a definite

article for the first noun. For purposes of translation, when the next noun following a construct has a definite article, we often place that definite article in front of the construct. But most often, we simply place a definite article wherever it fits with the sensibilities of the English language. So, in Exodus 3:15, we see *the God of* over and over again; but in the Hebrew, there is no word for *the* to be found. That is simply the difference in the way people use language. In the English, the definite article sounds right; in the Hebrew, a definite article would sound weird.

We have first what God expects Moses to say to the elders of Israel: *'The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me [Moses] to you [the elders of Israel].*

This introduction presupposes some knowledge of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, you may think, *of course they know about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; but remember, these people have been enslaved under a pharaoh who did not know Joseph; and they are separated in time from Jacob by about 400 years. In case you think, *well, anyone knows who their ancestors are*; then quick, tell me about your ancestors from the 1700's. See what I mean?

There has to be more than simple knowledge of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They have to understand that these men had a personal God, a God Who interacted with them and oversaw the beginning the Hebrew people. In other words, they needed to know at least portions of the book of Genesis in order for these words to make any sense.

This does not mean that these Hebrew people had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures or even that they believed in their God. I don't think that they did, for the most part—at least, right at this time. I believe that they did understand some of the basics of their faith; but I would hesitate to say that this translated into a strong faith in God—at this time.

Then God says something specifically to Moses: *This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.* This does not appear to be what Moses is to say to the elders of Israel, but what God is saying to Moses by way of explanation.

I don't doubt that Moses is somewhat confused at this point. First God speaks of Himself as the *I Am; the Always Existing One*. Moses does not have an immediate response to this. Then God says, *"This is what you are going to say, 'Y<sup>e</sup>howah, the Elohim of your fathers—the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob—He has sent me to all of you.'*"

Then God adds, by way of explanation, specifically to Moses, but not necessarily something Moses is to repeat: *"This is My name [= I Am that I Am, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob] and this is how I will be remembered in all generations."* Let me suggest that this is the expanded way to understand what God is saying to Moses: "You will say those words exactly, Moses, because that is My name forever, and this name is connected to the Hebrew people this name is how I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

It is my opinion that Moses is standing there, somewhat dumbfounded; very much taken aback. God has given him a directive, but Moses does not say, "Yes, Sir, I will do it!" Moses has somewhat of a deer in the headlights look. Moses is a brilliant man; he is a genius; but under these circumstances, his brain is not working to full capacity.

So God breaks it down for him. "This is exactly what you are going to do and this is what you are going to say, step-by-step," is what God is saying to Moses in v. 16:

Exodus 3:16 [Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, 'The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, "I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt;...](#)

God repeats this reference. This particular reference is significant, and Moses recognized that, as would the elders. He is the same God Who appeared to Abraham; He is the God of Isaac; He is the same God Who appeared to Jacob. Moses knows something of his own history as a Hebrew man, and he understands these words; and the elders of Israel, no matter what their understanding is of God, they will understand these words.

Using a common British colloquialism, God is telling Moses that He will personally go to Egypt and sort out the problems of the Hebrew people there. Moses is going to be His ambassador. Moses is going to be God's man; but it is God Who will be doing everything.

Ancient communications lacked our electronic sophistication; so there was a council of elders that Moses would speak to (nothing is said as to how formal or informal this group of elders were). This was the ancient world *tweet blast*. Coordination was begun through a series of authoritative positions. God is over all; and Moses is his point man. Moses goes to these elders with the authority of God. These elders have some sort of authority, and it is they who would interact with Pharaoh on behalf of their people. These same elders would probably interact with lower bodies of authorities who would eventually inform the people.

At the end of this verse, we have the very common quote, within a quote, within another quote (something which is often found in the Bible). God is speaking to Moses, telling Moses what to say to the elders, and what Moses will say will be a quotation from God. My stepping off point throughout the book of Exodus is the NKJV translation; so I will go along with their formatting.

God is telling the elders of Israel that He is there in Egypt with them; He is observing what is going on; and He has seen what has been done to them.

Exodus 3:17 [...and I have said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey."](#)

v. 16b–17 is a quote within a quote within a quote. Moses will say this to the elders of Israel, and he will say these words as if God is speaking directly to the elders. Let's put

this quote together. These are the words that God is saying to Israel (to the elders of Israel), but spoken through Moses: “I have surely visited you [all] and seen what is done to you [all] in Egypt; and I have said I will bring you [all] up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a land flowing with milk and honey.” God is telling them, “I know exactly what is going on, and I will lead you away from the affliction of your slavery in Egypt, and bring you to the land flowing with milk and honey.” But, there is a catch—this land that God will give to the Hebrew people—right now, it is the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and the Jebusites.

God tells Moses what to tell the people about what He, God, is going to do. He will lead His people out of Egypt, away from slavery, into the land of Canaan, which is a land flowing with milk and honey (words to indicate this is a prosperous and desirable land).

The people to whom Moses will speak likely know the same history that we know about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and about God bringing Abraham to the land. They would know all about Isaac and all about Jacob and what these men did in Canaan. They would know why they are in Egypt; and they would better know how they became slaves than we know today. They would know that their future is not supposed to be in Egypt, but in Canaan.

Moses no doubt knows about this land of Canaan and about the peoples who live there because it would have been a part of his studies, preparing him to become king. *Languages, history, geography, military along with foreign people and their cultures* would have been extremely important topics for a potential pharaoh to know. Moses would have had formal training in those areas; as would every son of close relative of Pharaoh. Moses would have known who lives where and what their military might is. He would have known the various routes to get to this or that country. He would have known the history of these peoples in Canaan. He would know their languages and he would be able to read, write and speak those languages (assuming that their languages are written as well as spoken).

Furthermore, Moses had to know something about the history of his own people, but we do not know how much or from where he would have learned it. Did his Hebrew family teach him these things? Did he learn this from Jethro, his father-in-law? Since God first spoke to Moses from this point of view (v. 6), Moses must have some understanding of it from somewhere. Could he have been exposed to the book of Genesis in his Egyptian library or did he hear it spoken by his father-in-law? Although Moses certainly had a desire to see and be with the people of his birth, he did nothing about this until age 40, when he first went out and walked among the Jewish slaves.

Since Moses was educated in the palace, it is not a stretch to think that he may have had Hebrew teachers, and some of them may have taught Moses the book of Genesis. It is my hypothesis that this is how Moses was first exposed to the Scriptures and that they affected him enough to walk out of the palace and walk among the Hebrew slaves—his brothers, as it were.

As an aside, I want you to consider a particular parallel that has been established: Moses, who is royalty, the (adopted) son of Pharaoh, deigns to walk out of the palace and to walk among the Hebrew people, the slaves. Do you see how this parallels Jesus Christ, the Royal Son of God, and the adopted Son of Joseph? Jesus will choose to walk among the slaves to sin (that would be us). Throughout the Old Testament, there are many parallels established, of actual events which synch up with the future ministry of Jesus Christ. Moses will foreshadow Jesus Christ in many ways.

### Lesson 031: Exodus 3:18–20

### God tells Moses what will come to pass

Moses is still in the Midian desert and God is speaking to him, and telling him exactly what to do and say. Moses is to go to the elders of the Hebrews and tell them that God has appeared to him. Then he is to go to Pharaoh and demand that God's people be let go.

Interestingly enough, God will tell Moses about something else that will happen along the way.

Exodus 3:18 Then they [the Hebrew elders] will heed your voice; and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt; and you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.'

The word translated *heed* above is *shâma*<sup>c</sup> (שמע) [pronounced *shaw-MAHÇ*], and it means *to listen [intently], to hear, to listen and obey, [or, and act upon, give heed to, take note of], to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and be cognizant of. To heed, to hearken* are the best translations of this word, because it means more than to simply listen to someone. However, *hearken* is old English and *heed* does not appear to be a part of speech patterns of young people today. So the twofold translation *to listen to and obey* is probably the best modern translation.

The first people that Moses has to convince are the civil leaders of the Hebrew people, called the *elders of Israel*. They have to be on board from the beginning, as Moses will, in part, represent them. However, once the elders of Israel give Moses the go-ahead, then, he will go with these elders to the palace of Pharaoh and speak directly to him.

This is interesting that God speaks first of taking His people to the land of Canaan (v. 17), but then, when Moses is to speak to Pharaoh, he is to ask for a 3-day journey into the desert-wilderness, to sacrifice to Y<sup>e</sup>howah their God.

Let me suggest several things at this point. God is not being deceptive. He is *not* telling Moses to get His people a 3-day's journey out of Egypt, and which point, God will come to Moses and say, "Okay, now, everyone make a run for it!"

There are 2 ways of looking at this. God is going to take His people out into the desert and they will move on from there; or the request is for a limited amount of time in the desert, after which, they would return to Egypt.

I do not see promises of them returning in v. 18, but there will be promises that they will return when Moses first proposes this to Pharaoh.

The 3-day journey does not mean they will go, worship their God, and be back in 3 days, but that the one-way journey itself will take 3 days. So, initially the request is simply for the Hebrew people to temporarily go out, away from Egypt, and worship their God. This initial request is, essentially, a request for a week or two outside of Egypt.

God certainly knows exactly how Pharaoh will respond—what he will think and what he will say to Moses. The request is legitimate; but Pharaoh will not honor this request. Furthermore, when Israel eventually leaves Egypt, it will be for good. There will be no indication that they will just be gone for a few days and return, when the time comes for them to leave. But, option #1 for Egypt will be to allow Israel to take a temporary leave to go out into the desert-wilderness and worship their God.

So, when Moses first confronts Pharaoh, the only thing being requested is that the Israelites be allowed to leave Egypt temporarily to go out and worship their God.

Perhaps the idea is, Moses will make a request for something which is acceptable, in order to get the ball rolling. Given the relationship of the Hebrew people and their God, making a request for them to worship their God is not a request would should be flatly rejected, as in, *no way, no how*. If Pharaoh had honored this first request, they would retain their slaves and the blessings with which God has blessed Egypt with.

God, knowing the end game, recognizes that, at the point that Israel exits Egypt, this will be considered forever by both the Pharaoh and people of Egypt. They will want Israel gone. All of Egypt will want Israel completely and totally gone.

Exodus 3:19 **But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand.**

God is still speaking to Moses and He knows what is going to happen, and He has made provision for it. “When you go to Pharaoh and say, ‘Let my people go,’ he won’t.” God tells Moses, “You are going to ask for your people to be able to leave for a bit of time to worship Me, but Pharaoh will not accept that.”

When God says, *not even by a mighty hand*, it means that, even after some great miracles, by His mighty hand, Pharaoh is going to refuse this request. God is telling Moses, up front, that Pharaoh is not going to be at all cooperative.

I used to sell real estate, and I found that it was best to prepare the buyer (or seller) for everything that could happen. At that time, it was not unusual for a buyer to do an

inspection and come back with \$1000–2000 of repairs which needed to be done (today, that figure would be considerably higher). If the parties were not warned in advance, the buyer might think he is buying a house about ready to collapse; and the seller may feel he is selling a house that was picked apart unfairly. But, if they knew up front, in advance, that this amount in repairs is a very likely scenario, when that comes to pass, neither party is too upset. And if the repairs came in at \$400—both sides were often quite happy with that. A good real estate agent prepares his people for what is to come in the transaction.

God is preparing Moses for what is going to happen. Moses is not going to just go to Pharaoh and say, “God says, ‘Let My people go,’ ” and Pharaoh agrees to that. Or God does a miracle or two, and Pharaoh agrees. That is not the way that this will play out. Moses will be prepared for the negative volition of Pharaoh.

Exodus 3:20a [So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst;...](#)

Moses, with a staff that turns into a serpent, is not enough to convince Pharaoh that he must release the Hebrew people—either temporarily or permanently. God will bring out the big guns for that. God will perform great miracles by the hand of Moses to get Pharaoh to relent—however, these miracles will bring great pains upon the sons of Egypt.

**Signs and Miracles:** An issue brought up here is the "wonders" which God will perform. Since we are mostly acquainted with the more spectacular portions of the Bible, we seem to think that the Christian life should be fraught with miracles and signs and wonders. We should walk out our front door and there should be a cloud in the sky indicating that we should make a left turn or a right turn. How did we ever become so foolish? Firstly, our lives are filled with supernatural activity that we will never recognize until we have passed into phase three of the Christian life—but this activity is not something that we actually recognize as powerful or miraculous (I am thinking of the angelic conflict which is occurring all around us). However, the kinds of signs and wonders which we associate with the Christian life did not occur on a regular basis throughout history. These things were the exception to human experience, not the rule.

Every thousand years or two, there might be a short period of time when there would be signs and miracles and wonders. These things all occurred when God was making an important change in the way He dealt with man. Or they would occur at a particular cross roads of history. When God went from dealing with mankind through all families and centered in on the race of the Jews, there were some miraculous things which occurred, but miraculous to Abraham and Sarah only, and not to the outside world. When designating exactly what that genealogical line would be, God played a significant role in that family through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The bulk of their lives, including the portion with Joseph, were not filled with miracles. In the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, there were a few unusual situations—primarily involving God speaking to one of them—but even in their lives, this was very rare.

After this, 400 years will go by without any miracles occurring. Now, at this point in the history of the Hebrew people, there will be miracles associated with the exodus because God is not going to work through an unbelieving nation. All of these miracles will help the people of Israel to develop some faith in their God and exit Egypt. Furthermore, when it comes to Israel forming their own independent nation in Canaan, that will require some more supernatural encouragement.

What we will study in the book of Exodus will be a series of miracles which will take place in chapters 7–11, and God will allow the people of Israel some miraculous events in the desert-wilderness, ideally to bolster their faith. However, all of this is related to the formation of nation Israel out of the Hebrew people.

Now, after Israel is established as a nation in the land of Canaan, there will occur the odd miracle or act of power from God, but they will not occur on a daily, weekly or even monthly basis. Many years and even decades will pass between sign miracles in nation Israel.

Once God has established nation Israel in the land, there was less reason for signs and miracles to occur. King David, for instance, known as a man after God's heart, did not ever see a manifestation of God like Moses will see in the book of Exodus. David, in fact, only spoke with God through prophets and never directly.

In the far future, there will be a host of miracles and wonders associated with our Lord Jesus Christ, as He is the Promised King, the Messiah of Israel. Furthermore, there will be a great many miracles associated with the *foundation* of the church, because that indicates a complete change in God's plan (God would no longer work through the individual nation of Israel, but through an entity known as the *church*).

Throughout most of human history, even though God's hand is present and fully recognizable, there will be long periods of time where there are a dearth of signs and miracles and wonders. I clearly perceive and understand God's will in my life; but God does not guide me with a series of miracles, signs or feelings. God's guidance in my life is by means of the filling of the Holy Spirit (by means of naming my sins to God) and Bible doctrine in my soul. This is how God guides *every believer*.

Back to God speaking to Moses:

Exodus 3:20 [So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he \[Pharaoh\] will let you go.](#)

At this point in the negotiations, God will strike Egypt with a series of signs and miracles, and all of these things will cause Pharaoh to eventually let the Hebrew people go. There would be a point at which Egypt and Pharaoh would relent and allow the Hebrew people to exit, with their children, livestock and possessions. This will be a permanent exit.

Also, we will observe that these signs and wonders are going to be appropriate to the audience; and the audience will be Pharaoh, all of Egypt; and all the Hebrews. So, what they will *not* see is a burning bush that does not burn up. The miracles the nation Egypt will see will be much more spectacular than that.

I have seen Penn and Teller (magicians) live on 3 occasions, and they tailored their magic act to their audience. At the Renaissance Festival, they did small magic, as they would have an audience of 5–20 at any given time. One trick which stuck with me is, they allowed the entire audience to see how a trick was done—except for the one person for whom the trick was done—he did not see it. It was very clever. Now, on the large stage, Penn and Teller did magic for thousands of people, so they did not use a deck of cards and perform some card tricks. Their act needed to be appropriate for their audience and what their audience was able to see. Someone 100' away in a crowd of a few thousand needed to be able to appreciate the trick (such as, when they threw their rabbit, Loafdish, into a wood chipper).

God's signs and miracles throughout Scripture are exactly that—they are made appropriate for their audience. Bear in mind, not all Egyptians saw Moses confront Pharaoh and speak to him; but *every Egyptian* was exposed to the great signs and miracles of God—and they would have learned by talking to others what had taken place. None of the Egyptians would be in the dark about what was happening. God here, in speaking to Moses, is very clear. God, in speaking to the Egyptians on a national stage will also be very clear. “Let My people go!”

### **Lesson 032: Exodus 3:21–22    Reparations/What the Egyptians will give to Israel**

At this point, God skips over a description of His various plagues, and goes to the final interaction between the Hebrew people and the general citizens of Egypt (those for whom they worked, in many instances).

Exodus 3:21 *And I will give this people favor [= grace] in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go empty-handed.*

As slaves, the sons of Israel would essentially leave Egypt with little or nothing. Even though the Hebrew people had been able to accumulate some material items during their time in Egypt, this was certainly limited by the fact that they had been enslaved by the Egyptians. God did not want them to leave Egypt with nothing.

The word *favor* here is actually grace. Despite all that will take place, when the sons of Jacob gather up their things and leave, they will speak to their masters or to ordinary Egyptian families, and they will be given tokens for their many centuries of slavery. Some Egyptian people will be so moved that they themselves will leave Egypt with the Israelites.

Bear in mind, all of this is God speaking to Moses. None of these things are taking place yet. God is simply preparing Moses for what is to transpire.

Exodus 3:22a But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing...

They will ask for some specific things, such as jewelry and clothing.

The English Standard Version translates v.22a like this: ...but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing.

The word translated *jewelry* is k<sup>e</sup>lîy (כֶּלִי) [pronounced k<sup>e</sup>lee], which is a multi-purpose word with many applications. It means *manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables*. A k<sup>e</sup>lîy is not something which occurs naturally in the world, but men or women have lent their own hands to take something and to craft it or to mold it or to manufacture it in some way. This is why, when speaking of gold and silver that *jewelry* is an excellent translation. This could refer to coins as well, but the context will have their children wearing these things, which sounds much more like jewelry than coins.

They would also ask for clothing, which was much more difficult in that era to make, and required a great deal of time, skill and many steps to make it.

Exodus 3:22a-b But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters.

**Preview of Coming Attractions:** It is interesting that this gold and silver jewelry will be placed on the sons and daughters; rather than being carried by the adults. This act is a foreshadowing of the future, where the generation of promise (the young people who will receive the clothing and jewelry) would be the ones to enter into the land of Canaan, and not their parents.

The parents, whom I have designated Gen X (the Exodus generation) will develop enough faith in God to leave Egypt with Moses, but not enough enter into the Land of Promise. God will keep them in the desert-wilderness for 40 years, so that they will die in the desert. However, their sons and daughters will enter into Canaan (which will take place in Joshua 1).

There are two applications that we might make from this: (1) Every generation is different, and sometimes a new generations sends a country into a downward spiral and sometimes they become the hope of the nation. (2) Believers themselves are differently classified. Two people can be saved, and God loves each of them with an equal amount of love, and there is the promise of eternal life which will not be withdrawn, no matter what. However, God gives every believer “x” amount of time to live after believing in Jesus Christ (in the Old Testament, after believing in the Revealed God). What we do with this time is significant. Our use of time determines both what happens to us on earth; and what happens to us in eternity.

Gen X will die off in the desert due to their negative volition towards God, towards God's authority as vested in Moses and towards the plan of God (going into the land of Canaan and taking it—something that they refuse to do). As a result, Gen X will spend their days of freedom dying off in the desert. Once that entire generation dies under God's discipline (also known as the sin unto death), then next generation will rise up and take charge. This people, the generation of promise, will go into the land and they will take it, city after city. Only a handful of people remain from Gen X during this time (chiefly, Moses, Aaron, Miriam and Joshua).

The generation of promise will live in the land of promise, enjoying the many benefits which God had been promising them for centuries. They will leave the corpses of their parents behind, rotting in the desert. Two generations, two very different outcomes.

Besides that, the generation of promise will enjoy greater rewards in the afterlife, given that they obeyed Moses, they obeyed God, and they executed the plan of God.

The question that you ask yourself is, are you more akin to Gen X or to the generation of promise?

Exodus 3:22 **But every man shall ask of his neighbor, namely, of his who dwells near his house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."**

Plunder here is not used in a negative way. The Jews have worked for hundreds of years for these things; and it is fair that the Egyptians pay them before they go. This is also known as reparations, which has a legitimate meaning when they are paid to the people who have actually done the work. The people who did the work, and their children, have a legitimate claim to remuneration.

**Application:** Applying the concept of reparations to this day and time for slavery in the United States makes very little sense. Who is actually descended from a slave family? Who exactly is responsible to pay reparations? What exemption can be given to those whose ancestors fought in the Civil War with the intentions of ending slavery? What about former slaves who later owned slaves? What about the descendants of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings? Do they pay themselves reparations?

When Israel left Egypt, the Egyptian slave owners and the Hebrew slaves made up two very distinct, identifiable groups. The people who gave their silver and gold were Egyptians, who were benefitted by the slavery of the sons of Israel. Those who received payment were people who were actually enslaved (*and* their ancestors had been enslaved as well). There was no confusion about who was who.

Exodus 3:22 **But every man shall ask of his neighbor, namely, of his who dwells near his house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."**

The Jews have worked for years under the control of the Egyptians and have produced and built and slaved for the country as a whole and for individual families. God has allowed that and has not said anything about the evils of slavery. However, it is now time for the Jews to become established and God will see to it that they are paid for what they have done. The amount of compensation that they will receive will be small compared to what they have done on behalf of Egypt; but it will be a beginning.

**40 Acres and a Mule:** When the slaves were freed here in the United States, every slave-owner *should have* given their slaves some seed money or some land or something with which to begin a life. Near the end of the Civil War, Blacks began to take over some tracks of land abandoned by Southern whites, and cultivate these lands. President Lincoln also ordered that 20,000 acres in South Carolina be confiscated and then offered for sale to freed Blacks in 20 acre plots (later increased to 40 acre plots).

In January of 1865, union General Sherman met with 20 Black leaders, essentially asking them, "What do you want?" On Jan. 16<sup>th</sup> of that same year, Sherman issued *Special Field Order No. 15*, which reserved a considerable amount of land along the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina for black settlement. Later, army mules were to be added to this deal, to be loaned to the farmers. Congress got involved, and set up the Freedman's Bureau, which was to divide the confiscated land into plots for sale to freed slave and to loyal southern whites.

After Lincoln was assassinated, Andrew Johnson, his vice president, became president, and he, being sympathetic to the south, rescinded these orders. The confiscated land was to be returned to the former Southern landowners. Some Blacks defended their land with force; the federal government also stepped in to evict the freed slaves from this land. In the end, only 2000 Blacks actually retain their ownership of their plot of this land.

The sentiment, on the part of some, was right; but there was no follow-through by Congress, which actually writes the laws of the land. A proper law would have made it impossible for a new president to undo what had been done.

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Exodus 3:22 But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing; and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

We will see in Exodus 12:33 that the Egyptians wanted the Jews to leave, as they were afraid of the dire consequences if they remained. This is one of the few places in the Bible where it is *implied* that there is a price for keeping slaves and that the Egyptians did owe the Israelites something for their years of slavery.

We may wonder why the Jews needed any kind of jewelry in their circumstances. It was an Oriental custom to wear fine jewelry when going to a sacred festival. This way they did not displease the deities. It is also common for us today to dress up for Sunday church. However, this jewelry and the like was payment for services rendered. It was also somewhat like a savings account. It could be bartered when in difficult circumstances.

This division between chapters 3 and 4 was misguided. God and Moses are speaking in chapter 3, and this conversation continues into the first half of chapter 4. The chapter divisions were added long after the text was written, and sometimes, why they were made here rather than there is inexplicable. There should have not have been a chapter break until vv. 19 & 20 of Exodus 4.

### **Lesson 033: Exodus 4:1–5, 29–30 Moses, now equipped to speak before Pharaoh**

Exodus 4 picks up right where Exodus 3 leaves off. Moses had come across a burning bush out in the desert-wilderness, so he turns aside to get a closer look at it, and God speaks to him from the burning bush.

Moses and God were speaking to one another at the end of Exodus 3 and this conversation will continue in Exodus 4. Placing a division between these chapters makes little sense. The only difference between the chapters is, God speaks to Moses in Exodus 3:15–22; and Moses responds in Exodus 4:1 (they had been talking back and forth beginning in v. 4 in chapter 3; so Exodus 4 simply continues this conversation (vv. 1–17).

God began talking to Moses in Exodus 3, Moses began to object to being sent to Pharaoh, offering up several excuses why he is not the man for the job. God then said the following:

“You must say to the Israelites, ‘Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God whom Abraham worshiped, whom Isaac worshiped, and whom Jacob worshiped, has sent me to you. Yahweh is my name forever, and this is what all generations should call me.’ Go to Egypt and gather together the elders. Say to them, ‘Yahweh, the God whom Abraham worshiped, whom Isaac worshiped, and whom Jacob worshiped, has appeared to me and said: I have seen what the Egyptian people have done to you. I promise that I will rescue you from being treated badly in Egypt, and I will take you to the land where the descendants of Canaan, Heth, Amor, Periz, Hiv, and Jebus live. It is a good land where you can grow many crops and raise much livestock.’”

God tells Moses exactly what to do and where to go.

The elders will do what you say. Then you and the elders will go to the king of Egypt, and you will say to him, 'Yahweh, whom we Hebrews worship as God, has met with us. So now we ask you to allow us to travel for three days to a place in the wilderness in order that there we may offer sacrifices to Yahweh, our God.' But I know that the king of Egypt will allow you to go only if he sees that he has no other choice. So I will use my power by performing many miracles there. Then he will allow you to leave. When this happens, I will cause the people of Egypt to honor the Hebrew people so that when you leave Egypt, they will give you what you need for the journey. At that time, each Hebrew woman will ask for what belongs to the Egyptian women living nearby. The Egyptians will give you all they have, silver and gold jewelry and clothing. You will put these things on your children. In this way, you will take everything from the Egyptians." (Exodus 3:15b–22, Unlocked Dynamic Bible)

Then God tells Moses how this is all going to turn out.

Although not all of Exodus is chiasmi, there are a few interesting ones.

### Chiasm of Exodus 4:1–5 (Chiasmus Exchange)

- A (1) And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor listen to my voice: for they will say, The LORD has not appeared unto you.  
B (2) And the LORD said unto him, What is that in your hand? And he said, A rod.  
C(3) And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.  
C'(4) And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth your hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, ...  
B' ...and it became a rod in his hand:  
A'(5) That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared unto you.

From <http://www.chiasmusxchange.com/2016/02/08/exodus-41-8/> modified; accessed October 18, 2017.

### Miraculous Signs for Pharaoh

God has just told Moses exactly what he is supposed to do; and God has told Moses what the final outcome is going to be.

Exodus 4:1 Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'"

Moses says, "What if they simply don't believe me?" This seems like the question to have asked first, but we must recognize that Moses is no doubt flabbergasted by this entire situation. 15 minutes ago, Moses was just wandering through the desert-wilderness leading his father-in-law's sheep; now, all of a sudden, God wants him to return to Egypt and lead his people out of there. That's a pretty big deal. Even though Moses is a brilliant man, he is no doubt still coming to grips with what God is expecting of him.

Moses asks, "Suppose that they don't believe me?" This is a very logical question. Moses is to go and speak to the elders of the Hebrews; and just about the first thing he will say is, "I just spoke to God of Abraham and He sent me here to lead you all out of Egypt." How does God know someone won't just say, "Dude, are you crazy? You say that you have talked to God? Get a grip." And then everyone would laugh and Moses would have even less credibility than when he stepped before them in the first place.

Despite the fact that God laid out to Moses exactly what was going to happen, Moses is making a reasonable point. However, what is key here is, is this a matter of genuine curiosity on the part of Moses; or is this simply another excuse that he is offering up to get out of doing this?

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When Moses first stood before Pharaoh, he had to have enjoyed some spiritual growth. Is there evidence of this?

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I have been claiming that Moses is at some level of spiritual maturity; but he will put up some opposition to God in this chapter. How to explain?

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### **Moses' Current Spiritual Maturity Level**

1. It is logical that Moses has attained some level of spiritual maturity as a believer in the Revealed God. God would not have randomly plucked Moses out of the 2 million Hebrews who are available.
  2. An axiom of the spiritual life is, God uses prepared men. It is a mistake to believe that God would choose unprepared people to do the heavy lifting in the Angelic Conflict.
  3. As we have discussed, Moses had to have already believed in the Revealed God and then developed some spiritual maturity.
  4. What seems likely is, he learned Bible doctrine (spiritual information) from his father-in-law, who was a priest.
  5. Although there is no specific verse stating, *and Reuel taught Moses the Word of God*; Moses, by the time he has gotten to this point, knows the background of his people, which means, he knows at least portions of the book of Genesis.
    - 1) I lean towards this as the most logical explanation, given that Reuel appears to be a legitimate priest and that he is kept on by Moses in the future as an important advisor. Moses would do this only if he respected the wisdom of his father-in-law.
    - 2) Respecting the wisdom of your father-in-law suggests, on the part of Moses, that he believed Reuel to have divine wisdom.
    - 3) Also, Moses running into this man in the first place was not some random event. I believe that this is right in line with the plan of God. Another spiritual axiom of life: there are no random events in the spiritual realm. If you want to know the Word of God, then God will lead you in that direction. If you truly want spiritual information, God will provide that for you (this is different from wanting information which backs up what you already believe).
    - 4) God always uses prepared men; so it is reasonable to assume that Moses
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## Moses' Current Spiritual Maturity Level

was prepared for his mission during this time in Midian (Moses spent 40 years in Midian).

6. We have also discussed the possibility that Moses learned under an ancient Hebrew scholar (s) when still in the Pharaoh's palace. This is also conjecture, but it is reasonable conjecture.
  - 1) Moses would have been well-educated as he was in line to become a pharaoh.
  - 2) Moses would have known about the peoples round about; and he may have had a Hebrew teacher for some of this.
  - 3) There is no reason to assume that Moses, born a Hebrew, was ignorant of that information; and people in the Hebrew community would have known this as well. So, if Moses had a Hebrew teacher, it is logical that they would have used their Scriptures at that time (the book of Genesis) to teach him.
7. Even though Moses being taught by Reuel and/or by a Hebrew teacher is conjecture; it is very reasonable conjecture.
8. The reason we know that Moses knows something about his familial history is, when God speaks of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exodus 3:6), Moses does not ask, "Now, who are those guys exactly?"
  - 1) Now, you may object, saying, *everyone knows their ancestors*.
  - 2) Do you know the names of your ancestors from the 1700 and 1800's? Moses knows his.
  - 3) And, let me point out the obvious: Moses was raised by an Egyptian family; not by a Hebrew family. So the knowledge which he clearly has did not come with the territory (that is, Moses does not know Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob simply because he is a Hebrew man).
9. God speaks of giving the land of Canaan to the Hebrews; Moses does not say, "Now why would You do that, God? I think everyone would be fine just living here in Goshen, as long as Pharaoh sets us free." We know that, if Moses has an objection, then he is going to raise it. We have seen that in the previous chapter. But he never raises an objection to Israel settling in Canaan. Exodus 3:8, 17
10. Also, Moses appears to have no objections to Israel getting out of Egypt to worship their God. He seems to take it for granted that they worship a very specific God; not one of the Egyptian gods. Exodus 3:18
11. Moses has no questions about his ancestors or about Canaan; and when he talks to the elders of Jerusalem, they seem to understand these things as givens as well. Exodus 4:30–31
12. Moses is clearly not shy about voicing objections, but none of them are about his ancestors or about the land of Canaan. Moses does not say, "Now, who is Jacob?" Nor does he say, "What is Your obsession with Canaan?"
13. There will be one person who seems to have some opposition to all of this: Zippora, Moses' wife of 40 years. When she is required to circumcise her son, she is none too happy about it and she clearly expresses her displeasure. Exodus 4:24–26

## Moses' Current Spiritual Maturity Level

14. Now, you might think there is a bit of a contradiction. I am claiming that Moses has some spiritual chops; but, when God tells him what to do, Moses suddenly says, "I am not capable of doing those things. I am not a good speaker. You need to find somebody else, God."
15. In real life, we have seen the athlete or celebrity who is converted to Christianity, and, a few days later, he is making pitches for Jesus. This is not God's plan. This is not a good plan. Recall that Jesus prepared His disciples for at least 3 years, and that was a crash course, teaching them day and night. When they began their ministries, they were well-prepared (but not without faults).
16. Here is what is going on: Moses has the spiritual information; and he has believed most of it. But now God is putting him to the test; now it is time for Moses to walk over the hot coals, as it were, and he expresses some natural reticence. That is pretty normal, because Moses has not had to apply that level of doctrine before. There are times when you cannot move ahead spiritually until God throws something in your way that you must deal with by applying Bible doctrine. You have to apply the spiritual skills which God has given you. In other word, the doctrine is in your human spirit, God puts a situation in front of you that requires the application of that doctrine; and you move ahead spiritually when you do that. When you use them and see that they work, you develop further confidence in God and His plan.
17. To sum up: Moses has a level of spiritual maturity; God is now going to require him to apply this doctrine at a level that Moses has not operated at before.
18. Moses will continue to grow spiritually during his next 40 years. His teacher at that time will be God...and he recorded his lessons in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses will interpret and apply Bible doctrine for the next generation of Israel.

Essentially what I have done here is taken information about Moses which we clearly know and place him into a time and place, assuming that he knows this information and believes it. He behaves exactly as we would expect him to.

### **Lesson 034: Exodus 4:1–5, 29–30 Moses being equipped to speak before Pharaoh**

God is speaking to Moses about what He wants Moses to do, and Moses has clearly balked at the idea, saying, "How can I go to the leaders of Israel and tell them that I have spoken to God?"

Exodus 4:1 Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'"

God needs to give Moses some weaponry and some ammunition. When someone goes into battle, it is fine that they understand the plan and protection of God. However, this

does not mean that they just wander about holding up a peace sign in the midst of battle. They are going to have military equipment appropriate to the battle.

God is going to issue Moses his minimum military equipment to lead him in battle. He will be given what is necessary in order to fire the first shot.

Exodus 4:2a [So the Lord said to him, "What is that in your hand?"](#)

So God asks Moses, "What is in your hand?" God appears to use the Socratic method in order to teach some things, which is legitimate, since God created Socrates and God was aware of everything that Socrates would say and do, a thousand or more years into the future.

God did not ask Moses what was in his hand because God was not sure. He asked Moses so that Moses would have no doubt in his mind as to what he was holding. The miracle which was performed was nothing. It was a very small thing for God to do. The less that we require in the way of miracles, the better off we are. Miracles and wonders do not ground one in the faith. Similarly, Christian apologetics, although they have their place, do not appreciably cause one to grow. Moses will not, later in life, hearken back to this miracle and find strength and power in it. This miracle was good for a few hours; or, at best, a few days.

So, perhaps Moses looks at his hand and then answers:

Exodus 4:2b [He said, "A rod."](#)

Moses, walking through the desert-wilderness with his sheep always carried with him a rod (a stick, a crook, a staff). This is standard issue, shepherding equipment, the ubiquitous tool of his trade.

Moses had to walk up and down hills and mountains; over very rocky terrain; and the staff was necessary to help him keep his balance; or even to check rocks in front of them, to make certain that they are stable and steady.

There were human and animal predators and Moses could use his staff in a pinch to ward off either. It could be used to beat and to keep any wild animal at bay.

Thirdly, a staff is an extension of the shepherd's arm, so he might use it to guide the sheep in the proper direction. Sheep were continually wanting to wander off on their own, yet having very little by way of innate protection. The shepherd provides them this protection and guidance, often using the staff.

Or, as Bishop Brewer describes it, the staff is for *steadying, protection and correction*.<sup>40</sup> Let's add to that list, *guidance*. That sounds very much like the Word of God, does it not?

When I leave for work, I have several bags and cases of tools. There is nothing worse than to arrive to work, have a particular job to do, and remembering that particular tool is sitting on a shelf at home. Moses had one necessary tool, and that was his staff. It was always with him; and God will tell him, he needs to keep it with him.

It may not have occurred to you that Moses carrying a staff when he goes in to speak to Pharaoh is actually kind of a weird thing. But that is necessary for what he is going to do. Let's say that I went to a party, but I carried a hammer with me (or an nailgun, as I rarely use hammers anymore). That would look a bit odd; people at the party might even avoid me. So it will seem to Pharaoh and his attendants when they see Moses and Aaron walk in, and Moses is carrying a staff.

Exodus 4:3 *And He [God] said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it.*

God tells Moses to throw his staff onto the ground, and he does. It becomes a snake and Moses runs from it. We may reasonably assume that the snake would be roughly the same length and width as this staff—making it a pretty large snake.

Undoubtedly, this surprises Moses, and frightens him somewhat. You do not have to be afraid of snakes to step back when you see a large snake in front of you, seemingly out of nowhere.

Exodus 4:4 *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail" (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand),...*

God tells Moses to grab the serpent by the tail, which he does, and it becomes a staff once again.

There were two potential stages for this particular set of miracles—before the elders of Israel (to gain credibility as their leader, as a man from God) and before Pharaoh of Egypt (also to gain credibility as a man from God). These miracles would be Moses' initial *weapons* in this spiritual conflict.

Moses' staff would become a very important part of the signs and miracles which would occur in Egypt. Often, Moses would use this staff to point to a miracle/sign/plague which was about to happen. Moses was never to be the center of attention. The staff would focus everyone's attention on what God was about to do. This is, as if to say, "Don't look at me;" (Moses would say) "Look at where the staff is pointing. That is where God will show His power."

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<sup>40</sup> From <http://www.cfdiocese.org/bishopsblog/3-tremendous-responsibilities-the-shepherds-staff-represents/> accessed November 13, 2018.

We have no idea as to the number of elders who would meet with Moses. There would not be an overabundance of elders; and we may reasonably assume that all of them would be able to see these signs that Moses would do. For that reason, I would place the number of elders somewhere between 7 and 30 (and, most likely, between 12 and 15).

These first miracles would be done first before the elders of Israel and then on the very small stage of the royal palace in Egypt. Wherever in the palace where the Pharaoh would meet with individuals, this would take place. So, this would take place among the staff and bodyguards of Pharaoh—maybe as few as 10 people and maybe as many as 50, including any personal servants.

Something like this would seem remarkable to a small audience like this (primarily, this would be to impress Pharaoh). The transformation of a staff into a snake would certainly impress the elders of the Hebrews. Throughout Scripture, God's miracles are appropriate to the audience. Some miracles were done for a small audience and others would be done for the benefit of all the people of Israel and all the people of Egypt.

God will give Moses just enough to convince the elders of Israel.

Exodus 4:5 ...“that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”

All of this is about giving Moses credibility with a relatively small number of people as having authority from God. Things will happen after these initial meetings which will confirm that Moses speaks for the God of the Hebrews. This particular miracle essentially gets his foot in the door. The elders will initially accept him.

**Signs and Miracles, part II:** What we are studying helps us, as students of the Word of God, to understand the purpose of miracles. These miracles often would give credence to the person performing the miracles (or pointing to the miracles—which is mostly what Moses will do before Pharaoh). One might say, these signs and wonders are Moses' credit card. Because he is able to do these things, people will give him a hearing (first the elders of Israel; secondly, Pharaoh).

Signs and wonders are a means to an end. We often remember the signs and wonders that we read in the Bible because they are amazing, but they are designed with a purpose in mind—which is, to convey God's will to God's people.

Believers are often confused about miracles and they think that the Bible is just one chapter of miracles followed by another chapter of miracles, but that is not exactly true. Or, they read about the miracles here in Exodus or about those that Jesus performed, and too often we think, *we should see miracles or we should be able to perform miracles*. Not true.

Miracles, in the Word of God, are generally used for very big events. If there are more than 3 miracles, then usually, what is happening is a very big deal. God does not find Himself bored and then decides, "I need to do some miracles to shake things up." This is not how God functions.

There are four times in human history where there are a plethora of miracles: (1) when Moses is about to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. By doing this, Moses is going to establish nation Israel. (2) Jesus performs many miracles, because He is the Son of God. These miracles give His Person credibility. There is nothing more important or more fundamental to the believer than Jesus dying for us sins on the cross. This is what Jesus has come to do. (3) The church, an entity separate and different from Israel, is established with a number of miracles and sign gifts. These are very big events in the history of God and man. (4) The next big event where there will be a number of signs will be during the Tribulation.

Today, a pastor does not need to establish his authority by speaking in tongues or curing people at the front of the stage, or throwing down his staff and having it turn into a snake (or by picking up deadly snakes and wandering about the church auditorium). The pastor-teacher today establishes his authority by his careful and accurate teaching of the Word of God. The believer ought to be able to read the Word of God, listen to the pastor teaching, and then see that these are in congruence with one another (or not). The established authority is the Word of God; and the pastor receives his authority from the Word of God by properly teaching the Word of God.

Today, God's great power is in His Word; not in a series of miracles. The greatest event in our lives is when we believed in Jesus Christ. We did not see someone perform some cheap slight of hand, and then believed; we heard the gospel—we heard that Jesus Christ died for our sins and opened up the way to God. We responded to the gospel message with faith. Suddenly, we understood that we needed to make this decision, and we did.

Nearly every one of us has seen a magician; and seen that magician perform tricks that we cannot explain. I can guarantee you that people will be far more impressed watching a Penn and Teller live show than seeing some pastor-teacher try to perform a miracle or two. First of all, God has not given pastor-teacher's the ability to perform miracles; and, even if they could, they would not be anywhere near as impressive as Penn and Teller. Does this mean that we ought to be listening to the teachings of Penn Jillette? Of course not! He's a nice enough guy, but he is (if memory serves) an atheist and a libertarian. Neither of those concepts are Biblical. Following either of those approaches to life would be problematic for any believer.

Exodus 4:5 ..."that they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."

This gives us the reason why God has given Moses the power to perform some miracles—so that the people that Moses is in front of will believe that the Lord God has appeared to him.

This is the 4<sup>th</sup> and final time that God will use this expression (*the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*) in the book of Exodus (Exodus 3:6, 15–16 4:5). In fact, we will not see this title again until Matt. 22:32 (see also Mark 12:26 Luke 20:37 Acts 3:13 7:32). It surprises me how few times we find this phrase in Scripture. However, this expression makes perfect sense if the elders to whom Moses speaks understand the book of Genesis and at least some of the history of the Hebrew people. These words are very meaningful to such people. On the other hand, these words would have no meaning whatsoever to someone who lacks this knowledge (or rejects it). This title for God ties the God of the book of Genesis (a book which is 400 years old at this time) to the God of Moses.

In the New Testament, Jesus will constantly tie Himself to the existing Scriptures, which we call the Old Testament today (which means the Old Covenant or the Former Contract).

God speaks of *Y<sup>e</sup>howah Elohim of their fathers*, which means that Moses will first perform these signs before the elders of the Hebrews, as we read in...

Exodus 4:29–30 *Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people.* (ESV)

## Lesson 035: Exodus 4:6–9

## The Signs Which God Gives to Moses

God is still speaking to Moses out in the desert-wilderness of Midian. It may seem as if we have advanced further into the narrative, but this is because God is telling Moses what to expect. Moses is standing before God, Who has manifested Himself to Moses as a burning bush.

God has given Moses a general outline of what he is going to do and how Pharaoh is going to respond. Nevertheless, Moses has expressed great reticence about doing these things, which is understandable. God has given him a sign to use to convince a small audience; and now God will give Moses another sign.

Exodus 4:6 *Furthermore the Lord said to him, “Now put your hand in your bosom.” And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow.*

Following the Lord’s directions, Moses puts his hand under his cloak, brings it out, and it is leprous; white like snow.

There are some things which God does which align with the laws of science; and there are some things which God does which are in opposition to the laws of science. In Scripture,

these different sorts of signs are never distinguished. One can make the argument that some of the plagues of God in the book of Exodus, are a result of a set of natural phenomenon set into motion by God—how much of these plagues should be understood as supernatural and how much is a set of natural events is certainly debatable. There are some cures done by Jesus which could have a scientific basis. However, the Bible never breaks down these signs into two groups, natural and miraculous (or, *anti-natural*).

What is happening right here is clearly miraculous; Moses' hand is truly leprous. This is not a vision, not sleight of hand, but an actual physiological change that takes place.

Exodus 4:7 **And He said, "Put your hand in your bosom again." So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh.**

When Moses places his hand under his cloak and brings it out again, God undoes whatever He did in the first place. All signs of leprosy are removed.

The heart is what we *are* and the hand is what we *do* as a result of what we are. Moses had both a corrupt and an honorable heart; when he put his hand near his heart and took it out, what was revealed was his dishonorable, leprous heart; a heart filled with excuses and negative volition. However, Moses was also saved and he clearly did have some doctrine (that is, knowledge of God and His plan). So when he put his hand back inside his cloak it came out whole again. Jesus actually teaches about this issue in Luke 6:43-45.

Luke 6:43–45 **"For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (ESV)**

These miracles, first and foremost, are simply designed to impress Moses enough to give him the courage to do what God has told him to do. As amazing as it may seem, this will not be enough to convince Moses to completely trust God and to go ahead with His plan. Whereas, Moses has certainly had some spiritual preparation, we have no idea exactly how much Scripture he has learned (or even had access to). (I believe that Moses had access to the entire book of Genesis; for a reason I will give in a future lesson).

Moses will, when he receives God's Word on Mount Sinai, become much more grounded and that will prepare him for the forty years of living in the desert with a bunch of spiritual losers (an apt description of Gen X, the adults who take part in the exodus).

Exodus 4:8 **"Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign.**

God assures Moses that, if they reject the first sign (the sign of the staff and the snake), that they will believe in the second. You might say that God is sending Moses there with

a gun that is loaded with more than one bullet. Therefore, Moses will be able to do all that is necessary to gain an audience to listen to him and to trust that he speaks for God.

Here is what we should get from this: these signs, these miraculous events, are designed in order for Moses to get a hearing. These signs give authority to Moses. These signs are a physical manifestation that Moses has the authority of God behind him. The signs give evidence that Moses has actually spoken with God. Pharaoh and his palace guard, and all of his personal servants will see these things take place—and each time, Moses will have a message: “God says to let His people go out into the desert-wilderness to worship Him.” It is the expression of God’s will that is important. These sign gifts are simply a means to an end; the means by which the Israelites and then the Egyptians will hear the Word of God.

Despite these initial signs, Pharaoh will say, “No” and then Moses will say, “Then God will do this to your land to your people...” Pharaoh’s negative volition will not come as a surprise to Moses, as God warns him about it.

Exodus 4:9 *And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land.*”

God offers a third sign which, insofar as we know, He does not demonstrate by the hand of Moses. At least, not exactly the way it sounds here.

The first judgment-sign that God will perform by the hand of Moses will be similar to what we read here.

These signs very likely symbolize some very specific things.

### The Three Signs Given to Moses

| The Signs   | What the Signs Mean  |
|---|--|
| Moses throws his staff onto the ground and it turns into a serpent; he takes it up again, and it turns back to a staff. | The serpent is often used as a biblical metaphor for Satan or demonic powers (e.g., Gen 3:1; Luke 10:19 cp. 9:1 and Mark 16:18; Rev 12:9; 20:2). What Moses faces in the land of Egypt is a plethora of Egyptian gods (that is, demonic powers). Moses will have the ability to neutralize them at any time, despite their appearance (more accurately, God through Moses can neutralize the Egyptian gods). |

## The Three Signs Given to Moses

| The Signs  | What the Signs Mean   |
|--|---|
| <p>Moses places his hand into his robe and takes it out, and it is leprous. When he places it back into robe and takes it out, and his hand returns to normal.</p> | <p>Leprosy is often a sign of sin or an indication of sin. The leper is often seen as being completely consumed by sin (I am speaking metaphorically; not literally). When Moses takes his leprous hand and places it back within his robe, and then brings it out, whole again—this is what God is able to do. God is able to take that which is consumed by sin and make it whole again.</p> <p>Along the same lines, if Moses' heart is right, then he is able to accomplish good things with his hand (we are motivated by the heart; and what we do is represented by the hand). If Moses' heart is not right, then his hand is leprous and incapable of doing God's work.</p> |
| <p>Moses will take water from the Nile River and pour it out on the ground, at which point, it will turn into blood.</p>   | <p>Water speaks of blessing and blood speaks of judgment. Egypt, a nation which has enjoyed blessing because Israel resides there. However, because of their actions against Israel and Israel's God, Egypt will now be under judgment from God.</p>  |

From Nathan Lawrence: *The serpent represents sin, since it is Satan the serpent who introduced sin to man in the Garden of Eden, which brought upon man the curse of death. Yeshua took that curse on himself when he was lifted up on the cross of judgment as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness (John 3:14). Yeshua defeated Satan the serpent at the cross, even as Moses' serpent defeated the serpents of the satanic Pharaoh's magicians.*

Lawrence continues: *The three signs that YHVH had Moses perform to Pharaoh were merely warning shots against a wicked and unrepentant nation instructing them to submit to Y<sup>e</sup>howah's will. YHVH was telling the Egyptians that if they refused to obey his prophet, he would unleash demonic spirits, plagues of sickness and economic destruction on that nation. These are YHVH's judgments against a nation that refuses to repent. Of course, Egypt refused to obey YHVH, and so he not only brought these judgments against Egypt, but much more, such that Egypt was totally destroyed.*<sup>41</sup>

I read several opinions on these signs; the information in the table I believe is the most accurate understanding of the spiritual meaning of these signs.

Angels are watching all of this go down. For specific historical events, God apparently gathers the angels en masse to see what God is doing.

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<sup>41</sup> From <http://hoshanarabbah.org/blog/2016/01/02/whats-the-significance-of-mosess-three-miracles/> accessed November 13, 2018.

Here, they observe God speaking to Moses in the Midian desert; they observe that Moses is not really willing to do what God asks him to do. It is obvious that, despite these amazing signs, Moses will not be completely and totally convinced. Signs and miracles are never enough to change the heart of a recalcitrant man (Moses is not completely recalcitrant; but he is clearly not willing to do exactly what God is asking him to do).

The angels here observe Moses and his reticence to do what God is asking him to do; and they will also observe the eventual deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt, by God through the hand of Moses.

Let me suggest that everything that the angels—both elect and fallen—see, they remember. When God tells them to come and observe some specific set of events, they remember all that happened related to those things. No doubt, nearly all angelic creation was there to observe Moses and his reticence; and they will also witness the signs and plagues which God will bring against Egypt. At this point, the angels are observing the free will of Moses; and later, they will observe the free will of Pharaoh. This will be a set of historical events unlike any other that the angels will observe in man's history.

All that the angels observe reveals man's free will, God's will, man's fallen nature and God's perfect character.

### **Lesson 036: Exodus 4:10–16**

### **Moses Objects to God's Plan for Him**

The big picture here in Exodus 4 is, God has a plan for Moses' life, and Moses is objecting to it. Moses has a great part to play in the history of nation Israel (and in the history of all mankind); but he has to, from his own free will, agree to do what God is asking him to do.

The idea here is, Moses is going to have more than he needs in order to speak before Pharaoh. He will have great authority before God and man. Yet, Moses still manages to come up with another objection:

Exodus 4:10 *Then Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."*

Moses has had his doubts about this whole thing from the very beginning. He has offered up several objections (all of which seem fairly reasonable from a human standpoint). God has answered each of his objections. Moses has at least some imagination, and what God is asking him to do seems like quite a lot to ask or expect of a normal person. And, quite frankly, Moses does not know the half of it.

Finally Moses points out, "Look, I am just not a good talker." Being *slow of speech and slow of tongue* means that he does not think and speak well on his feet—or, at least, that is his excuse. I don't know if we are dealing with two different aspects of slowness here or not.

The irony of what Moses is saying is twofold: (1) Moses was trained to be a public speaker; that would have been a part of his training to become Pharaoh. He was trained to be able to do many things; and these abilities will come out as we study more about him. Clearly, he is out of practice; but, obviously, not completely. (2) Right at this moment, Moses is standing up against God and speaking his mind, posing an argument which he hopes will get him out of doing this thing. What could be more difficult to do than that, when it comes to speaking extemporaneously? Somehow, Moses is arguing before the God of the Universe that he might not be able to convey God's message to Pharaoh, because he would be intimidated by Pharaoh and tongue-tied. Do you see how Moses' argument is illogical? If Moses can oppose God with these arguments—arguments which he has just thought of right on the spot—then surely he can speak in front of Pharaoh, where God will tell him what to say.

Exodus 4:11 [So the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord?"](#)

God reasons with Moses. "You say you are slow of speech and slow of tongue; just who do you think made your mouth?" Obviously, God made his mouth—and his brain as well. God is saying, "I AM God! I have equipped you for this job. I know what you are capable of doing. You do not have a valid excuse."

Whatever a person has or lacks (or thinks he lacks), God made that. If God has a thing for you to do, then you are able to do that thing—He knows the full extent of your potential because He made you and He can read your heart. God will not require us to do something that we are unable to do.

Furthermore, God is omniscient; He knows the end from the beginning; therefore, He knows what Moses is capable of doing; but that is not the argument that God uses.

God is not going to require from Moses what Moses is unable to do.

God gives Moses his marching orders, but they will be subject to Moses agreeing to do what God is asking him to do.

Exodus 4:12 [Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."](#)

"Don't worry about what you lack or what you have by way of verbal prowess; I will be with your mouth and help you to say the right thing," is the assurance that God gives Moses. However, Moses continues to object.

It is fascinating to me that, 99.99% of the time, God uses a human messenger to convey His Word. The angel Gabriel will speak to Mary and to the parents of John the baptizer; but he is that very rare exception. God does not send an angel to speak to Pharaoh; He sends Moses—a somewhat reluctant Moses.

**Application:** We are the ones by which God does His work on earth. Believe it or not, God has some people in your periphery who need to hear His Word. Now, this does not mean that you are going to quote Scriptures to every one you see every single day; but Bible doctrine gives you the discernment and the wisdom regarding what to say and when to say it. The people around you are your mission field. This does not mean that you will set up a soapbox on your street and start speaking in a loud voice about Sodom and Gomorrah (despite there being so many parallels to today's world).

**Application:** And to orient you to this dispensation, bear in mind that God is *never* going to speak to you personally, from a burning bush or from some other phenomenon, nor will He take you aside and tell you what to do, step-by-step. God is able to speak to you through His Word and guide you by His Word (the Bible), as revealed while you are in the Spirit (that is, in fellowship—1John 1:9). Without God's Word, you are not guided in this life. We are all given the Holy Spirit, but unless we have doctrine in our souls, there is no guidance.

**Application:** Bible doctrine guides you as to what to say and when to say it.

Let me draw an analogy. Perhaps you have heard of [wild children](#); children who have not been raised by humans, but by animals (yes, such people have existed—they are also called [feral children](#)). What we have found is, a child who is raised by animals, once he reaches his teens, is permanently stunted in his intellect. Some develop a small vocabulary of perhaps 20 words, but they never become normal human beings. They are not capable of doing normal human things if they go for too long without human interaction as children.

Here is the parallel: this is your spiritual life. Unless you learn the things of God, you will never have a normal spiritual life. Now, you can pretend to have a spiritual life. You can go to church, sing hymns, pray and give money—and even act as a deacon or a pastor—but if you are without Bible doctrine in your human spirit, then your spiritual life is stunted. Just as a wild child cannot adjust to human interaction, past a certain age; the same is true of us who never develop any spiritual maturation. Without Bible doctrine, our spiritual lives are an act, an imitation at best, and no more than skin deep.

You can dress and groom a wild child; and, as long as there is no intricate human interaction, they look and seem normal. But, that is only skin deep. You move closer, and you find out that the wild child is incapable of normal human interaction. So it is with the believer who lacks spiritual information in his soul. His spiritual life is, at best, just an act.

Back to Moses, who wants God to choose someone for this job other than him:

Exodus 4:13 [But he \[Moses\] said, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send."](#)

God's assurances are not enough for Moses. "Look, you must have a #2 guy in mind; why not talk to him and send him out instead of me?" seems to be Moses' attitude. After all,

there are 2 million Hebrews; and half of them are males. Surely, there is a better choice from within that massive group, Moses argues, thinking fast and speaking his mind—indicating that he is clearly the right man for this job.

Exodus 4:14a *So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said: “Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well.*

God does not actually get angry—He knew in eternity past just exactly how Moses would respond—which is going to be clear in this and the next few verses. The use of emotions in reference to God expresses the actions of God in terms that we might better understand. This is a way of making God more relatable. While reading this narrative, you may have thought, *I’d be angry at Moses if I were God.* So, when the Bible speaks of the anger of God, this makes sense to you and I.

If I personally was the one telling Moses what he needed to do and how is able to handle this assignment—I might become frustrated and angry with him as he continues to say, “No, I can’t do it; no I don’t want to do it.” I understand what God should be feeling (God does not have such feelings). But this is why He is so described; to help me as a man with emotions to understand Him.

Exodus 4:14 *So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said: “Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.*

Interestingly enough, Moses does not appear to catch on how far in advance that God has worked all of this out. But, right at this moment, Aaron is walking towards Moses to reconnect (Aaron is miles away, but he started on this trip to meet Moses long before this conversation between Moses and God takes place). God knew what Moses would say, and so God’s plan anticipates the free will of Moses, and his limited negative volition.

We do not know what has precipitated this. How is Aaron suddenly coming out to meet Moses? When did that happen? How did it happen? God knew in eternity past what Moses would say, and God has made provision for it. However, we have no idea exactly how Aaron was caused to move towards Moses (obviously, God did the causing). And, in order for Moses to meet Aaron in the next day or so, Aaron had to have been sent out long before this conversation between Moses and God takes place. Obviously, God already knew what Moses was going to say. God knew Moses’ objections and his reticence, and He made provision for that.

God does not stop Moses mid-sentence and say, “Look, I know what you’re going to say, and I have made provision for it.” God lets Moses talk himself out. Then God tells Moses, “You are worried about being tongue-tied? I have got this covered. Your brother Aaron is on his way right now. He’ll do all of your public speaking for you.”

If Aaron is on his way to meet Moses right this moment, then God organized all of this a long time ago (we understand God’s plan to be in existence from eternity past).

The obvious application is, no matter what is occurring in our life, no matter what difficulty that we face, God was aware of it in eternity past and He made provision for it in eternity past—and He even takes into consideration our positive or negative volition.

Exodus 4:15 **Now you [Moses] shall speak to him [Aaron] and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do.**

God is telling Moses, “Listen, I have got all of this handled. You don’t need to worry about thinking fast and speaking. Aaron will do that part.” This is a job, by the way, for which Aaron has had no training. Even if this entered into Moses’ mind, he cannot very well use that argument, because it tends to invalidate his position that there must be someone out there better for this job. Moses cannot object and say, “Well, Aaron has no training.” He can’t say that because Moses has had training.

Also, Moses certainly cannot say, “Well, I cannot speak to Aaron; I am not a good speaker.” Aaron is his brother. All he has to do is be a conduit between God and Aaron. So he does not have that excuse. Surely he is able to speak to his own brother. Essentially, what is really happening is, God is sending Aaron along to hold Moses’ hand.

Interestingly enough, at some point when speaking to Pharaoh, Moses will no longer require Aaron to speak for him. Things will become rather intense and Moses will find himself at a point where he just cannot be bothered to stop and whisper to Aaron what he needs to say. Moses will just blurt it out. It will be a fairly subtle set of circumstances—at least in the recording of it. We will not read the words, *and Moses shoved Aaron out of the way and got right up in Pharaoh’s face*. But, more or less, this is what will happen.

All of this is going to become rather convoluted. God speaks to Moses then Moses speaks to Aaron, and then Aaron speaks to Pharaoh. At some point, without thinking, Moses is going to start speaking to Pharaoh himself.

As an aside, the recording of these things could also become quite convoluted—God speaking to Moses, Moses speaking to Aaron and, finally, Aaron speaking to Pharaoh. No worries here. The narrative as recorded in Exodus is far more abbreviated than that. We will know that this is going on when we read, *and they said to Pharaoh*; and we will know that Moses has stepped in to bypass Aaron, when we read, *and he said to Pharaoh*.

God continues speaking to Moses, telling him what Aaron needs to say and do.

Exodus 4:16 **So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.**

God would speak to Moses and then Moses would communicate divine instructions to Aaron, and then Aaron would speak these things to Pharaoh. Since these are divine instructions, Moses will be like God to Aaron.

For me, I cannot get over envisioning this as being somewhat similar to Fred Armisen playing Prince and whispering to Beyonce (Maya Rudolf) in order to communicate to his audience (at the 50 second mark [here](#)).

This reveals God's sense of humor, because whatever Moses says to Aaron, Aaron is going to simply repeat to Pharaoh (or to the elders when Moses meets them to begin with). Moses, grudgingly, is going to find this acceptable. God has boxed him into a corner here.

To be clear, God is not forcing Moses to do anything here; God is simply answering all of his objections and saying, "I have made provision for that." We will come to a point where Moses no longer has any reason to object to what God wants him to do. Moses is unable to come up with a counter-argument. Moses will finally go along with God's plan as an exercise of his own free will.

### **Lesson 037: Exodus 4:17–20b**

### **Moses Begins a Journey to Egypt**

We are still out in the desert-wilderness of Midian and God is giving His final instructions to Moses. Moses has finally agreed to do what God has called him to do (which involves using his brother Aaron as a go-between to Pharaoh), and God is firming up the final details.

Exodus 4:17 *And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs."*

God has shown Moses one sign to be performed with his staff; but there will be others.

Moses is going to be doing everything, but when it comes time to speak to Pharaoh, he will lean into Aaron (everything will suddenly stop), tell Aaron what to say, and then Aaron would say the exact same thing, just louder and directly to Pharaoh.

In the actual narrative, there is almost no mention of all this interaction. We will not read, God said to Moses; then Moses whispered it to Aaron, and then Aaron stood before Pharaoh and said these words. In fact, throughout, the writer, Moses, will take a number of shortcuts when it comes to the narrative, so that we do not get overwhelmed by the details (as happened with the writer of Gen. 24).

Had the signs and miracles in Egypt been recorded in a different way—including each and every detail—the narrative would grind to a halt. This incredible series of events would have become tedious and boring. However, with the literary shortcuts applied by Moses, the impact of the signs and wonders will remain front and center throughout.

When it comes to these various signs, God is very theatrical. Most of the signs that Moses will perform will be for all of Egypt, for royalty and the common man alike. These will be signs and wonders which are played out on the main stage of the land of Egypt. Moses will take his staff and strike the ground with it, on at least one occasion; on another, he will lift up his staff high over the water (sometimes Aaron would man the staff). The staff acts

to focus attention upon whatever wonder that God would perform. For the big signs and wonders, Moses is simply using his staff in order to point into the general direction of what Pharaoh and his people need to look at.

No doubt, the people who first witnessed these great wonders were Pharaoh and his cabinet; and, no doubt, they would relay to friends and family what they saw. "Then this guy Moses lifts up his staff into the air and..." So the focus is first upon Moses, then upon his staff, but then upon the great work that God does by his hand. The staff essentially points in the direction of what God is doing.

The people of Egypt would have had just the opposite experience. They would be aware of the great signs and wonders first; and then later understand that this is related to Moses and the sons of Israel. What is actually happening will be broadcast across the land, so, after 2 or 3 signs, everyone knows that these things are being done by the God of Moses. It is left to the people to conclude that their own gods are powerless against this God. Signs as Egypt has never seen before will be attributed to God.

Most of Exodus 3 and the first half of Exodus 4 have been devoted to a conversation between God and Moses. At this point in the narrative, Moses will leave for Egypt.

Had it been me dividing up the chapters, this would have been a good place to end Exodus 3 and begin Exodus 4 (the original Scriptures were written without chapter or verse divisions). That way, Exodus 3 would have included the entire conversation between Moses and God.

Because of the conversation between God and Moses, we have received a preview of the events to occur. At this point, the narrative of Moses in Egypt actually begins (not with v. 18; but soon thereafter Moses travels toward Egypt). However, there will be a serious hiccup before he gets very far.

### **Moses Goes to Egypt**

V. 18 would have been the logical place to begin a new chapter (God and Moses' conversation continued from chapter 3 into chapter 4). Many translations have a subheading at v. 18 (the CEV, MEV, NEV, NKJV, the New Century Version, Tree of Life Version, New English Translation). Even though the chapter divisions are not inspired; pretty much every Bible translation holds to them as if they were. There is a reason for that, of course; and that is so that, when I make reference to Exodus 4:18, everyone is able to find where that passage is and what it says. So, even though I will make reference to the imperfections of the chapter divisions, we will continue to follow them.

I write this study of Scriptures as reference material for others; so, even though I would like to change the location of the chapters beginnings, that would not be of any help to someone researching the book of Exodus. Therefore, I keep to the traditional division of chapters, as does virtually every other translator and commentator.

Generally speaking, I prefer the chiasmi developed by Murai; I find them to be the most logical and obvious.

### Chiasm of Exodus 4:18–31 (by Hajime Murai)

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| A(4:18)     | Words of Moses  |
| B(4:19)     | Commands of the LORD  |
| C(4:20-23)  | "If you refuse to let him go, I warn you, I will kill your son, your first-born" (4:23) |
| C'(4:24-26) | "the Lord came upon Moses and would have killed him" (4:24)                             |
| B'(4:27)    | Commands of the LORD  |
| A'(4:28-31) | Words of Moses  |

From [http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02\\_Exodus\\_pericope\\_e.html](http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02_Exodus_pericope_e.html) accessed October 18, 2017.

Moses has lived in Midian half of his life, married to a Midianite woman, with whom he has 2 boys. He works for her father and has a stake in his life there. We know very little about Moses' life in Midian; but whatever this life is, it is about to be upended.

Before Moses leaves, it is logical for him to speak to his father-in-law in order to secure permission to leave. He has lived with his father-in-law for 40 years and has become a son to him; and therefore, in many ways, he has occupied the place of a son.

Exodus 4:18a *So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, "Please let me go and return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive."*

Interestingly enough, Moses does not tell Jethro about seeing God in the desert-wilderness. Instead, he speaks of going to Egypt to see his brothers—his fellow sons of Israel—who are in slavery in Egypt.

The NKJV is generally an excellent updated translation. I have no idea why they use the anachronistic word *brethren*.

There was no doubt more to this conversation, but it is not recorded; and there is no indication that Moses told Jethro what really happened. Moses is not lying here; but he is simply withholding most of the information. He will be going to his brothers (= fellow Hebrews) in Egypt.

This is interesting choice by Moses, as his father-in-law Jethro, more than any other person, would have understood and believed Moses (that is conjecture on my part; but I think a logical conjecture). Perhaps Moses is ultimately keeping this information from his wife, who is not the most stable person in the world. Perhaps Moses is just completely astonished by the entire experience, and he is simply not sharing it unless absolutely necessary. At this point, Moses might not share any of these events with anyone, apart from his brother Aaron, and then, the elders of Israel.

In any case, father-in-law Jethro sends Moses on his way.

Exodus 4:18b *And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.”*

Jethro has a great deal of respect for Moses, and he tells Moses to go in peace. In other words, “You have my permission.”

Moses has lived in the deserts of Midian with Jethro and his family for the better part of 40 years. He has become an integral part of his family; and therefore, integral to the family business. Suddenly leaving like this will require Jethro to scramble, to make up for the loss of Moses. However, this is never presented as an issue by Jethro. We don't see him bringing it up; it is never discussed in the narrative.

In v. 18, Jethro gives Moses permission to leave; and suddenly in v. 19, God is speaking to Moses once again:

Exodus 4:19 *Now the Lord said to Moses in Midian, “Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead.”*

We do not know if this is an additional conversation which God had with Moses or a part of their earlier meeting (which is what I think is the case). What I think is happening is, Moses is reflecting upon what God has already said to him. He is thinking about it as he continues his trek towards Egypt.

Now, 40 years previous, Moses had killed an Egyptian taskmaster for beating on a Hebrew slave. Moses thought that no one saw him do this, but many saw him and a warrant was issued<sup>42</sup> for his immediate arrest.

It appears that the statute of limitations for any crime is the death of the pharaoh issuing the arrest warrant. Since that particular pharaoh has died, and Moses is now legally off the hook.

Exodus 4:20a *Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey,...*

God does not suggest that Moses leave his family behind. However, we will soon find out that one son is not circumcised, which is unacceptable. We will determine that this reveals a lack of leadership on Moses part.

Exodus 4:20a-b *Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt.*

The way that this is translated, it sounds as if Moses has returned to Egypt; and then the rest of this narrative takes place. I think that it is better to understand that *Moses has begun his trip to return to the land of Egypt.*

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<sup>42</sup> Whatever they did in ancient Egypt when a man was to be arrested.

The verb translated *to return* is an imperfect verb, which can denote a process rather than a completed act (the perfect tense often indicates a completed act). So, we may legitimately understand Moses to be *in the process of returning to Egypt*. The Voice is one of the few translations which recognizes that v. 20a-b does not place Moses in Egypt; but on the way to Egypt: *Moses placed his wife and sons on a donkey, and he started on the long journey back to Egypt*. The Expanded Bible takes the same approach: *So Moses took his wife and his sons, put them on a donkey, and started back to Egypt*. However, most translations incorrectly read *returned to Egypt*. That would have been the way to translate a perfect tense.<sup>43</sup>

The reason that the imperfect tense is important is, the incidents which occur in vv. 20–28 all occur in Midian; at v. 29, Moses is actually in Egypt.

### Lesson 038: Exodus 4:20–23

### Moses Begins a Journey to Egypt

Moses has said goodbye to his father-in-law and has placed his wife and sons on a donkey to return to Egypt. The wife has likely never been outside of Midian.

Exodus 4:20a-b *Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt.*

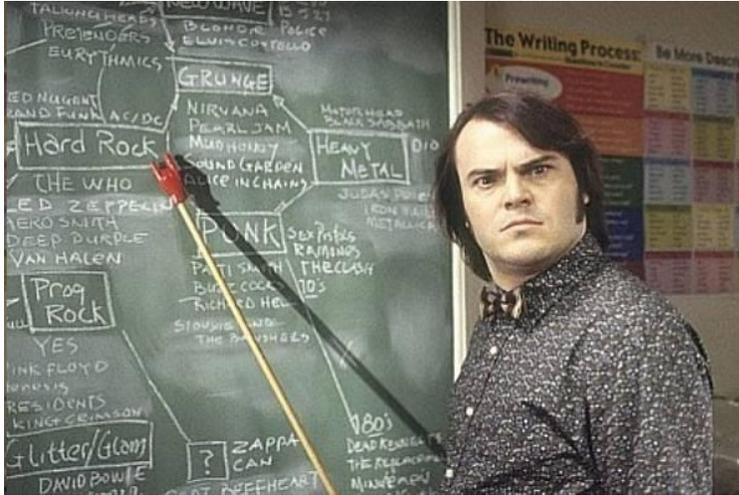
As we have previously discussed, *returned* is an imperfect verb, referring to a process rather than to an achieved result. This is better translated *and he began to return to Egypt*. He will not actually be in Egypt until v. 29.

Exodus 4:20c *And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.*

Now the rod or staff that Moses has been carrying is called *the rod [staff] of God*. God will use this staff in Moses' hand. It is not essential to lend power of any sort to the acts of God; Moses will simply use the staff in order to point to the place where God will act. His staff will be used much like a magician uses a magic wand; or as a teacher uses a pointer (both of those may be dated references for younger readers).

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<sup>43</sup> It is not always easy to give the sense of the imperfect or perfect verb tense in the English translation from the Hebrew. However, it is important to the context here to recognize that Moses is simply on his way; he is not there yet.



Jack Black using a pointer in the movie "School of Rock"; from [Movie Details](#); accessed November 27, 2018. Most pointers have a point on the end; Black's pointer has tiny *Hook 'em horns* hand at the end of it.



**Magician's Hat and Wand (graphic)**; from [123RF](#); accessed November 27, 2018. At one time, the top hat and wand were standard issue to young magicians. The wand is that thing that looks like a pencil next to the hat.

Exodus 4:21a [And the Lord said to Moses,...](#)

The narrative could be understood to be like this: Moses is leading his wife and two sons on their donkeys, traveling to Egypt; and Moses considers what he is doing. He becomes cognizant of the staff in his hand, and then he thinks about what God said to him.

There are basically two ways of understanding this passage: (1) Every few minutes, as Moses rides along (I am assuming that he is riding a donkey as well), God speaks to him and Moses thinks about that. Or (2) Moses, on this long trip, thinks about the things that God said to him. I have interpreted this narrative in the second way, which I believe is a correct assessment of the situation.

We know very little about his wife; but what we do know about her is not good. It would make perfect sense for Moses to concentrate on what God has said to him, as opposed to what his wife wants to say about everything that is going on. If she is giving her opinions on the matter of traveling from Midian to Egypt, Moses may take that time to think about what God has said to him.

Exodus 4:21a-b [And the Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand.](#)

God speaks of wonders which He has placed in Moses' hand. This does not mean that Moses has something visible to carry with him (apart from the staff). The word *hand* is often used for what someone has in his possession or what someone is able to do or

accomplish. God has given Moses the power to do several signs; and when it is called for, Moses will do these particular signs. Strictly speaking, Moses will usually point towards the place where God's power will be made manifest.

Again, it is unclear whether this is a new conversation or whether these are bits and pieces of what God had already said to Moses in the desert-wilderness. It is possible that God encouraged Moses along the way, perhaps speaking to him in his dreams. Or, more likely, this represents something that God said which Moses remembers both while moving forward on this trip and later, when recording this information (this would have been recorded much later). It would make perfect sense for God to have said more to Moses than we read in chapters 3b–4a, but for Moses to bring these things to mind as he travels towards Egypt. In fact, these things *ought* to be on Moses' mind as he proceeds towards Egypt.

Traveling from Midian to Egypt would have been a slow, many-day process. Moses therefore has time to think; and I believe that we find these words at this point in the narrative to represent Moses thinking about what God had said to him.

Bear in mind that Moses is not 100% enthusiastic about this trip. He has expressed many misgivings when speaking with God. However, what Moses is doing right now—thinking about what God had said to him—that is the right thing for him to do, despite any reticence that he might be feeling.

Exodus 4:21c [But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.](#)

This is Moses recalling what God has said to him. He is pondering these words. The Hebrew word here for *harden* is *châzaq* (חָזַק) [pronounced *khaw-ZAHK*], and it means, *to make strong, to strengthen*. Strong's #2388 BDB #304. God is going to provide Pharaoh with the resolve (or strength) that he (Pharaoh) needs and desires. God is not determining what Pharaoh will do. God is not reaching into Pharaoh's soul and turning his positive volition into negative. God is giving Pharaoh the ability to express his volition, despite the tremendous pressure which is placed upon him. Throughout, I believe that Pharaoh always acts according to his own volition.

Throughout Scripture, God appears to take our volition very seriously and I do not believe that He messes with it. He does bring situations and circumstances to bear on what we are doing and thinking at any given time, but these situations still allow our volition to act freely.

It ought to be clear that two people can face the exact same set of circumstances, and one person will go left and the other person will go right. Many people spend their last hours of life on a deathbed (they realize that they are going to die), and some commune with God in those hours and some continue to reject God in these final hours, even cursing God with their final breath.

Little else is more integral to life than free will. It is my opinion that God does nothing to change Pharaoh's free will; God just gives him the ability to exercise it to the fullest extent.

From all that I have read in the Bible, I believe that God's sovereignty and the free will of men and angels coexist. God's sovereignty will win out in the end; but that God allows for us to make whatever decisions we make; and He does what He does (which often includes divine discipline, to guide us away from sin).

Children are quite helpful to the person who tries to understand God's sovereignty versus man's free will. If you have children, then very likely you have disciplined them not to do *X*. They might do *X* several times, and each time, you impose whatever discipline you believe is appropriate to stop them. The normal parent does this because he (or she) believes that *X* is wrong for a person to do and/or that the child will end up being led astray in his life for doing that. As every parent knows (and dreads), their imposition of discipline may or may not curtail a child from doing *X*. And often, what works with one child may not work with his younger brother. That is because children have free will and as much as we might want to guide them in the right direction, our enactment of discipline does not always work.

So, around the house, the parent has sovereignty. Simultaneously we have these children in our care from the moment that they are born, so that we are able to exert our will over theirs from the earliest age. However, as any parent can tell you, even when that child is 2 feet tall, they might not obey you. The parent does everything that they can to guide the child in the right direction, and some respond positively and some do not—even if we are talking about siblings. Sometimes a child, with his free will, responds to our sovereignty in a way that is pleasing to us; and sometimes he does not.

My point being, we have free will and God has sovereignty. God guides and disciplines us, but that does not mean that we always obey Him.

When the new believer finds out about naming his sins to God, the first thing that comes to his mind is, *so, I am going to confess my sins every 20 seconds?* (I have, in fact, had two believers express that very sentiment directly to me). The answer is, of course, *yes*. And, when we grow spiritually, believe it or not, we will maintain our fellowship with God for sometimes 10 minutes; later for 60 minutes; and later for even a half day or so.

Back to our narrative, where Moses is recalling things that God had said to him (I realize that I have repeated that fact, but there is a point which I will make).

Exodus 4:22 *Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: Israel is My son, My firstborn.* (I have again taken liberties with the formatting of the text here of the NKJV.)

On this long ride to Egypt, Moses continues to think about what God said to him. Think about this, if you will: God speaking audibly to Moses right now and Moses considering what God has said to him—these are virtually the same thing. You may think, *no, no way; those things are very different;* but from a practical standpoint, *are they really?* Whether

Moses hears God's audible voice or he simply thinks about what God has already said to him, the actual impact upon Moses' soul is essentially the same.

When Moses thinks about God's words and decides, *okay, I believe that*; that is when Moses begins to grow spiritually. This is how all believers grow—we hear the Word of God (by whatever means), we consider the Word of God; and then we believe the Word of God. At that point, it begins to affect our spiritual lives for the better.

So many Christians think that, in some way, they have missed out. We have never spoken with a burning bush; we never sat down at the feet of Jesus as He lectured a crowd. But, as you learn Bible doctrine, you can mentally go to that place at any time during your life. Each day, as often as possible, you should be thinking Bible doctrine. You should be able to take your time and place in life and integrate this with God's thinking. **Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,...** (Philip. 2:5; VW) Paul did not write these words in such a way as to suggest, *now here's a good idea*. In the Greek, this is a command (it is a present passive imperative). This means, we are enjoined to allow the thinking of Christ to become our thinking. That happens *only* when we believe God's words. And this is exactly what Moses is doing. He is replaying in his mind what God said to him as he travels along. That process is powerful within Moses' soul. In fact, it might even be more powerful, because Moses is not talking back as he ruminates on the words of God (recall that Moses engaged in a lot of talking back to God when they communicated directly in real time).

Exodus 4:22a *Then you shall say to Pharaoh,...*

God is going to make an analogy here. Interestingly enough, even though God agrees that Aaron will be Moses' spokesman, God says, "**You** [2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular] **will say to Pharaoh.**" At this point, Moses will be doing the talking. This is very subtle, so Moses may be thinking this in his mind, but not fully realizing that is what God has said to him.

Exodus 4:22 *Then you* [2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular] *shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: **Israel is My son, My firstborn.***

This is the first time in the Bible when the word *Israel* (rather than *the sons of Israel*) is applied to the people of Israel. We understand that word today to refer to the nation Israel; but that nation is made up of people—and that is to whom this word refers.

Interestingly enough, this is the final warning that Moses will issue to Pharaoh for the 10<sup>th</sup> and final plague. Also, by this time, it will be Moses issuing the warnings directly to Pharaoh rather than through his brother Aaron.

Exodus 4:23 *So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.'* " (I continue taking liberties with the formatting of the NKJV, using italics to represent a quote within a quote within a quote.)

God flash-forwards to the end, to Moses giving God's final warning to Pharaoh. Moses will speak for God at that point. Moses will speak directly to Pharaoh at this point. So that Pharaoh can understand the connection, God speaks of Israel as *His son* and the contrast will be with Pharaoh and his son. Paraphrasing, God is telling Pharaoh, "You know how you feel about your own son; that is how I feel about Israel."

I do not believe that Pharaoh will appreciate these words of God. He may hear them, but he will not (in my opinion) ruminate on how he loves his own son will be very much parallel to how God feels about Israel. In other words, Moses is ruminating on the words of God; Pharaoh will choose not to think about them. Two men; the exact same words; Moses considered them and thought about them as he traveled towards Egypt; but Pharaoh, despite all that happens to him and to Egypt, will choose not to think much about the words that come to him from God.

The killing of the firstborn is to be the final and most dramatic of the plagues God put upon Egypt.

These are God's marching orders to Moses. I believe that these words, spoken by God to Moses earlier, are the words that Moses concentrates on as he begins his trip from Midian to Egypt.

However, despite how you may feel about the narrative, at this point, Moses and his family have not gone very far; and they will suddenly be stopped in their tracks. It may seem odd to you, because here is Moses, doing what God asked him to do, packing up and leading his family to Egypt; and he is thinking about God and what God said to him—exactly what Moses ought to be doing—and yet, God is going to stop this family from going any further and Moses will face the sin unto death.

## **Lessons 039–040: Exodus 4:24–26**

## **The Uncircumcised Son**

I should warn you that this is going to be a longer-than-usual lesson, despite the brevity of the text (3 verses).

At this point, Moses is leading his family out of Midian and they are traveling towards Egypt. They don't get very far before something quite dramatic occurs. However, for the casual reader, it is very hard to fully comprehend and appreciate what is happening.

In vv. 24–26, there is an unusual incident which appears to involve circumcision and the sin unto death. What makes this incident particularly unusual is, it is very poorly recounted, so that we need to read a lot into it. Most of the narrative of Exodus is fairly easy to follow; but this particular incident, not so much. In fact, it may be helpful for you to read the entire passage first, before we study it in detail:

Exodus 4:24–26 [At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet](#)

with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!" So He let him alone. It was then that she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision. (ESV; capitalized)

When reading this, your understanding of what is taking place is going to be quite limited. For some reason, God wants to kill Moses; Moses' wife then circumcises their son (but she seems to be upset about it); and everything appears to be back to normal after this—that is, the narrative just continues as before, and nothing later is said about this incident).

Where all of this leads might surprise you. That is, taking in this passage and realizing that Moses circumcised his first son (or ordered his wife to do it), reveals a lot of information about Moses and his knowledge of the Scriptures (which, at that time, would have been the book of Genesis).

First off, I have a theory concerning the weak narrative at this point. I believe that Moses, during this time, was very ill—sick to the point of death. So he faded in and out; and he knew what was going on, but just barely. Therefore, his recollection at this point is not as good as his recollection of other incidents in his life. He was literally dying in front of his wife and barely had enough strength to let her know what she needed to do (this is all conjecture, but it fits well with the threadbare narrative).

As a result of the limited narrative at this point, we are going to have to do some careful analysis and do some logical speculation in order to develop a full picture of what is taking place.

Regarding the inspiration of Scripture—the human authors are moved along by the Holy Spirit; but they do not act as secretaries for the Spirit. The personality, vocabulary, intelligence, sensibilities and experiences of the human author are *always* a part of the text. Every word of Scripture is inspired by God the Holy Spirit; yet every word also reflects the thinking and perception of the human author. The written Word of God is very much the Word of God and the words of men. For every single verse in the Bible, the words used are the words of God conveying God's perfect message to man. However, simultaneously these are exactly the words of the author—in this case Moses, as if he were simply recording these events based upon his own perception of his own experience. What I have just described is the verbal plenary interpretation of the inspiration of Scripture (which is the conservative, orthodox understanding of the authority of the Scriptures).

So, it is possible for this to be Moses' recollection of what happened, taking into consideration that he was very sick at the time and has a very limited memory of these events. However, at the same time, these same words are the words of God, conveying to us divine information from Him as well.

Let's take this verse-by-verse and see if we can develop a better understanding of what is going on:

Exodus 4:24 [And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him.](#)

I have assumed that the *him* in this verse refers to Moses. Certainly, one could understand this to refer to his son; but then the confused, threadbare narrative makes very little sense. Would not Moses, the author and the man who loves his sons, specifically cite his son as God's target? Secondly, a child is not responsible for his own circumcision—this is a choice made by parents long before they take the volition of their son into consideration. So, if God wants to kill the son, then God is going after the wrong person—his circumcision or lack thereof was not his choice. The person who made the choice, ultimately on whether the son would be circumcised is Moses. This makes Moses and not his son culpable. Finally, even if it is Zipporah who has objected to the second son being circumcised, even she is not the one at fault here—even if she dug her heels in and said, “You will not commit this act of barbarism, Moses; and I won't do it either.” In marriage, the man is the ultimate authority; and therefore, he is responsible. Moses is the man, the husband, the one with authority. Certainly, a man can give in to his wife's wishes from time to time, but not here, not in the economy of Israel, not with regards to circumcision.

In any case, this sudden threat by God is a great surprise. God has, with no little effort, convinced Moses to go to Egypt; and yet, suddenly, God meets him along the way, and threatens Moses with the sin unto death—that is how we should understand the Lord meeting him and seeking to kill him. The sin unto death means that God kills the believer (or allows the believer to be killed) before his time on earth is up. (This does not mean that every early death of a believer is the sin unto death.)

The sin unto death means that God is going to remove the believer from this life prematurely due to sins, disobedience and/or general recalcitrance on the part of the believer. There is not a specific sin (or complex of sins) which leads to the sin unto death; and *only* the person under this final stage of discipline can turn things around. He must change his own mind; he must change his negative volition to positive. The sin unto death occurs at the point that a person apparently will not spend any more time of his life in fellowship, will not produce any divine good, and/or through his own personal choices cannot continue moving forward in the plan of God. Moses cannot go into Egypt and lead the Hebrew people as long as he has an uncircumcised son. That is the problem here.

There are no details given here. We may surmise, from the next verse that, the problem is, Moses' son has not been circumcised. Interestingly enough, there is not an overabundance of details given here. How did Moses know what was happening? How did he know why it was happening? Did God speak to him? Did Moses figure all of this out on his own, perhaps after being struck by a debilitating disease along the way?

What Moses appears to understand is, he is dying; and to regain his strength and vigor, his second son must be circumcised.

Remember how I have presented Moses and the words of God. I believe that he is thinking about what God has said to him along the way. If Moses knows Genesis—and I

believe that he at least knows some of it—then Moses knows about circumcision. Perhaps while God’s words are going through his mind, Moses is also thinking about incidents from the book of Genesis. I am being speculative, of course.

One should also note that, only one son of Moses has been named in the narrative of Moses’ life in Midian; yet he has brought with him *sons* on this journey (v. 20). Only one son will be circumcised. This suggests to me that Moses’ first son had been circumcised (he is named previously in this book), but that his second son was not circumcised (and, therefore, not named previously).

Now, why would one son be circumcised but the other one not? Let me suggest that Zipporah, Moses’ wife, had refused to allow it, and, as a result, this child was not really considered by God up to this point as being a valid Hebrew child (as he did not represent regeneration). Only one son, Gershom (*stranger*) has been named (Exodus 2:21–22); and this chapter in v. 20 do we find out for the first time that Moses has more than one son.

What this means is, right now, Moses is going to Egypt to lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt; and yet he is traveling there with an uncircumcised son. That is very problematic.

Exodus 4:25a [Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son...](#)

This short passage deals with circumcision. Recall that circumcision refers to regeneration or giving new life to that which was dead. We are born into this world physically alive but spiritually dead. That is, we have no natural contact with God. Now, through our own thinking, we might think things about God, but we have no direct contact until we have believed in Jesus Christ (in the Old Testament, they believed in the Revealed God, the Preincarnate Messiah/King). Circumcision, although done usually on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of life, represents this new life which comes through faith in the Revealed God. Circumcision is a representative analogy, and is clearly required by God of all Hebrew males.

Hebrew children would be brought up, in varying degrees, with some sort of knowledge of their God; and when they choose to believe in that God, they are reborn (or born again). This means that, they now have a human spirit (or, more accurately, their human spirit has become activated). Before the human spirit had no function or there was no way to access it; but after salvation, the human spirit is where spiritual information is stored. Just as we store information about people and things in our soul; we store information about God, about the Angelic Conflict, and about God’s plan in our spirits. However, we must be born again unto God in order for this to happen. Additionally, we must be in fellowship. The human spirit is not available to us if we have unconfessed sin in our lives. (This is why every church service ought to begin with the opportunity for the parishioners to silently name their sins to God.)

Exodus 4:25 [Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses’ feet, and said, “Surely you are a husband of blood to me!”](#)

Moses' wife, Zipporah, appears to be none too happy with circumcising her sons. Some people have great difficulty with the idea of circumcision (I believe that some cities have even [tried to outlaw it](#)).

Circumcision marks God's people; it was a sign of new life, which began with Abraham.<sup>44</sup> Abraham was sexually dead; he was incapable of reproducing in his old age, and yet, he did not have the son that God had promised him. God required him to be circumcised and that gave Moses new life (metaphorically speaking). After the circumcision, Moses was potent and able to father children. So circumcision represents having new life given by God (so much of what we study in the Old Testament is representative of spiritual truths).

For more information, see the doctrine of **circumcision** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

What appears to be the case is, Moses or Zipporah circumcised the first boy—I suspect that Moses made Zipporah do it—and Zippora was so upset over it, she refused to allow the circumcision of the second son. That would explain why one son was circumcised but the other was not. However, it is the uncircumcised son that kept them from moving forward.

So Zipporah circumcises the younger son and she casts the foreskin at Moses' feet.

It is reasonable to suppose that this entire thing, where Zipporah has been uprooted and is now traveling with Moses to a place that she has never been—separated from her family, a way of life she has known her entire life—this is quite a jarring experience for her. She may be mad about the circumcision, but I suspect that she is upset about a great many things at this point.

Furthermore, we do not know how much Zipporah knows about what is happening. Does she simply think that Moses is going to look up some of his old buddies in Egypt? Does she know anything about God speaking to him? Therefore, it is logical that Zipporah is upset about a lot of things right at this moment; as she is clearly a very headstrong woman.

If Moses has not told Jethro the real reason that he is going to Egypt, what exactly has he told his wife? How much does she know at this point in time? If anyone is difficult to deal with, it is Moses' wife. She does not want to be on this trip going to Egypt—and I doubt that she has any idea why Moses has been so insistent on going. And, quite obviously, she is not happy with this whole circumcision thing.

I suspect Moses' way of dealing with his wife was not to tell her why exactly they were going to Egypt. I believe that he told her the same things that he told her father. So she did not have the full and complete picture.

Exodus 4:25 [Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!"](#) (NKJV)

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<sup>44</sup> Certainly men were saved prior to Abraham; and he was saved long before he was circumcised.

Moses was fully aware of this requirement of circumcision, yet he apparently did not push it when his second son came along. My guess is, considering the response of Zipporah, it was just not worth the trouble. How long would she nag and trouble him after this second circumcision? He weighed his options and went with not circumcising this second son.

However, now Moses is about to lead all Israel, but how can he do that if he cannot lead this one woman? No one was moving forward on God's plan or God's covenant until all of the males were circumcised (compare Joshua 7). Remember that circumcision was a sign of God's covenant (Genesis 17:12–14).

Exodus 4:26a *So He let him go.*

The translation, *So He let him go* might be difficult to understand. A more literal rendering would be *Consequently, God [lit., He] withdrew from Moses [lit., him];...* God's pressure on Moses had been tremendous. Moses was under the sin unto death; and, as soon as his son had been circumcised, God backed off. It was Moses' responsibility to see to it that all of his male sons were circumcised, and he apparently failed in this regard. The fact that Zipporah reluctantly circumcises their second son, but it not very happy about it, suggests that she is the reason that he was not circumcised in the first place. However, as head of the household, Moses is the one responsible for this (that is, the sin unto death was placed upon him and not upon Zipporah).

Exodus 4:26b *Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision.*

One thing that Moses remembers very well from this incident is his wife calls him, "A husband of blood." This is stated in v. 25 and 26. Let me suggest that she is expressing both anger and frustration towards him; and it is possible that she said it more than once. Right after the circumcision, she probably said those words—and then, when Moses began to recover, she may have said those words again, just to make sure that he heard her.

With his sons now both circumcised, God lets Moses proceed towards Egypt. Nevertheless, his wife is apparently livid over the circumcision and probably because of the circumstances of them leaving Midian, her home.

Exodus 4:24–26 *At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!" So He let him alone. It was then that she said, "A bridegroom of blood," because of the circumcision. (ESV; capitalized)*

I would like to separate what we actually know from logical speculation.

### **What Do We Know About the Circumcision Incident?**

1. *Son* is in the singular, so it appears that only one son had been circumcised and the other was not. Exodus 4:25

## What Do We Know About the Circumcision Incident?

2. As the father, Moses would have been aware of this from the very beginning. It would be virtually impossible for a father to have a son and not know whether or not he was circumcised.
3. Zipporah does the circumcision on the second son. Exodus 4:25
4. Moses does not say anything (or, whatever he says is not recorded); but the one comment is made by Zipporah, which is said in v. 25 and partially repeated in v. 26. **“Surely you are a husband of blood to me!”** It is possible that she repeats this phrase herself. Exodus 4:25–26
5. This remark seems to indicate that Zipporah is upset by this incident, and particularly about having to circumcise her son.
6. She says this as she throws the foreskin at Moses’ feet. This is the sort of thing a person would do who is making a statement, like, “So, this is what you want? This is what I had to do?” Zipporah seems very angry over what she had to do.
7. The circumcision of the child appears to be directly related to Moses’ illness (or his being put under the sin unto death).
8. It appears that Moses’ life is in danger from God (v. 24), but that after the circumcision, God lets up on Moses (v. 26).
9. The believer’s life, when in danger directly from God, is known as the threat of the sin unto death. We have incidents in the Bible where a believer appears to be dying the sin unto death and others where they die the sin unto death.

Now, let’s consider and talk about these things that we know:

If I were to make an educated guess, Zipporah was the one who refused to circumcise their second son in the first place, after witnessing (or doing) the circumcision of their first son. Moses very likely did not exert his God-given authority as her husband but simply let her have her way regarding the second son. Therefore, God would strike Moses with an illness so that he cannot do this for her. Since Moses did not exert his authority as husband, God does it for him.

*We need to be flexible in the nonessentials, and inflexible in the essentials,* as R. B. Thieme, Jr. said many times. Moses, as the husband, is not a drill sergeant. He was not to tell his wife what to do in each and every instance of their lives. However, when it comes to the essentials—which includes circumcision for their sons—Moses was to be inflexible. This was a requirement of God for Moses as a Hebrew father. Here, he failed.

Moses is given divine authority from God. He must know how to wield this authority. If he is unable to assert his authority with his own wife, how can he possibly stand before Pharaoh and lay down the law? How can he stand before Israel and tell them what must be done?

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Zipporah seems to be a rather difficult woman, the few times that we encounter her in the Word of God. Moses' 40+ year marriage to her was probably preparation for him to lead the people of Israel. At a much later time, in the desert, after the people of Israel have committed another round of sins indicating their negative volition, God comes to Moses and says, "I am ready to start all over again. I will kill every single Israelite and start over again with your sons."

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You or I, had we put up with some of the nonsense that Moses did, might have responded, "That sounds like a great plan, God. I like that idea." But Moses won't do this; he will intercede for the people of Israel (just as Jesus has done on our behalf). I have little doubt that being married to a woman as difficult as Zipporah helped to prepare Moses to respond appropriately (or, to put this another way, killing your wife is *not* the solution to any of your marriage problems).

So there is no misunderstanding, circumcision was performed in the Hebrew economy because it represented regeneration, bringing life out of death. It has no spiritual meaning today. It is not wrong or right to have your children circumcised today. Circumcision does appear to be common in western society particularly of Christian cultures. Again, it is not wrong or right for a Christian to choose to circumcise his sons.

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I will try to take all that we know and weave it into a logical, reasonable narrative, which is consistent with the narrative before us.

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### **Kukis' Full Interpretation of the Circumcision Incident**

1. Zipporah had two sons of Moses, one who is circumcised and named in Scripture and the other son, whose birth is not mentioned (Exodus 2:22 18:3). This second son was not circumcised (Exodus 4:25). Being uncircumcised, he is not recognized by God; and so he is not mentioned in Scripture until this point.
  2. The fact that one child is circumcised suggests that Moses knew enough about his history as a Hebrew man to require his son to be circumcised.
  3. I would guess that Zipporah put her foot down with the second child and said, "We will not circumcise this boy! That is a bloody ceremony which I refuse to allow our son to go through. Nor will I ever take part in doing such a thing!"
  4. In the alternative, she puts her foot down and tells Moses that he will not circumcise the second son. We do not have this quote in Scripture and we have no idea who performed the first circumcision. I have simply made an educated guess at this point.
  5. Given that circumstances for Zipporah to perform the circumcision in this chapter, that would certainly suggest that she is the one at fault for the second son not being circumcised.
  6. Moses, when Zipporah originally indicated that she did not want their second son circumcised, decided that this is a battle that he does not really want to have; and he backed off. He was flexible with regards to an essential. Circumcising his child is not an optional matter for any Old Testament Hebrew father.
  7. The Midian family which has adopted Moses apparently did not circumcise their
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## Kukis' Full Interpretation of the Circumcision Incident

- young. They are believers but they are not Hebrews. Also, Moses' father-in-law appears to have only had daughters. Baby girls are not circumcised. *That* is a heathen ritual.
8. Then God speaks to Moses and, as a result, Moses and his wife and his sons then travel toward Egypt.
  9. Early on, God stops this procession, and Moses is placed under the sin unto death, because the one son is not circumcised. God will not allow incomplete obedience from Moses. We do not know the nature of what was happening to Moses, but let me suggest a deadly illness which appeared certain to kill him.
  10. I would suggest an illness which has knocked Moses on his back, making him unable to do much of anything except talk.
  11. Moses was probably so ill as to not have a full and complete memory of this incident; and that he himself was too weak to perform the circumcision. He only had enough strength to tell his wife that she must circumcise the second son or he, Moses, would die. Whether he said this once or several times, we do not know. That he said this at all is also an educated guess.
  12. Moses, being too weak from the illness, cannot circumcise the boy. Zipporah must do it. My guess here is, God is making her circumcise the boy because she is the one who refused the procedure earlier. All that we know for certain, at this point, is that Zipporah performs the circumcision.
  13. Moses being weak with sickness, suffering the sin unto death, would have been responsible for this narrative, which is threadbare. What is recorded is almost less than what is needed to understand what is going on.
  14. Zipporah is angry about all of this, but she still does the circumcision. She throws the foreskin at the feet of her sickly husband, remarking, "[You are a bloody bridegroom, you are!](#)" I suspect that Moses is lying there sick before her (he is not standing).
  15. God removes the discipline from Moses, and he recovers. Had the son not been circumcised, Moses would have died the sin unto death.
  16. They continue on their journey. Son #2 is now officially a part of their regenerated family and will be later named in Exodus 18:3.

The overall interpretation is accurate. Some of the individual details spoken of here, but not found in Scripture, are simply reasonable guesses which logically fit in with the text that is given. Those additional thoughts are reasonable speculation.

Zipporah, even though she married Moses, was not his biggest supporter.

**Moses and his own personal knowledge about circumcision:** There is one more related topic which is ignored, regarding what I have read so far, and that is, Moses' *knowledge* of circumcision. This knowledge has to come from *somewhere*. Recall that, he, as a Hebrew infant, would have been circumcised; and that his adoptive mother, when she saw him in the ark, recognized immediately that he was a Hebrew child, which would also indicate that he was circumcised. However, it takes more than having been

circumcised to cause a father to circumcise his own sons. At some point, through whatever means, Moses had to find out about the importance of circumcision.

For Moses, at some point in his life, circumcision has to have some sort of spiritual meaning to him. If it has no meaning—if it was just some act that occurred at birth, then Moses would not have circumcised either son.

A topic about which we have speculated previously—Moses' knowledge of the Scriptures and of his own spiritual/racial background—is once again revealed. Moses saw to it that his first son was circumcised. Now, *why* would he do that? He would have to know more about his background as a Hebrew—as a son of Israel—than simply his genealogy to insist that his son be circumcised.

Circumcision was not a part of his original adoptive Egyptian family (otherwise, how did his adoptive mother know immediately that he was a Hebrew child?). Circumcision was apparently not a part of the tradition of his Midianite family, given his wife's disgust with the bloody ritual.

This actually helps us to narrow down where Moses learned his spiritual/racial traditions (or, more accurately, the requirements by God of the Hebrew people). He likely did not learn them from his father-in-law, or else his father-in-law would have logically backed him up on the circumcision of his sons. So, logically, there is nowhere else that Moses could have learned these things apart from the time that he was in the royal palace in Egypt. I believe that Moses learned spiritual lessons from his father-in-law, a priest; but specific lessons about his spiritual heritage as a son of Jacob had to come from elsewhere.

I previously speculated that Moses had a Hebrew teacher or teachers (perhaps hired by the royal palace to teach a young Moses language and/or history); and this teacher taught Moses the Hebrew Scriptures (that is, the final  $\frac{3}{4}$ <sup>ths</sup> of the book of Genesis—which I believe was preserved orally by the Hebrew people). When this teacher walked into the royal Egyptian palace to give young Moses an education, no one realized that he carried the textbook *The History of Man and God* in his head (that is, the book of Genesis). From this textbook, this teacher presumably taught Moses all about his past and his relationship with the God of the Hebrews (which history would have included the ritual of circumcision).

The fact that Moses would choose to circumcise his first son suggests that Moses knew far more about his people, the Hebrews, than simply his genealogical line. The fact that Moses was willing to allow his wife to overrule him and not circumcise the second child suggests that this information was from Moses' past and not something which he recently learned from his father-in-law.

Now, speculating further—and forgive me for this, but I am following out these clues logically—the spiritual life of Moses' father-in-law was probably the pre-Hebrew spiritual life which we find in the post-flood, pre-Abrahamic era. This spiritual life would have included

animal sacrifices (which is practiced by Noah and his sons immediately upon exiting the ark) but not circumcision (which is specific to the Hebrew people). We studied this particular spiritual life back in lesson #166 of Genesis.

[Genesis Lessons 101–200](#)  
[HTML](#)

[Genesis Lessons 101–200](#)  
[PDF](#)

[Genesis Lessons 101–200](#)  
[WPD](#)

I am unaware of any commentary which has followed out this information with this specificity. In fact, I don't know if any commentary recognizes the importance of Moses having his first son circumcised. That choice reveals that Moses, raised in the royal palace of Egypt, knew a great many things about the Hebrew faith. This also helps to explain why Moses, at age 40, decided to walk out of the royal palace and to walk among his brothers, the Hebrew slaves.

#### **Lesson 041: Exodus 4:27–28**

#### **Aaron and Moses Meet Up**

Up to this point in time, God has spoken to Moses and given him an assignment. Moses balked, said that he would be unable to speak in front of Pharaoh, so God said, "Listen, I will send your brother Aaron to you. He will do all the talking; you just need to tell him what to say."

To this point in the narrative, Moses and Aaron have not yet been reunited. Moses began this trip towards Egypt, but was stopped suddenly by God because one son had not been circumcised. That was our previous lesson.

It continues to be unclear how God is guiding Moses. Did God tell Moses everything in the desert-wilderness, and now Moses is doing what he was told to do? Or is God speaking to Moses as he continues on this journey? I don't believe that Moses requires God to pop in and out of his dreams in order to guide him and prepare him; but that Moses is simply thinking back on what God taught him in one meeting at the burning bush (see vv. 19, 21–23). I lean toward those verses as being things that God had already said to Moses, and Moses is, on this trip to Egypt, remembering those things and thinking about them.

In fact, even when Moses began to die the sin unto death, it is not necessary for God to speak to him. If Moses is thinking about the things which God said to him; he could also think about what he knows about the book of Genesis. So, if Moses is thinking about the book of Genesis; there may have been a point at which, he thought about circumcision and his own uncircumcised son. Moses—even without God speaking to him directly—could have determined that he was deficient before God. Whether this required additional divine revelation or whether Moses figured it out on his own, we don't know. However, if Moses knew enough to have his first son circumcised, then he probably understood that, as a Hebrew man, his other son should have been circumcised as well (therefore, I don't believe that Moses needed any additional contact from God about circumcision).

In the next verse, we find out that God also spoke to Aaron; and for the timing of this to be right, God had to get Aaron moving *before* Moses told God that he was not up to the job.

This timing is important, why? It helps us to understand God's will, our own free will, and our negative volition. God knows the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10), so God has known Moses in eternity past; God knew that Moses would balk at taking on the things that God required of him. Therefore, God acted in time *before* Moses stated his objections, knowing what Moses would do. God is sovereign, Moses has free will, Moses is able to exercise his free will; and God acts so that His plan comes to pass, despite Moses' reticence. At some point, from his own free will, Moses will act according to God's plan (he will become the man between God and Pharaoh, essentially pushing Aaron aside).

Acts 5:39 "But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop them. You may even find yourselves fighting against God."

God's will, plan and purposes cannot be stopped.

Psalm 33:11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the purposes of His heart to all generations.

Where we read *the purposes [of God]*, we understand that to be His sovereign will; and the execution of that will is His plan.

Proverbs 19:21 Many plans are in a man's heart, but the purpose of the LORD will prevail.

We have plans and ideas, many of which we will try to execute from our own free will. However, God's agenda will prevail in the end.

Isaiah 14:24 The LORD of Hosts has sworn: "As I have planned, so will it be; as I have purposed, so will it stand. (Berean Study Bible)

The simple analogy is parents and children—parents have sovereignty in the relationship and children have free will. Where you live, what your job is, the amount of money that you bring in, when and where you vacation, when you have meal times—these things are a matter of the sovereign will of the parents. Now, the children have free will, and they may seek to subvert your plans (at mealtime, they may refuse to eat), but your sovereign will overrides their negative volition (maybe they will go to bed hungry, as a result of your sovereign will).

And when you know your children, you know how they might act, being placed in certain situations (like taking them to the dentist's). I recall going to get ice cream after the seeing the dentist. Knowing what your children will do (foreknowledge) sometimes leads you to take certain steps to deal with their obstinance (negative volition).

God knew how Moses would react, and He is making provision for it, because, His plan calls for Moses to go before Pharaoh and say, "God says to you, 'Let My people go.' "

Exodus 4:27a **And the Lord said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.”**

God did speak to Moses about Aaron during the time of the burning bush. God told Moses that Aaron to be his *mouth*, as that is where Moses claimed to be weak. However, this particular arrangement was not God’s first choice. God wanted Moses to be the single mediator between God and Pharaoh. This is because Moses is a type of Christ. Two people—one silent partner with a staff and one vocal one—do not properly represent God to man. The illustration that I have used before: a Penn and Teller would *not* be typical of the Savior. This is why sending Moses *and* Aaron was not God’s first choice.

However, God’s overarching plan, where Moses acts as the only mediator between God and Pharaoh, will come to pass, even though Moses does not agree to that at first.

The mountain of God, Mount Sinai, was much closer to Moses than it was to Aaron. For Aaron to be there already to meet Moses suggests that Aaron was not just on some random camping trip, and happened to run into his brother Moses; but that this was a well-orchestrated meet-up organized by God. God spoke to Aaron, and guided these men to meet one another (which in itself is quite amazing, given that Moses intentionally placed himself in the desert-wilderness of Midian to avoid being found by Egyptian officials).

Although God guided Aaron through the desert-wilderness near Midian, we do not know any of the specifics. I lean towards God laying nearly everything on the table. “I am the God of your fathers. Your brother Moses needs you, so you must get up and go—I will guide you.” Or words to that effect. None of this is found in Scripture and let me offer two reasons: (1) From the human standpoint, Moses was not there when God spoke to Aaron, and there is no indication that Aaron even told Moses how it was that he came to meet him (even though that seems like a likely topic of conversation). Since the experience was not Moses’, that would explain why the human author, Moses, did not include God’s words and guidance to Aaron in this record. (2) From the Divine viewpoint, Aaron represents God’s second best. He was not a part of God’s stated plan, as God wanted *one man* to stand between Himself and Pharaoh. **There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.** (1Tim. 2:5) Aaron is plan B and the presence of Aaron ruins the typology of Moses being the sole mediator between God and Pharaoh (between God and man). So God the Holy Spirit gives Aaron no more due than is absolutely necessary for the narrative.

Interestingly enough, God will eventually guide Aaron into becoming a type (the priesthood will begin with Aaron; the High Priest is a type of Christ). This will happen *after* Moses assumes complete and total authority over the people of Israel.

When we come to Exodus 13 (which is all about the consecration of the firstborn and the regulations for the Festival of the Unleavened Bread) and 14 (Moses and Pharaoh’s army at the Sea of Reeds), Aaron’s name will not even be mentioned. In Exodus 15 (which is the Song of Moses), Aaron’s name is only mentioned once. What is happening is, God is easing Aaron out of the co-leadership role, which is something that will require Moses to eventually assert his own complete authority—the authority that God mandated.

It has been at least 40 years since Moses had spoken to Aaron; and possibly much longer (Moses was brought up for 40 years in the palace of Pharaoh; and then he has spent the second 40 years of his life in Midian). It is very possible that they have not seen each other since Moses was an infant.

God has designed things so that they would meet up in the desert-wilderness, essentially in the middle of nowhere. Except for God guiding both men, they might not even recognize each other, after all of these years. From a human standpoint, how do these men recognize each other? They are brothers; therefore, there would be strong similarities in their physical appearance.

Was there any intervening relationship between these two men? Had they seen one another at all since Moses was an infant? About the only thing I could suggest at this point—and even this is conjecture—Moses was aware during his life that he had an older brother Aaron. If they met at any point in their adult lives, it is not recorded or even hinted at in Scripture. About the only thing which is hinted at is, Moses appears to know that he has an older brother Aaron. When God mentions *Aaron*, Moses does not ask, “Now, who pray tell is that?” Nor does Moses say, “I have a Hebrew brother?”

We have discussed in past lessons Moses’ understanding of the plan of God for the Hebrew people—he knew about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and he knew about circumcision. We may reasonably assume that Moses had knowledge of his genealogy (at least, some of it) and of his family who lived among the Hebrew slaves in Egypt.

As also previously discussed, we do not know exactly how Moses acquired any of this information; and I have postulated that he had Hebrew teachers when in the palace and that he learned much about his own background and his own people from them.

Exodus 4:27 [And the Lord said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.” So he went and met him on the mountain of God, and kissed him.](#)

Again, Mount Sinai is called the *mountain of God*, which suggests to me that Moses recorded this narrative *after* he led the people of God back to the Sinai. I don’t think that Moses even slightly appreciates what is about to happen in his life, despite God giving him a rundown of what was going to take place.

Assuming that these incidents are in chronological order, Moses and his family barely were a few miles from their home when Moses almost died the sin unto death. Then Aaron ran into Moses not too long after that, as they meet on the mountain of God. There is, in all of that, some very exact timing. The principles need to be in the right place at the right time; and God acts so that all of this happens, while respecting and allowing for the free wills of Moses, Aaron and Zipporah.

Did God specify to Moses and to Aaron where to meet? That seems like a reasonable assumption—at least for one of the men. There is nothing in the text which suggests that Moses recognizes what a remarkable thing that this is. His brother—whom he has

probably not seen for 40 years (or maybe for 80 years), just happens to come to see him, and they run into one another on the mountain of God. Take God out of the picture, and this is an impossible event.

Regarding this conversation between God and Aaron, we have few details.

Exodus 4:28 [So Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord Who had sent him, and all the signs which He had commanded him.](#)

Interestingly enough, God did not fully brief Aaron. God did tell him, “I need you to go find your brother Moses in Midian;” but God did not add, “...and these are the plans which I have for you and Moses.” All of those plans were divulged to Moses directly, who then revealed them to Aaron. *Why* they were meeting up and what God had planned for them was revealed by God to Moses; and Moses reveals it to Aaron. This maintains the proper authority chain. God is over Moses who is over Aaron.

Moses tells Aaron everything that God has said to him. We may reasonably suppose that Aaron shared his own calling as well, which was probably not with the same level of detail. Remember that Aaron has come out to Midian to find Moses and God knew about it. It makes little sense that Aaron, on a whim, decides, *why not go out and see my brother Moses and catch up?* God, foreknowing Moses’ resistance, would have already contacted Aaron and brought him into the picture.

Interestingly enough, we do not have the phrase, *and Aaron then told Moses*. No doubt, Aaron spoke to Moses, but whatever it was that he had to say was not important enough to include in Scripture.

The strength of Moses should have rested in God from the beginning; but God bringing Aaron to him indicates that Moses ended up being dependent, at first, upon his older brother.

Even though God knew that Moses could handle this, Moses did not believe that; and apparently, could not be convinced otherwise. God still worked with Moses, despite the fact that Moses had not fully trusted God. God uses imperfect men—all of the time. This is why God is able to use you and I.

At any time in human history, God could have used elect angels—those who have never sinned—to speak to man and to give man perfectly accurate teaching and divine viewpoint. God chose not to do this. Angels are rarely brought into the picture. God chooses imperfect man to communicate God’s truth to imperfect man. It should be clear that Moses is imperfect—we should have no doubts about that. Yet God is able to use Moses to lead Israel. In fact, Moses will be one of the greatest leaders of Israel. He will be known as the father of nation Israel (just as Abraham is the father of the Hebrew race).

At this point in our narrative, Moses and Aaron are in the Midian desert, close to the Mountain of God, talking about what God has planned for them. In the next verse, which

would have logically been a good place to start a new chapter, Moses and Aaron will be in Egypt, speaking to the elders of Israel.

## Lesson 042: Exodus 4:29–31

## Aaron and Moses in Egypt

In vv. 27–28, Moses and Aaron are in the desert-wilderness of Midian chatting with one another, having met at the Mountain of God (Mount Sinai). In v. 29, they have gathered together the elders of the sons of Israel, which indicates that they are now in Egypt. So, between vv. 28 and 29, Moses and Aaron (and however many servants, if any) travel from Midian to Egypt.

It is very likely that Zipporah deserted Moses, and took with her, their two sons. We do not hear her name again until Exodus 18:2, when her father brings her and Moses' two sons *back* to Moses. So, at some point after the circumcision of their second son and Exodus 18 (only a few months later), she deserts Moses. Given her emotionally charged response to Moses requiring her to circumcise their younger son, I would guess that she has already left Moses.

Exodus 4:29 *Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.*

This is a sudden change of location—Moses and Aaron were at the Mountain of God in v. 28 and here they are in Egypt in v. 29—and this would have been a good place to begin a new chapter (just like Genesis, there are places where the chapter division in Exodus could have been much better done). The original text of the Old Testament was without vowels, without spaces, and without verse or chapter divisions. The only separations were the books themselves, and that is because they were literally different books. In my opinion, the first half of Exodus 4 should have been included with the previous chapter (it is all a single conversation between God and Moses). And here, we have a sudden change of location, that right in this portion of Exodus 4 should have been the beginning for a new chapter. So, Exodus 3:1–4:17 should have been chapter 3. Exodus 4:18–28 should have been an abbreviated chapter 4. Then chapter 5 should have begun here, with v. 29.

Because chapter divisions are not always done perfectly, many Bible translations include subheadings. V. 29 should have had the subheading, ***Moses and Aaron in Egypt***. Interestingly enough, none of the 90 or so translations which I review do this.

V. 27 is also a good place to begin a new chapter—this is where God speaks to Aaron. Many translations used a subheading at this point (The Christian Community Bible, HCSB, ISV, among others).

Let's get a bird's eye view of this. I will use different shading to indicate where a chapter division should have been.

## An Overview of Exodus 3–5

| Chapter   | Passage        | Location/Basic Description   |
|---|----------------|--|
| <b>Moses at the Burning Bush</b>  |                | <b>(Midianite Desert-wilderness)</b>   |
| Exodus 3  | Exodus 3:1–22  | Moses comes across the burning bush in the desert, which is God manifesting Himself to Moses. God tells Moses what He wants Moses to do.   |
| Exodus 4a   | Exodus 4:1–17  | God and Moses continue to discuss what God wants Moses to do. God eventually allows Moses to depend upon his brother Aaron to speak before Pharaoh.  |
| <b>Moses in Transition</b>  |                | <b>(Moses travels toward Egypt from Midian)</b>  |
| Exodus 4b   | Exodus 4:18–23 | Moses begins to head back to Egypt with his family; God continues communicating with him (whether these are additional meetings or Moses is simply recalling what God said already—we don't know). |
| Exodus 4c   | Exodus 4:24–26 | God requires Moses' second son to be circumcised or Moses will die the sin unto death.   |
| Exodus 4d   | Exodus 4:27–28 | Moses and Aaron meet up in the desert-wilderness in Midian.  |
| <p>Even though this is only 11 verses, that would not make this the shortest chapter in the Bible. Furthermore, there is a great deal of information to come out of this section.</p> |                |  |
| <b>Moses and Aaron in Egypt</b>   |                | <b>(Moses is in Egypt)</b>   |
| Exodus 4e   | Exodus 4:29–31 | Moses and Aaron speak to the elders of Israel (in Egypt) concerning what God wants to do.  |
| Exodus 5a   | Exodus 5:1–23  | Moses and Aaron speak before Pharaoh and ask that the Hebrew people be given time away from Egypt to worship God. Pharaoh increases the workload of the slaves instead.                            |

As you can see, topically and geographically, these chapters could have been divided up much more logically.

Exodus 3–4a should be Exodus 3.

Exodus 4b–4d (or 4e) should have been Exodus 4. This would have made Exodus 4 fairly short and Exodus 3 somewhat long; but neither would be that much outside of the norm.

Exodus 5 is fine as it is, or it could include Exodus 4e. I cannot explain why these 3 chapters were divided up as they were, apart from making them approximately the same length.

No doubt, those responsible for splitting up each book into chapters were saying, “Where’s Kukis to help us out here?”

Exodus 4:30 [And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people \[that is, the Hebrew elders\].](#)

Aaron and Moses operate somewhat like Penn and Teller, the magicians. Aaron does all of the talking, then Moses comes out and does signs before the audience (although, there are certain times when Aaron does these signs). What Aaron tells them combined with the signs that Moses does convince these elders that Moses and Aaron are from God. It does not appear that Moses does any talking at all.

God has told Moses what to say; Moses tells Aaron what to say; Aaron speaks to the elders (and, later to Pharaoh). Although this is laid out pretty carefully here in this verse, that God spoke to Moses, Moses spoke to Aaron and Aaron spoke to the elders; this will not be recorded for each meeting. There will be a number of shortcuts taken in the narrative as we proceed (which keeps the narrative from being bogged down with unimportant details).

Exodus 4:31 [So the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.](#)

The *people* here are the Hebrew elders. They have witnessed the signs of Moses and they believe that Y<sup>e</sup>howah is now with them. This suggests some prior knowledge of Y<sup>e</sup>howah. Again, I believe that many if not most Hebrews knew the book of Genesis. That was their Bible. It had been their Bible for 400 years. They knew how they got to Egypt; they knew Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and they knew about their God. Furthermore, they knew about Canaan. I would also make the assumption that they knew about circumcision (and I’d be willing to bet that all Hebrew male children had been circumcised).

We have already deduced certain things about the book of Genesis that Moses knew. He knew Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and he knew about circumcision and its fundamental importance to the Hebrew people. Now if Moses knows this—and he was raised in Pharaoh’s palace—then it is far more likely that the Hebrew people in general know these things.

This knowledge of the book of Genesis is implied by Scripture (no one ever says, “Now who exactly is this Abraham character you keep talking about?”). On the other hand, there do not appear to be any direct quotations from Genesis found in the 4 books of Moses. Whereas, throughout the New Testament, we find the words, *it stands written* (before quoting from the Old Testament); we do not find a similar situation here. Moses will never say, *and it stands written*. However, that could be simply because the book of Genesis had not been committed to a written form up to that point in human history.

For some reason, when the books of Moses and Genesis are put into a written form, then they will retain that exact text from that time forward (although there is some human error in the transmission of the text, it is rare that we cannot understand the text, despite there being some underlying textual problems).

As I have discussed previously, their Bible (= the book of Genesis) was probably not in written form, but passed down from generation to generation verbally and then memorized.

Earlier, I suggested that when the people of Israel cried out because of their slavery, I noted that it did not say *they cried out to God*. However, here, clearly, their attention is on God. They are not worshiping Moses and Aaron; nor are they worshiping the things that Moses and Aaron are able to do. So there has to still be a connection between the Hebrew people and their God. This connection appears to be strengthened somewhat in time, but never to the point where Gen X fully trusts in their God.

Incidentally, the men to whom Moses is speaking are a part of Gen X—Gen X are those who are 20 years old or older when Israel exits Egypt. This particular name is a designation of mine, not one found in Scripture. However, there are a few places in the Law of Moses where the generations are distinguished (they have to be, as one generation will die the sin unto death but the other will go into the land and take it).

Obviously, Moses and Aaron need to be on the same page with the rest of the Hebrews, as Moses, at some point, will say, “Time to move out;” and they need to be ready and willing, expecting that time to come. Furthermore, this has to be all of Israel. It cannot be a situation where half of Israel is enthusiastic and ready to leave Egypt and the other half is having second thoughts. The maximum pressure of slavery placed upon the Hebrews by Egypt was necessary to give them universal motivation to leave Egypt.

We live in a fallen world and we are naturally sinful, anti-God beings. God sometimes must use pain and suffering in order to motivate us (just as a good parent must use some pain and suffering on their children in order to raise and guide them properly).

The fundamental rallying point of the Hebrew people is around their God. However, the many plagues brought upon Egypt are done just as much for the benefit of Israel as they are for the benefit of Pharaoh. Israel must be given clear signs of God’s power in order for them to believe in Him. They *must* act as a cohesive nation. At some point, there cannot be any discussion whether or not following Moses is the prudent thing to do. Moses will say, “Let’s go;” and they must all follow him.



*Elohim* is more of a generic term, which refers more to the majesty and power of God; and to the Godhead.

*Israel* here has a double-meaning. It stands for the people descended from Israel (Jacob); and it also stands for nation Israel, the people who are there in Egypt, enslaved to Egypt. The entire nation Israel resided there. At this point in time, only God recognized them as a nation.

Exodus 5:1 marks the first use in the Old Testament of two related phrases, "[The Lord God of Israel](#)" (literally, "[Y<sup>e</sup>howah, Elohim of Israel](#)") and simply [the God of Israel](#). Both designations for God are found here for the first time. Furthermore, the people of Israel are now large enough to be considered a nation (they are about 2 million people) and God is over them. Prior to this, it was "[Y<sup>e</sup>howah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob](#)." Now He is the God of the nation Israel. This would be the way that God sees them, as He is able to see their future as perspicuously as their past.

Interestingly enough, Israel is a nation, but they are without an actual country at this time. God has a piece of land for them which is roughly 250 miles away. The first half of the book of Exodus is getting Israel out of Egypt. The second half should have been about taking Israel into their land, but, there will be problems along the way.

The bulk of Exodus takes place over a few months time. However, Israel will not enter their land to actually take it until the book of Joshua, which is 40 years into the future.

Exodus 5:1a [Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh,...](#)

*Afterwards* simply means *after Moses and Aaron met with the elders of Israel*. Moses and Aaron went to the people of God first (to their leaders) and made certain that they knew that what was to come were the acts of God. They all needed to be on the same page, so that, if quizzed by Pharaoh, the elders do not say, "Moses? Who is this Moses?" The leaders also need to inform their people of what is going on (there seems to be some sort of organization by which this could be done).

You will notice some narrative shortcuts taken. We do not have, *God had said these things to Moses; Moses repeated them to Aaron, and then Aaron said them to Pharaoh of Egypt*. All of that occurred, but Moses, as author, is not going to present such a repetitive narrative. There will be 10 plagues brought upon Egypt; and it would have been very easy for Moses to get bogged down in extensive detail when recording this information, thus completely losing the literary impact of these confrontations. However, he does not.

As I have pointed out, Moses had received excellent training for the 40 years that he lived in Egypt. It appears that he had developed writing and composition skills during that time. It would be my guess that Moses could both read and write Hebrew and Egyptian; and possibly other languages as well.

It is quite interesting that Moses and Aaron just walk in and speak to Pharaoh. We don't know if they made an appointment or if they just walked in, or how the way was made clear for them. Was there any knowledge, at this time, in Egypt, of who Moses was? He was well-known 40 years previous; was he known at all now? Did he use his name to gain access to the new Pharaoh (Exodus 2:23)? I suspect that he and the present Pharaoh were contemporaries and possibly raised together; but there is nothing said about that. There is no relationship between them ever defined or even implied, even though such a relationship seems likely.

I think that it is more likely that this meeting was initiated by the elders of Israel. It would make sense that they could meet with Pharaoh whenever they believed it necessary (obviously, they could not abuse this privilege).

Exodus 5:1a-b [Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel..."](#)

In the Bible, this is the first time that a *person* speaks of *Israel* as a reference to the descendants of Israel (Jacob). God used this terminology in the previous chapter; but now this word is used by Aaron to Pharaoh (and he is repeating what Moses told him to say).

Now, although it is possible for God to have said, *I am the God of Israel* in reference to *Jacob*, the individual; the context simply does not allow for that. Pharaoh may or may not know the historical Jacob (Israel), but, no doubt, he was aware of the people being associated with the name *Israel*.

We must reasonably assume that these words make sense to Pharaoh. So, at this point in time, the word *Israel* is understood to refer to the people who are descendants of Israel (Jacob). God here calls them *My people* (remember, that Moses and Aaron and simply repeating what God has told them to say) The people of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are known now as Israel or as the Hebrew people. Both names will stay with these people forever.

Was Pharaoh aware of the God of Israel? Did he know about their worship of Him? My estimation is, he knew little or nothing about that God; or he perceived the God of Israel as being generally unimportant in the grand scheme of things. No doubt he thought, "So what that Israel has a god; so do the Canaanites and the Syrians. And beside, the Israelites are my slaves. So, He is obviously not a very good god." Pharaoh would certainly associate the God of Israel with a myriad of others national gods, if he thinks of Israel's God at all.

In any case, what Pharaoh thinks of God is immaterial at this point. He is about to face the power of the God of Israel and how Pharaoh chooses to respond to Him will affect Israel and Egypt for a very long time.

Exodus 5:1 [Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'"](#)

The first request was simply for Moses to lead God's people, the Hebrews, into the wilderness, to worship their God. They would hold a feast celebrating Him—that was the initial proposed plan. The rationale offered would involve the necessity to separate from Egypt completely in order to worship their God.

Exodus 5:2a [And Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?"](#)

Pharaoh asks, "Just Who is this Y<sup>e</sup>howah?" This is certainly a reasonable question for Pharaoh to ask Moses and Aaron.

It is reasonable for us to ask, *is Pharaoh aware of the national God of Israel?* Let me suggest that Pharaoh is an intelligent man, and he would have been aware of many of the customs and beliefs of the Israelites. However, let me suggest that he trivializes their god and their beliefs in his own mind, if he is aware of them at all.

By Pharaoh's response, it is clear that he thinks nothing of Israel's God. He says, "[I do not know the Lord and so I won't let Israel go.](#)" Nevertheless, he understands what is being requested of him. He understands exactly of whom Aaron is speaking when using the word *Israel*. He calls the *sons of Israel* just *Israel*.

Pharaoh's words here pretty much open the door for the God of Israel to respond. "[Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?](#)" Pharaoh asks. God will answer this question over the next 10 or so chapters.

The word *obey* is often translated by the Old English work *hearken*. *Hearken* is a marvelous word for which we do not have an exact one-word equivalent in Modern English. It means *to listen and to obey* or *to listen and to comply*. The Hebrew word is the Qal imperfect of *shâma'* (שמע) [pronounced *shaw-MAH*] and this word can mean *to listen and comply* (as in Gen. 3:17 16:2); it can simply mean *to hear* (Gen. 3:8, 10); or it can mean *to hear and sympathize* (Gen. 16:11 Exodus 2:24). These six passages<sup>45</sup> make it clear that we do not have the exact same implication each time.

Pharaoh is actually asking Moses and Aaron, "Why should I even *hear* His voice? Who is this god to me?"

It is my opinion—this is not found in the text—that the pharaohs of Egypt, for the most part, were prepared men. Many of them knew the peoples around them, their language, their gods and their culture. Surely Pharaoh knew all about the people of Israel; he likely knew something of their God. Based upon Moses' request and Pharaoh's response, I would think that we could conclude that there is very limited Y<sup>e</sup>howah worship occurring at this time among the people of Israel in Goshen.

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<sup>45</sup> I have included the Qal perfect and the Qal imperfect in each illustration

Based upon the interactions of Moses (and Aaron) and the elders, and the request being made by Aaron, I would guess that, the people of Israel have preserved their Scriptures (the books of Genesis and Job), passing them along orally from generation to generation; but that they were not offering up animal sacrifices to their God. I come to these two conclusions based upon these two things: (1) When Moses and Aaron spoke to the elders, they appear to accept that there is a God related to them. This knowledge would have come from their Scriptures (which were not written down). (2) Secondly, Moses and Aaron will request that the people be allowed to go off into the wilderness to worship Y<sup>e</sup>howah, which would have naturally included animal sacrifices. This suggests to me that Israel did not practice this aspect of their religion in Egypt at this time.

Exodus 5:2a [And Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go?”](#)

God will answer this question posed by Pharaoh and give him many good reasons to believe and obey. God will see to it that Pharaoh knows Who He is. The fact that all of Israel will eventually respond to and obey their God; but Pharaoh will continue to resist Him—this clearly indicates that man has free will, and that two people can respond in opposite ways to the same thing.

Exodus 5:2 [And Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.”](#)

Pharaoh clearly expresses his negative volition towards the God of Israel; and this is exactly what we would expect. For perhaps 200 years, the sons of Jacob have been slaves to Egypt and, no doubt, they have built some marvelous Egyptian structures during that time. At this point in time, Pharaoh has no pressing reason why he should pay any attention to Moses and Aaron. God will change this.

#### **Lesson 044: Exodus 5:1–4a**

#### **The Term Hebrew**

So far, this is what we have studied:

Exodus 5:1 [Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’”](#)

This is the first meeting between Moses and Aaron and Pharaoh. They have the backing of the elders of Israel. They now stand before Pharaoh, asking for time to worship their God in the desert-wilderness.

Exodus 5:2 [And Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.”](#)

Pharaoh responds, “I don’t know this god to whom you refer. Israel is not going anywhere.”

Exodus 5:3a So they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us.”

The pronouns *they* and *us* refer to Moses and Aaron. God has told Moses what to say; he tells this to Aaron, and Aaron speaks to Pharaoh.

God met with Aaron and told him to leave Egypt and to go find Moses. God spoke to Moses in the Midian desert, having taken the form of a burning bush.

God has already been called *God of the Hebrews* (Exodus 3:18), a title which is, interestingly enough, found only in the book of Exodus (Exodus 3:18 5:3 7:16 9:1, 13 10:3).

### The Term *Hebrews*

1. The word *Hebrew*, which is found throughout Old Testament (but less often than you might think), is ʿIb<sup>o</sup>rīym (מִיִּבְרִי) [pronounced *gih<sup>b</sup>-VREEM*], which means, *those from beyond*. It is transliterated *Hebrews*, *Eberites*. Strong's #5680 BDB #720.
2. This appears to be originally an Egyptian designation for those who came from Canaan (it is not clear if it has been altered in any way by the Hebrew language).
3. Egyptians appear to have given this name to the sons of Jacob, which was previously a generic term applied to people who simply came from outside of Egypt. Apparently, this term was commonly applied to those who came from Canaan (or possibly anyone who came from that general direction). Gen. 40:15
4. It is so used in Gen. 43:32 when it is noted that there was a custom against Egyptians eating with Hebrews (the ESV reads: **They served him [Joseph, the prime minister of Egypt] by himself, and them [the sons of Jacob] by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.**) Clearly, there would have been no specific custom against eating with the sons of Jacob at this time, as they were a very small tribe of people, who were about 70 in number—wives and children included—and unknown to all Egyptians at the time of Joseph's rise to power in Egypt. Therefore, the custom of not eating with *Hebrews* is either a specific reference to the people of Canaan or a reference to non-Egyptians in general. My general impression of Egyptians at this time is, they are fastidiously clean people.
5. By the time of the exodus, this word became a term which specifically referenced the descendants of Jacob who lived in Egypt (Exodus 1:22 2:6, 13). That was simply how they were referred to. It is even possible that this word was a term of derision applied to them by their Egyptian masters (which is why I suggested that perhaps this term was softened, changed, or Hebrewized by the Hebrew people).
6. In any case, both the sons of Israel and the Egyptians accepted this terminology, and the sons of Israel were therefore known as *Hebrews*.
7. This term is used in the book of Exodus with reference to their God, Who is called *Elohim of the Hebrews* in Exodus 3:18 5:3 7:16 9:1, 13 10:3. Given the relative status of the Hebrew people, this was a powerful designation. No matter how the

## The Term *Hebrews*

people of Egypt views the Hebrews, they have a powerful God Who would prove to be all-powerful.

8. The Philistines used this term *Hebrew* to refer to the Israelite people. 1Sam. 4:6, 9 13:19 14:11 29:3
9. King Saul used this term to refer to his people. 1Sam. 13:3
10. Therefore, this word became a common way to reference the sons of Jacob.
11. This term is used by the writer of Samuel in 1Sam. 13:7 as a parallel term to *men of Israel*. The phrase *men of Israel* generally refers to the *army of Israel* and it was a much more common term than *Hebrews*. The word *Hebrew (s)* is only found 34 times in the OT<sup>1</sup>; and *men of Israel* is found nearly 60 times in the OT.<sup>2</sup>

So, it appears that this term was originally a generic term used by the Egyptians to refer to people from outside of Egypt; and that this was, in time, was specifically applied to the sons of Jacob and appropriated by them as well.

<sup>1</sup> *Hebrew (s)* is only found 15 times in the NT.

<sup>2</sup> I should clarify that I took these numbers from the English of the KJV. The Orthodox Jewish Bible has the phrase *Bnei Yisrael (sons of Israel)* and it is found 640 times in the OT. In case you were wondering, their word for *Hebrew (Ivrim)* is found about the same number of times that *Hebrew* is found in the KJV.

Exodus 5:3a [So they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us.”](#)

This is an entirely unusual thing for someone to say—“The God of the Hebrews has met with us.” If these words caught Pharaoh’s attention or interest, he does not let on. However, in that era, it would have been quite extraordinary for a person to interact with his God. When they said these words, did Pharaoh smile and think to himself, *this ought to be interesting?*

In our era, any person who claims to have had a *back-and-forth* conversation with God would be considered to have mental problems. God’s entire message to man is provided for us in the Word of God. He did not forget to say and few things, and so now, He is contacting Charley Brown (or Joseph Smith) to fill in the gaps. The completed Scriptures are enough to last us from A.D. 100 to the rapture. What God has provided for us is far more than most people could absorb in a lifetime.

There are so few good commentators who have written commentary on the entire Bible; there are even fewer pastor-teachers who have taught the entire Bible (J. Vernon McGee is the only person I can think of who has). My point being, if so few people have accomplished the feat of covering the entire Bible, then there is little need for us to look for more revelation from God. It is difficult enough to absorb all that He has shared with us already.

Furthermore, if you have ever read any extra-Biblical *revelation* claimed by anyone at any time since the completion of the canon of Scripture (A.D. 90–100)—and there have been many people who have made this claim—it is like comparing cheap dog food (their

writings) to a splendid Thanksgiving meal cooked by your mother at the top of her game (the Scriptures). Let me use Joseph Smith, the one who founded the Mormon religion, as an example. He claimed to have special revelation from God. The angel Maroni revealed to him some gold tablets with reformed Egyptian writing on it (no such thing, by the way), and when he wore these *rose-colored glasses*, he could read and understand the Egyptian and translate it into English. Interestingly enough, Smith did not translate the reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics into English but into *Old English*; that is, into King James' English. I guess that the end result was more holy that way? This is where Smith claimed that the book of Mormon came from (I may have a few of the details wrong; it has been awhile since I have looked into their cult). I don't believe that anyone else saw those gold tablets.

I want you to briefly consider the cultic nature of the origin of Mormonism. It is based upon the word of one man in one generation who offers up a very preposterous story. I mean, for one thing, why is this original text—which apparently has not been seen by anyone else—written in reform Egyptian hieroglyphics? What exactly is that all about?

There was another young man who I read about who claimed to have direct contact with God. This revelation included the boy having splash fights with Jesus in some heavenly river. My point in this is, when you compare extra-Biblical *revelation* from the church age, it almost seems satirical.

**Moses in Hollywood:** On a related matter, there was a television series on the Old and New Testaments; and part of this series was about Moses leading the exodus of Hebrews out of Egypt. That sounded interesting to me; and the creators were passed off as a new voice for God in Hollywood.

I tuned in, and saw Moses. As we have studied, Moses talked to God. So, the actor playing Moses—not a particularly big guy—played Moses as a nutcase. He talked to God; so, the guy must have been nutty, right? That was the interpretation this actor gave to Moses. It was pathetic and I could not watch it. Moses talked to God, but he was not a nutcase. He was a man who was a genius in many areas; and he had been trained to be a leader in the finest schools that Egypt had to offer (private tutoring in the palace).

I tried to watch, but after 30 minutes or so, I could not watch it any more. How could someone get Moses any more wrong? He was not a goofy man from another planet who heard voices. He was called by God and given one of the most difficult assignments that any man could have. No way does a nutball from another planet lead Israel out of Egypt.

Back to our narrative:

Exodus 5:3a-b [So they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days’ journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God,...”](#)

Even though Moses has required that Aaron be the spokesman, it reads, *they said*, referring to both Moses and Aaron. Moses tells Aaron what to say, then Aaron says it. This probably looks kind of odd to Pharaoh.

They specifically request a 3-day journey into the desert-wilderness to sacrifice to their God. For those who know the end of this story—that nation Israel will walk out of Egypt entirely and permanently—this is not a *bait and switch* perpetrated by God (that is, God is not asking for a 3-day trip into the wilderness, at which point He will say to Moses, “Okay, now make a run for it!”). When the people of Israel leave the land, they will leave it permanently by the demand of Pharaoh and his people. However, this is *not* what is being requested at the beginning. The negative volition of Pharaoh will make a complete separation inevitable.

This also fits in well with one of the underlying themes of Scripture that, at some point, there will need to be a complete and total separation of the holy from the profane.

Exodus 5:3 So they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days’ journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”

The alternative to being allowed to worship, according to what Aaron says here, is that God will fall upon them with sickness or with the sword. In other words, Aaron is saying that there would be consequences for their not going out to the desert-wilderness to worship God. It appears that either Moses or Aaron believed those consequences would fall upon the Israelites themselves. Aaron says, “...lest He fall upon us...”

Quite frankly, I do not know how to take this. When Aaron said this, does *us* mean the people of Israel *and* Egypt or just Israel alone? It sounds more like the latter. Furthermore, I do not recall God warning Moses, “Listen, if you do not get your people organized and out of there to the desert-wilderness to worship Me, I will visit them with the sword and with sickness.” Do you see how what Aaron is saying is problematic?

Therefore, I would not be surprised that Aaron was ad libbing at this point or summarizing what he believed Moses said to him. This is likely another reason why God wanted Moses for this job, exclusively. God’s words tend to be precise. God’s words spoken by Moses to Aaron, which process then allows Aaron’s own thinking to influence what comes out of his mouth.

The 1<sup>st</sup> person plural occurs quite a number of times in this verse, either as the subject of a verb or as a suffix. We can even see this in the English:

Exodus 5:3 So they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with **us**. Please, let **us** go three days’ journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord **our** God, lest He fall upon **us** with pestilence or with the sword.”

We see it 4x in the English; but the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural actually occurs 5x in this single verse. So, unless there was some hand-gesturing of some sort, no matter how Aaron meant this to come across, Pharaoh probably understood this the way that I first took it—that God would bring these things upon Moses, Aaron and all of Israel (= *us*). “You have to let **us**

go,” Aaron appears to be saying, “Or God will fall upon **us** with sickness and violence.” Just to make certain that we are clear on this, God did *not* say these things.

It is my opinion that God speaking to Moses, Moses telling Aaron what to say, and then Aaron speaking to Pharaoh results in saying something which does not really convey what God wanted to convey. I believe the intent was for the pestilence and the sword to fall upon the Egyptians (which means, at the very end, Aaron should have used the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural suffix rather than the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural suffix). So, I believe that what we read here actually represents a screw-up on Aaron’s part.

Now, how on earth, you may ask, does Aaron get this so wrong? What is in his background that would cause him to say something like this? In Egypt, there were the slave drivers, who were Egyptian; but there were also Hebrew men who oversaw the other Hebrew slaves. If the Hebrew slaves did not perform their duties satisfactorily, their Hebrew overseers would be punished. This is how Aaron could have allowed his thinking to end up distorting the accurate words of Moses from God (Moses did not have the same background as a slave as Aaron did).

This is another reason why God wanted Moses to speak directly to Pharaoh and not to speak through his brother Aaron: Moses would get it right; Moses would not go off-script. Moses would not just start making things up.

In any case, Pharaoh is rejecting all of what Aaron has to say. Exactly what Aaron said does not really concern Pharaoh. He is focused on what the Hebrew people are supposed to be doing, and that is constructing great things for Egypt. This does not give them time to go off on the religious sabbaticals.

Exodus 5:4a [Then the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work?”](#)

Pharaoh objects to the people being taken from their work. As far as he is concerned, the Hebrew people were good for one thing, and that was being slaves to Egypt. They had work to do. They served Egypt. Pharaoh had projects which needed to be done. He saw no upside in their meandering out into the wilderness for any reason.

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**Lesson 045: Exodus 5:1–4****Socialism and Communism**

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We have begun to study the first encounter between Moses and Aaron and Pharaoh. We have exegeted the first 4½ verses:

Exodus 5:1 [Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'"](#)  
Exodus 5:2 [But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."](#)

Exodus 5:3 Then they said, "The 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, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."

Recall that Aaron has made a mistake here with what he has said. God did not threaten the Hebrew people.

Exodus 5:4a But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? (ESV; capitalized)

Pharaoh's concern is with the work which the sons of Israel ought to be doing.

Exodus 5:4b Get back to your labor."

The final word in this verse is  $\zeta^{\text{e}}\text{b}\hat{\text{a}}\text{l}\hat{\text{a}}\text{h}$  (סִבְלָה) [pronounced *seb-aw-LAWH*] and it is the word used in Exodus exclusively for their slavery. The masculine form of this means, a *tyrannical burden* and this word, in the feminine, means *a burden placed upon the Israelites in slavery*. *Slave-labors* or *burdens of slavery* would both be good translations of  $\zeta^{\text{e}}\text{b}\hat{\text{a}}\text{l}\hat{\text{a}}\text{h}$ .

Pharaoh orders them back to work. "Go to your duties!" he orders. Now, remember, Moses is not a slave and never has been a slave, even though he is a Hebrew. He was a Hebrew infant who was adopted by the young daughter of Pharaoh; and, therefore, raised in the palace and given a royal education given to royal princes.

Aaron was a slave at this time and we are not given in any information about him leaving his assigned tasks. One day, he is working for Pharaoh as a slave; and the next day, he is off traveling to Midian, apparently guided by God to go and meet his brother there. Exactly how that all came about, we are not told.

There have attempts to explain why Aaron was not missed on the job. According to the Complete Tanakh,<sup>46</sup> being Levites, Moses and Aaron would have been exempt from typical slave duties in order to serve a spiritual function. However, I am unaware of any historical or Scripture backup for that assertion (it is the opinion of an ancient rabbi; but certainly from long after the period of time that we are studying). Although Moses and Aaron are clearly Levites; there is no indication at this point in time that Levites had any sort of spiritual function. Furthermore, given the harshness of the attitude of Pharaoh towards this request to worship God, it is hard to imagine that Egypt made accommodations for the religion of the Hebrews (there is not a lot of evidence for much by the way of Y<sup>e</sup>howah worship among these Hebrew slaves).

In nation Israel, the focus of the Levite tribe was to be towards spiritual things. This will be the result of divine revelation which will come to Moses *after* the sons of Israel exit Egypt.

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<sup>46</sup> I do wonder if there are any other opinions; and, more importantly, any sort of evidence for having an opinion on this matter.

During the time period that we are studying, the duties and responsibilities of the Levites have not yet been specified. This would come with the giving of the Law, a few months in the future from the time of our narrative. In other words, there is no basis for thinking that the sons of Levi have any sort of a specific spiritual function at this time. Their place in Hebrew culture will become defined in the second half of the book of Exodus and in the book of Leviticus, which things have not yet happened.

**Application—Socialism, Communism and Christianity:** As an aside, socialism and communism are simply forms of government where the people ostensibly work in service to the nation as a whole—and they are led to believe that their work is in service to themselves, as they are the nation. That is not what the reality is, however. Under socialism or communism, the political class takes their cut first from all that is produced, and then they spread out whatever remains among the workers. So the workers are not really working in service to the entire nation; they are working primarily in service to the political class—their rulers. It is a form of slavery, not dramatically different from what the people of Israel were subject to.

Before moving ahead with this digression, some definitions should be given. Originally, *socialism* and *communism* were theoretical terms. Socialism was established when the means of production belonged to the people (which was defined as the *state*). There had to be guidance from enlightened socialists (that is, rulers) to establish the socialist state, where everything, essentially belongs to the state. This does not mean that I, as a factory worker, have an individual ownership in the factory where I work (I do not own a few square yards here or there; I do not receive profit bonuses when the factory has a good year). But people who work in the factory are the owners insofar as they make up the nation and the nation owns the factory. You might be able to see from this what a ruse socialism is from the beginning.

A ruling class would be needed in order to implement all of these things, when a government becomes socialist, but, according to Karl Marx, this ruling class would naturally melt away or disappear when each factory, store and farm collective began to act as an autonomous unit. When that happens, then the nation is full-on communist. That is the theory; and the theory is false. At no time do despotic rulers look at their nation and think, “Well, all of these factories and stores and farms look like they are functioning fine and with autonomy, so, I am going to quit my job as ruler.” That is what is supposed to happen in theory, according to Marx; but it never actually happens. People who take power generally want it; and when they have it, they don’t tend to let go of it.

In actual practice, communism is usually an extreme form of socialism. Under socialism, the government begins to take over major industries (like the oil and healthcare industries); and, under communism, nearly everything is under state control.

It is nearly impossible to make a people think, “This sounds great, having a political class at the top and they control everything. I like that idea!” So socialism, which can be implemented quickly (almost overnight) or slowly (over many decades) has to offer things

for free: free education (at most or all levels), free food, free healthcare, free housing; whatever. The idea being sold is, no matter who you are, the government will make certain that you are fed, clothed, housed and medicated. Now, to a kid with \$80,000 in school debt, or the person with a \$150,000 medical bill, or the person who just wants something for free, this sounds like a great deal. The reality is quite different.

In our study, for all intents and purposes, the Hebrew people are in a socialized society. Egypt makes certain that they have food, clothing and housing (which they all apparently have); and, in exchange, they simply must work. There is not as much of a difference between slaves and socialist citizens.

Socialist leaders portray themselves as distributing goods and services equally; but those directly related to the socialist/communist party always receive the lion's share of whatever is produced. Whatever is leftover is then given to the workers. The closer you are to ruling class, the better off you are. Now, in some communist/socialism nations, their leaders may appear in crisp worker's uniforms; but, no matter what the standard of living is for the people, the standard of living for leaders is always greater—sometimes by an amazing factor.

There is virtually no difference between socialism/communism and the slavery endured by the sons of Israel while in Egypt. The Hebrew people, with their labor, served the state. Their first allegiance was to be towards nation Egypt and not towards their God (socialism and communism tend to be very anti-God). The exception to this maxim is, if socialism is being sold to a religious people, it is often presented as being the logical outgrowth of their charitable beliefs. That is, Communists found that attacking their faith directly did not work; but undermining their faith often worked to move people away from their God. Propagandists for the left often portray Jesus as a long-haired, hippy socialist, even though He was none of those things.

Socialism and Communism are forms of slavery where freedom is dramatically restricted. These forms of government have simply found a way to make their political philosophy sound palatable to the common man. Obviously, when socialism is being sold to a nation through propaganda, the subsequent loss of freedom is never revealed. You may be restricted on what you can read, watch on television, eat; and the type of medical care and education that you receive is determined by the state, not by you.

In a nation where the people are poor, communism/socialism teaches them jealousy of anyone who is successful; and particularly, jealousy of the wealth of the ruling class. But, communist/socialist leaders simply take the place of the ruling class when all is said and done. Many of those who are wealthy are eliminated; but the rulers of a socialist state are never eliminated (even in a socialist state which pretends to be democratic, many leaders rule for their entire life).

In a nation of freedom, there are always great differences between the rich and poor; and most recently, *wealth inequality* is how communism/socialism is sold to a free nation. Those who are successful are villainized. We even had a former president of the United States, who had socialist leanings, who, during his campaign, accused doctors of not giving the proper medicine to diabetics so that they might later cut off their limbs, because such an operation gave the doctor more money. We have two socialist politicians today in the United States, a male and a female, neither of whom has the first clue about economics, who proclaim that they will provide Medicare for all. Socialists never tell you of the rights and freedoms that you will lose. They tell the people about everything that they will give to them (if elected); and people, unfortunately, are sold by their promises of free medicine, free education, and free whatever else sounds good.

Today, in the United States, we have free public education which is not free, but very expensive; and has become sadly inferior to the education systems of modern countries around the world. By the use of political power, college education in the United States has become dramatically expensive. Where, at one time, one could work and pay for one's education; today, that is virtually impossible. This process took place over a period of 30–40 years, but the exact same people who caused it to happen are selling *free college education* today as the solution.

The nation that we are studying, ancient Egypt, appears to have been a 3-tiered caste system. There was the ruling class, the Egyptian population and the slaves. Modern socialism retains the ruling class and the slaves, who are not called *slaves* but *workers* instead. These workers are told that they are serving the collective whole (which is themselves), but, in reality, they are serving the ruling class. Whatever the ruling class wants, they take. This is why in extreme cases, like North Korea and Venezuela, the rulers are overweight and the people are starving.

What socialism and communism do is make a dictatorship (more accurately, an Oligarchy) more palatable to the people who are under them. It is quite brilliant, actually. It inspires a considerable number of people to revolt in order to replace one dictatorship with another; but thinking that this will somehow be better. Or, in other countries, to willingly vote for socialist programs and socialist candidates; so that there is a socialist creep in that nation.

Also, under communism or socialism, innovation and creativity are usually stifled because the state needs neither of these things (unless those things serve or glorify the state). People in power often view innovation as being a threat to their power (or, at least, this is often the first thing that comes to their minds). However, if those in power see something that impresses them done in another country, then they will do whatever is necessary to steal that technology. That's why we do not associate socialist countries with creativity or innovation, but with stealing technology that which is developed by others in other countries.

So that there is no misunderstanding, those who are allowed to evangelize in socialist and communist countries (sometimes this is allowed; most of the time it is discouraged and

even outlawed), it is not the responsibility of the evangelist to sell the people on free enterprise as over against socialism. The evangelist is to present Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Political commentary, however accurate, would be undermining the government. It is the job of the evangelist to present Jesus Christ, *not* to present a better form of government. The evangelist is to present the salvation of the cross; not offer up some candidate for a government office or a new system of government. As R. B. Thieme, Jr. used to often say, “It is not up to us to whitewash the devil’s world.”

That being said, it is not a coincidence that socialism and communism are most often associated with atheism. Socialism and communism are all about control of the people from the very top; and true Christianity is all about freedom. Fundamental to Christianity is the fact that we were created by God to have free will; life is all about choice.

The reason that Christians should understand socialism and communism is, these are enemies of man’s free will; and they are enemies of Christian evangelism. It is nearly impossible to evangelize for Christ in North Korea (which is communist); whereas, South Korea is the Asian center of Christianity. In North Korea, they have no freedom and not enough food to eat; in South Korea, they have great freedom and prosperity. Furthermore, the believer should never be confused about Jesus. Jesus is our Savior; He is not the first socialist. Jesus did not sell or practice any form of socialism.

Political leadership is first and foremost about power and control. Even though there are some leaders who are there to serve the people, most of them have the tremendous drive of power lust (a lust which most people do not have to the same degree). We tend to believe that a politician has a solid set of principles and that he (or she) stands firmly upon their own firm ideology. Whether you are left, right or center, the people that you look up to to lead may or may not hold to the principles that they espouse. I write this in 2019, when Democrat candidates are beginning to throw their hats into the ring to run for president; and one of the interesting phenomenon of this pre-election is the number of candidates who have had to make public statements which disavowed previous public statements. The leaders of the current Democrat party have made strong statements about border security, which statements included support for walls/fences/obstructions; yet, at this point in time, absolutely oppose doing any border security which involves new walls or fences. Now, I am not trying to litigate political issues here; but just to point out that a politician can favor X one year; and a few years later, favor not-X. This is how a Democrat can have a change of heart and become a Republican; or how a Republican can “see the light” and become a Democrat. Their values and principles are often things that they espouse with passion; but, given a change of political circumstances, and you can hear them passionately arguing for exactly the opposite point of view. What is far too often the case is, a politician will be asked a simple yes or no question, and he will give an answer that might be 100 words long. We had one president who, if asked a question at a press conference, could pontificate for 5–10 minutes on that question—without even clearly answering the question asked. As long as you understand that, with a politician, it is the power he desires, first and foremost, then his words and actions will often make a lot more sense.

The other thing that the believer ought to know is, nothing is free. Whatever a politician offers you in exchange for your vote will either come out of your pocket (or your neighbor's pocket) or be added to our crushing debt.

In the theological realm, we often say that salvation is free—and to us, it is. Completely and totally free. But it came at great cost to our Lord that we cannot even imagine.

There is very little difference between socialism, communism and slavery of the Hebrew people to Egypt that we are studying. The Hebrew people work for the nation of Egypt and Egypt determines how they are to be remunerated. The Hebrew people obviously have places to live and food to eat; and they enjoyed marriage and family. We have no idea of their religious practices. As has been discussed, they appear to have retained the Word of God; but there is nothing said about overt religious practices among the people. The implied awareness of their own history suggests that they have preserved their Scriptures (Genesis and Job).

#### **Lesson 046: Exodus 5:1–8a**

#### **Moses and Aaron's First Meeting with Pharaoh**

So far in our narrative, Moses and Aaron have come before Pharaoh for the first time and have requested that he allow Israel to leave Egypt, temporarily, to worship their God.

Exodus 5:1 *Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'"*

Exodus 5:2 *But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."*

Exodus 5:3 *Then they said, "The 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, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." (ESV; capitalized)*

Interestingly enough, we might think that this would be the time that Moses or Aaron would say, "Let me show you the power of God," and then show Pharaoh a miracle. Point in fact, that is what they did do. However, we are going to see this first meeting with Pharaoh from two views: this first view is from the human perspective. Everything that we will study in vv. 1–5 and the aftermath of this meeting will be what happened in the views of Moses and Aaron, Pharaoh and the elders of Israel. God's perspective is missing. Hence, we have Aaron saying something which is misleading ("The Lord our God...[will] fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."); and the miracles given to Moses are not mentioned.

We will revisit this same meeting in Exodus 7, and then it will appear to be more of a spiritual struggle between spiritual forces (which is what is really happening). Just as God allows Moses and Aaron to take part in this spiritual struggle, we are given the same opportunity in our lives each and every day.

When you view life, sometimes you see it from your own carnal vision; and sometimes you see life through the eyes of God, as you have the mind of Christ. I am not suggesting that

you live life as a nutcase; I am talking about how you view your day-to-day life. If your every thought is how do you get enough money to feed yourself; or how do you save and invest and spend enough money to get ahead in life—if this is your entire life, then your life is filled with ups and downs; your life is filled with confusion and frustration. As the [song](#) says, you are *riding high in April*, then *shot down in May*.

Exodus 5:1–5 is what this first meeting seen from the human perspective.

Exodus 5:4 [Then the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? Get back to your labor.”](#)

Pharaoh appears to be ordering Moses and Aaron to get back to their work. Aaron has been living there and he would have been a slave. If you are wondering, how could Aaron be a slave at age 83; it is because age 80 might be equivalent to age 50 or 60 today—meaning that he would still, more than likely, be a slave. How Aaron was able to go out to meet Moses, his younger brother, in the first place, is not told to us. Quite obviously, God worked out those details.

Moses is around 80 years old and Aaron is 83 (Exodus 7:7). Neither man is like men who are 80 and 83 today. They would have been more like healthy 50 year old men today. We do not know anything about those who were aged and slaves. If I were to hazard a guess, based upon what is coming up, it would be that most Hebrew men were worked until they died.

Exodus 5:5a [And Pharaoh said,...](#)

It is interesting that we have the words, *and Pharaoh said...* He had just been speaking in v. 4. Let me suggest that, some things happened between vv. 4 and 5; and then Pharaoh draws this meeting to a close with v. 5.

Exodus 5:5a-b [And Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are many now...”](#)

Pharaoh makes an observation here; and I think that he has stopped temporarily from talking, thought about the situation, and then makes a couple of additional statements to Moses and Aaron (I would assume that the elders of Israel are also in the room). In the alternative, there was some additional discussion which took place; and Pharaoh brought everything to a halt with his final conclusion of what Moses and Aaron were asking for.

I think in Pharaoh’s mind, he is even considering the effects of the people of Israel not working for a period of time. I don’t mean, considering like, *maybe I should grant this request*; but considering like, *if I granted them this request, here would be the end results...*

Exodus 5:5 [And Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest from their labor!”](#)

*You* is plural, and Pharaoh is speaking to Moses and Aaron and possibly to the elders of Israel. Pharaoh is complaining that Moses and Aaron are causing the people to rest from their labor. The Hebrews make up a massive slave force; and Pharaoh no doubt dislikes the thought of all of his slaves leaving Egypt for awhile to worship their God. This is a preposterous proposition to Pharaoh. There is absolutely no upside to him that he can see.

I mentioned the elders of Israel. It is my guess that they are there, with Moses and Aaron; but standing off to the side. Logically, the elders would have gone with Moses and Aaron for this is the first face to face meeting with Pharaoh. These would have been the men that Moses and Aaron have already met and convinced them to allow Aaron to speak on their behalf. In some way or another, the elders hear Pharaoh's conclusion, that this proposition of Aaron would take the Hebrews away from their work.

Moses and Aaron have come before Pharaoh and stated the demands made by God—that Israel be allowed a time for worship, away from Egypt and Egypt's gods. Not unexpectedly, Pharaoh declined their request. God warned Moses and Aaron that he would.

After speaking with Moses and Aaron, Pharaoh calls in the taskmasters—those over the Israelite slaves.

Exodus 5:6 [So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying,...](#)

Pharaoh apparently did not like having this demand made by Moses and Aaron, so he issues an edict. The idea that two men could just show up and make a request like this is quite amazing to Pharaoh. He wasn't going to have it; and he was going to take it out on the people of God.

Pharaoh likely thought about these demands, probably fumed a bit, and then put together a new law. He calls in the taskmasters and the officers, who would carry out his commands. It says that this occurs on the same day, so let me suggest that, within a few hours of Moses and Aaron speaking to Pharaoh, he put together a new law.

The taskmasters are the Egyptian officials in charge of the slave units; the officers (or, foremen) are Hebrew men who oversee their own people. They act as a buffer, so to speak, between the Egyptians and their own people. On the one hand, their work is mostly administrative; on the other hand, they will take the first wave of punishment from Egypt if the people do not do as ordered. This approach by Egypt is a logical practicality. There are 2 million Israelites, and over half of them are slaves. You cannot physically punish that many people if they do wrong. Therefore, those Hebrew men who have some authority over them and privileges, they are punished if people of Israel do not meet the expectations of Pharaoh.

The next 3 verses contain the official edict of Pharaoh, issued as a result of the request put forth by Moses and Aaron.

Exodus 5:7a **“You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before.**

Pharaoh is surrounded by men who carry out his wishes. People in power like Pharaoh do very little apart from make decisions and give orders. He has men there who are in charge of the slaves, overall. It would be like several cabinet-level positions, as the slaves make up a very large population in Egypt.

So Pharaoh turns toward these men who are in charge of the slaves (we know that there is more than one, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> masculine plural verb is used here). The verb is *yâçaph* (יָצַח) [pronounced *yaw-SAHPH*], which means, *to add, to augment, to increase, to multiply; to add to do = to do again; to continue to*. It is in the Hiphil (causal) stem. With this verb is a negative, and with the negative, it means, *to stop, to discontinue [doing something], to no longer [do something], to never again [do something]*. Strong's #3254 BDB #414. There was a program in place where the straw from Egyptian farming was brought to various locations and it was used to make bricks. This was Pharaoh's recycling program. The chaff from the wheat (or whatever grain); was, otherwise, useless. However, it gave the brick strength. Useless straw became quite useful. However, this program would no longer be offered. That practice of providing straw to be used for bricks would be discontinued.

Exodus 5:7b **Let them go and gather straw for themselves.**

Apparently, the Egyptians did some of the labor; as they had been providing the straw for the bricks (it is not clear whether the Hebrews are used as slaves on Egyptian farms—although that seems logical that they would be). Presumably, they farm their crops and their excess material can be used in the making of bricks—this was the Egyptian way of making use of the entire stalk of grain. Apparently the straw which was separated from the grain was gathered and brought to where there Hebrew slaves made bricks. It is this straw which gave the bricks some additional strength and volume. However, this practice came to an abrupt end, considerably increasing the workload of the Hebrew slaves.

Pharaoh is being vindictive here. He has decided that he needs to bring the hammer down, so to speak, on his slaves. They have come to him asking for some time off—that is simply an unacceptable request on its face. Pharaoh finds this request so repugnant that he will punish the people of Israel for even considering making such a request.

Exodus 5:8a **And you shall lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce it.**

Ancient Egyptian bricks were made of clay mixed with water, some with straw and some without, and then the mixture is put into a mold, 14.5–20" long, 4.5–7" thick and 6.5–8.75" wide. Once they had set, the mold was removed and they were placed in the sun to dry completely. These bricks were used in Egyptian homes, tombs, tower walls, fortresses,

various buildings and for the sacred inclosures of temples. Often they would bear the imprint of the name of the king who was in power when they were made (which helps us to date the buildings found). The Egyptians also use stones, but they were confined to temples, quays (these are docks built out into navigable waters for loading and unloading ships) and reservoirs.

Pharaoh requires that the people continue making the same number of bricks as before; but now they must gather the straw themselves as well. His reasoning is, they have far too much free time on their hands to want to go out and sacrifice to their God. He assumes that the additional work will cure them from having such notions. In the opinion of Pharaoh, these elders should not have brought Moses and Aaron in to see him in the first place. Obviously, Pharaoh does not fully appreciate that the request made by Moses and Aaron originated with their God. No matter where this idea came from, Pharaoh assumes that a quick and severe response will whip the people of Israel back into line.

No doubt, the Hebrew people had just enough time to make the bricks and build. No doubt, they worked from dawn til dusk (or longer). Adding more work—work which could not be done—was one approach Pharaoh could take. His intent, I believe, was to drive a wedge between Moses and Aaron and the people of Israel. Pharaoh does not harm or threaten to harm Moses and Aaron.

There is an interesting thing that Pharaoh does. His expressed concern is, the worship of God will take his slaves away from Egypt and away from their work (thus, reducing their work output). His edict will ultimately reduce their work output. Requiring the Israelite slaves to produce the same amount of bricks does not mean that they will be able to do this.

**Application:** An interesting application of this is, just because you pass a law, that does not mean that people will obey that law or that the intended results of that law will be the actual results.

Pharaoh has laid down an edict which cannot be obeyed. He knows this. He will also punish the people for not obeying it.

## **Lesson 047: Exodus 5:1–8      God Takes Man's Free Will and Produces Good**

We are studying the first time that Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh.

Exodus 5:1 *Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'"*

Exodus 5:2 *But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."*

Exodus 5:3 *Then they said, "The 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, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."*

At this point, we have recognized that we are seeing this first meeting from man's point of view. When we come back and revisit this meeting, we will see it from God's point of view.

Exodus 5:4 But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens."

In essence, Pharaoh is saying, "I don't know what you are all doing here—it is a work day today. You all need to be working right now."

Exodus 5:5 And Pharaoh said, "Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!"

What Moses and Aaron have proposed is absurd in Pharaoh's eyes.

Exodus 5:6–7 The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. (ESV; capitalized)

Exodus 5:8a And you shall lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce it.

Pharaoh's new requirements for the slaves will be this: they will continue to make bricks as they had in the past, but they themselves will have to ferret out the straw necessary to use in these bricks, in order to give them strength and volume. This is a considerable amount of additional work and impossible for the people of Israel to do. Pharaoh has just given his slaves an impossible task to do.

There is another issue here. There is this delicate interaction of natural consequences, man's sinful behavior, God's discipline and God's ability to mix everything together for good to those who love Him (Gen. 50:20 Rom. 8:28). We tend to get these all mixed up, so we let's take this in points:

#### **God Produces Good from Man's Free Will, Sin, and Failures**

1. God is able to take man's free will, the natural consequences of man's sin along with His divine discipline and produce divine good from mixing all of that together.
2. What the Egyptians had done to the Jews was wrong. Enslaving Jews in the first place was wrong and increasing their burdens to a point of making their work requirements impossible was wrong.
3. For committing those sins, Egypt will have to be disciplined. God will discipline Egypt.
4. Today, even though we do not live in the Jewish age, the Jews are still God's peculiar people and we are blessed by God when we treat them with compassion and respect. On the other hand, we are disciplined (either individually or as a nation) when we commit acts of prejudice against them or when we bear mental attitude sins against them. Gen. 12:1–3

## God Produces Good from Man's Free Will, Sin, and Failures

- 1) Antisemitism always results in divine discipline. Now you may think, *but what about all of those Arab nations? Aren't they rich with great oil reserves?* Some of the worst nations in the world to live in would be any of the Arabic nations, Pakistan or Iran. At any given time, there are 40–60 armed conflicts (= wars) occurring in the world. 80–90% of them are always happening in the Middle East. Some of the greatest humanitarian disasters of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are happening right now in Syria and Yemen (I write this in 2019). A 2019 graphic of these conflicts will be found below.
- 2) We have seen, by means of YouTube, the brutality of ISIS. They have burned people alive, drown them in cages, and slowly cut off their heads. For many of us, their evil and brutality are difficult to even contemplate.
- 3) Antisemitism, at any time in history, always results in far greater harm to its perpetrators.
- 4) Large portions of the Middle East are severely upset with nation Israel, despite the fact that it takes up about 0.2% of the land mass of the Middle East. Some Arabic nations blame so many of their problems and failures on that tiny, postage stamp of a nation.
- 5) In modern-day history, we have seen that the Arabic people are capable of marvelous building projects and improvements to their land which defy the horrendous weather conditions in which they live. For the past century or so, they could have been taking their oil profits and pouring them into projects to make conditions in their land more bearable—and some Arabic nations have done this. However, most of these nations have poured much of their money into war and terrorism, resulting in great self-induced misery.
5. It was God's plan for the Hebrews to be under slavery to Egypt and to endure great suffering; otherwise, they would not have left Egypt as a unified whole and return to the land that God had given them. In fact, their lives in Egypt had to get so bad that, they will have no other choice but to exit Egypt. Egypt's sinful and hostile actions towards Israel will cause the sons of Israel to leave.
6. However, this does not mean that Egypt will be rewarded for enslaving Israel, nor is Pharaoh rewarded for making their work tasks impossible to complete. God uses the fact that Egypt enslaved Israel; but that does not mean what they did is good or right. The actions of the pharaohs towards Israel were evil. Nevertheless, God is able to use their actions to produce good.
  - 1) Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery to Egypt and he endured some difficult times as a result. But, that made Joseph tough and he rose to a high political position in Egypt. As a result, he was able to preserve the lives of many Egyptians and his family. He said to his brothers, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." (Gen. 50:20, ESV).
  - 2) Paul assured the believers in Rome: **And we know that for those who love**

## God Produces Good from Man's Free Will, Sin, and Failures

God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28, ESV)

7. Because of the impossible pressure that Pharaoh places upon the people of Israel, they will move, en masse, out of Egypt. They will act as a unified whole to defy Pharaoh. They will choose to follow their God rather than obey the dictates of Pharaoh, because of the power the God reveals in Egypt.
8. Even though God is able to take the evil actions of Pharaoh and producing good from them, this does not somehow cancel out his personal responsibility for doing evil against Israel.
9. In this age, it is God's plan for the Jews to be scattered throughout the world; and regardless of the status of that little country in the mid-east; the Jews as a whole will remain a separate entity throughout all of the nations wherein they reside; and they will face attacks of prejudice from man and from Satan. This is God's plan for their lives prior to the second advent of Jesus Christ.
10. God's people, the Jews, are not the dominant factor in human history today; but God has not forgotten them; nor will He overlook evil done to them.
11. Even though these things are all a part of God's plan, this does not relieve any individual or nation from the discipline that they will receive due to their anti-Semitism.
12. God is able to take things which are wrong and combine them with motivations which are sinful and work these things into His plan so that it will all result in good. God is perfect and He is able to not only rectify, supercede and nullify the results of the sinfulness of man; but, at the same time, God is able to actually use those results to fulfill His perfect plan.
13. Even though God is able to work all things together for good, we are not pardoned for our sinful behavior, even if our wrong actions are used in His plan. We cannot use God's abilities or our personal predilections to pardon us from sin.
14. For those who want to deal with the *what if's*: if man did not sin, God's plan would still work all things together for good. God's plan will continue to work all things together for good to those who love Him even in the millennium, under perfect environment; and in eternity, where there will be no sin.
15. For the believer, the smart thing to do is to remain filled with the Spirit and run our lives in accordance with the guidance and power of Bible doctrine. In that way, we produce divine good in the devil's world. In that way, we participate in the plan of God in such a way that we will be rewarded for it.

## God Produces Good from Man's Free Will, Sin, and Failures

Conflicts Across the Globe (a map), from [Express.co.us](http://Express.co.us); accessed December 4,



2018. There are a few websites with *war/conflict* maps; and they do not all agree, simply because there is no universal agreement as to when an armed conflict is taking place. However, what all of these maps agree upon is, there are always armed conflicts taking place in Middle East countries and in Pakistan and in Iran. These are unhappy places to live because they are ruled by Islam, Satan's religion.

Furthermore, nearly all of those conflicts shown above involve Islam.

In the chapters that we are studying, God will take these hostile and retaliatory acts of Pharaoh and use them to further His plan.

Now I realize that does not put it all together for everyone, that should at least help you to understand God's plan, man's sin, and our responsibilities. All of these things coexist and are used by God for His good.

Back to our narrative:

Pharaoh has told the people that they must collect the straw with which to make bricks. Then he gives this rationale for his edict:

Exodus 5:8b For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.'

This is quite fascinating. The people of Israel are not idle; nor are they crying out to go and sacrifice to their God; this is all coming from Moses and Aaron and the elders of Israel. Ultimately, that comes from the will of God. However, Pharaoh will find it more instructive to punish all Israel rather than just Moses and Aaron.

Pharaoh approaches the problem in this way: the children of Israel have far too much excess time on their hands if they think that they can come and make a request of him to leave en masse for a week or so to worship their God. This sort of request he finds flabbergasting. Nevertheless, his response indicates that he takes the request seriously. He does not dismiss Moses and Aaron as just two nutcases (they have performed miracles in Pharaoh's sight—we will find this out later).

Pharaoh's intent is to nip this and all such future requests in the bud and make life so miserable for the people that they will never consider making such a request to him ever again—or so he thinks. It is Pharaoh's response to this initial request which will result in Israel becoming unified as a people against him (not right away, but eventually). Pharaoh's response it is intended to turn Israel against Moses and Aaron; but the end result will be, this will begin to unify the people of Israel against Pharaoh.

Obviously, Pharaoh has no regard whatever for the Hebrew God or the relationship of the Hebrew people to their God.

#### Lesson 048: Exodus 5:6–13

#### Pharaoh Denies Straw for the Bricks

Moses and Aaron have come before Pharaoh and have asked that the people be given some time in order to worship their God. This is how Pharaoh responded to their request:

Exodus 5:6–8 The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, 'Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.' (ESV; capitalized)

Pharaoh would not put up with such a foolish request from the Hebrew people. He then gave his Hebrew slaves an impossible task.

Exodus 5:9a Let more work be laid on the men,...

We have yet another word for *work* in v. 9; the feminine singular of 'ăbôdâh (עֲבֹדָה) [pronounced *ab-o-DAWH*] and it means *labor, service, work*. It is very similar to the Hebrew word for slave: 'ebed (עֶבֶד) [pronounced *eh-bed*]. The transliteration and the pronunciation make them sound like very different words; however, the Hebrew was written originally in all consonants and in this way they are exactly the same word (in written form) except that *labor* has an ה (he) on the end of it.

Moses and Aaron have come before Pharaoh and have requested that all Israelites be given the chance to leave Egypt for a week so that they may worship their God. Pharaoh's response to this request is to give them more work—in fact, he places an impossible burden upon them.

Exodus 5:9a [Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it,...](#)

Pharaoh was quite perturbed that Moses and Aaron came to him and asked for time off for the people—his slaves. Therefore, he made a ruling that the Hebrew slaves would no longer have straw but they would have to make the bricks for their construction projections out of mud and clay alone. Pharaoh has announced this to the taskmasters, and now the taskmasters will inform the people.

Exodus 5:9 [Let more work be laid on the men, that they may labor in it, and let them not regard false words."](#)

This is clearly more work required of the people. Pharaoh regards the things said by Moses and Aaron as *false words*. They have stirred up the sons of Israel. The idea that they have a God Who looks after them, Who thinks about them—this is false, in Pharaoh's estimation.

While these men are working much harder than they did before, Pharaoh wants them to think about requests like these; and to realize that such requests are false hopes. These fantasies proposed by Moses and Aaron will result in the lives of the Israelites becoming even more miserable.

No direct action is taken against Moses or Aaron at this point. Pharaoh does not say to them, "Don't you two belong with the slaves?" He does not put them in jail. He does not have them beaten. He listened to them and then he acted. Even though he urged these men to return to their burdens (which would have included the elders of Israel), he does nothing to Moses and Aaron. He does not put guards on them, to send them back into slave labor.

My theory is this: if Pharaoh is extremely harsh towards the Hebrew people, and yet Moses and Aaron are wandering about free, that would cause a serious rift between them. If the Hebrew overseers are beaten (many of whom are also the elders of the Hebrew people), but Moses and Aaron are not, then this original bond would be broken (the one which had been established between Moses and Aaron and the elders—recall that Moses and Aaron went before them first and, it appears, they all went before Pharaoh).

Would the Hebrew people look to Moses and Aaron as leaders, if what they did simply increased the requirements of their work, to the point of impossibility? And, while they are given an impossible task to do, Moses and Aaron are simply wandering about without any responsibility. If anything, the Hebrews would quickly come to resent Moses and Aaron. Whatever respect that these two men have among the people, Pharaoh's actions are designed to destroy that respect.

Pharaoh will exhibit strong will against God; but he is not a stupid man. If God were not real, then his plan here would be considered brilliant.

Exodus 5:10a [And the taskmasters of the people and their officers went out...](#)

In all organizations, there has to be a hierarchy; and, ideally speaking, a clear line of authority. Pharaoh would not go out and tell his slaves what ought to be done from day-to-day; he told the overseers and the Israeli foremen; and then they would go out and inform the people what was going on.

There were two primary sets of authority over the slaves: the taskmasters (who were Egyptians) and the overseers (who were fellow Hebrews). *Taskmaster* is *nâgas* (נָגַשׁ) [pronounced *naw-GAS*], which means *to drive [an animal, workman, debtor or army]*. By implication, it means *to tax, tyrannize or harass*. It is a verb, found here in the Qal active participle masculine plural construct. A participle acts as an adjectival noun (that is, it is a noun which often modifies another noun) or as a verbal adjective, and in the construct, it is also dependent upon another noun. The noun that this word modifies is the word for *people*. *Taskmasters of the people* is a reasonable translation and the *people's taskmasters* is even closer in meaning.

The second word is *shôṭêr* (שׁוֹטֵר) [pronounced *sho-TARE*], which comes from an unused primitive root word which means *to write*. Therefore, this means *writer or scribe*. However, in this context it would mean *an official, a foreman, a superintendent, an overseer*. I suspect that a part of their duties included a recording of what had been done on any given day by the people that they oversaw. They would report the number of bricks made by their crew; or the amount of wall or building completed by their crew.

So, Egyptian slave service was organized into levels of authority over the slaves; those who were constantly with the slaves while they did their work, seeing that everything was done as expected, and people above them who gave the directives, spot checked the work and the amount of production and reported back to Pharaoh when necessary. The writing is probably related to them keeping records of what work was done (for instance, how many bricks were produced).

It is not clear from "Strong's" which word is which, but v. 10 indicates that the *overseers* (or *foremen or officers*) were out in the field with the Jewish slaves and v. 14 indicates that these *overseers* were taken from the men of Israel. The Egyptians had found that it was better to set up levels of authority with the Hebrews themselves in those levels; that would possibly set up a buffer between the slave laborers and the taskmasters themselves. The point is that the Egyptian were very organized. They had to be. With two million slaves, they could not be haphazard about this. These were not primitive, two steps away from being cavemen civilization. Egypt was a highly organized, highly civilized nation. Two million slaves requires an incredible amount of organization.

I have had my own, very small business over the past 30 years, and on occasion, it involved coordinating 4 or 5 workers at the same time on a variety of projects (but

sometimes on the same house). This requires great skill and organization (and, obviously, that is a very small number of workers). So, with two million slaves, there must be very skilled people in the hierarchy as well as excellent organization and paperwork. There must always be well-defined goals and projects to complete. Otherwise, there would be very large groups of men just standing about, unable to do what they were required to do. In any building project, there is a proper order which must be followed and coordinated. Quite obviously, when a modern house is build, the framing must be build before the windows are put in. You cannot have your window people standing around with nothing to do at a building project, where the framing has not already been done. A builder today does very little building; but he is a master at coordinating various groups of people, each of whom has his or her own particular skill which is put to use. Now, I don't know how many artisans are involved with building a house—but, as a guess, those who must be on-site might number 200. The builder has to carefully coordinate these 200 men so that they are not all there at the same time, and that things are done in order (the electrical work must be done before the sheetrock is install, for instance).

Pharaoh has 2 million Hebrews, at least half of whom are working as his slaves. Even though the construction of any building or wall is less complex than our homes are today, there still is the careful coordination of such a massive workforce. Pharaoh cannot have a quarter million slaves standing around with nothing to do.

Exodus 5:10 [And the taskmasters of the people and their officers went out and spoke to the people, saying, “Thus says Pharaoh: ‘I will not give you straw.](#)

There is apparently a very organized system of authorities. Pharaoh can speak to 2 or more men in his cabinet and lay down the law; but those actually in charge of the people and the supplies are a much larger group. So, immediately the edict of Pharaoh is spread across the land.

The taskmasters go out, gather together the slaves under them (or the representative leaders of their slaves) and announce Pharaoh's decision to make them gather the straw themselves.

Bear in mind that there are 2 million descendants of Israel and most of them are unaware of what is going on. They don't know who Moses and Aaron are; they don't know about this request for worship. On one day, things are normal and miserable; the next day when they get up and are gathered together in various groups, they find out that things are now abnormal and far more miserable than before. For the average Israelite, this would have quite disconcerting. No doubt, they would ask why, and the would hear something about Moses and Aaron going to speak to Pharaoh. No doubt, the people in general would place the blame on Moses and Aaron, who managed to step in and make their miserable lives even more miserable.

Pharaoh, by means of the Egyptian farmers, would no longer provide straw for the bricks.

Exodus 5:11 **Go, get yourselves straw where you can find it; yet none of your work will be reduced.’ ”**

Their work was not to be reduced to make up for their gathering the straw for the bricks. Gathering straw was a lot of additional work, and removing this step in the process places the Israeli slaves in an impossible situation. Even if the Hebrew people wanted to reject their God and do just as Pharaoh demanded, they were physically unable to.

One of the things not recorded is, the response of the slave leaders to their taskmasters. “What is this all about? What’s Pharaoh’s beef?” Their questions would have been far more respectful than this, but that would have been the gist of their questions (as the Hebrew slave leaders know that those under them would have these same questions). It is logical that they would then be told what the problem is. “Your Moses and Aaron came to us demanding that you have time off to worship your God; so Pharaoh believes that you are idle and without enough work to do.” This is certainly reasonable to assume. Very likely, the Hebrew slaves will come to understand that Moses and Aaron are the cause for their additional misery.

Exodus 5:12 **So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.**

The people had to go out through the land of Egypt to find anything like straw in order to make the bricks. They needed something to hold the clay together.

There was just no easy substitute; and considerable amount of time would have been given over to finding and collecting such a substitute. An agricultural society which grows grain would have a plethora of straw to offer; but take that away, and there does not remain any easy replacement.

The problem is, in Egypt’s agrarian society, there is a lot of straw (waste from growing grains or corn); and that is plentiful and already gathered in great quantities, as being left over from separating out the grain. When there was this cooperation between the Egyptian farmers (or whoever was doing the work) and the Hebrew brick makers, a great many bricks could be produced. But cutting off this source of straw made what Pharaoh demanded an impossible task. This new mandate by Pharaoh actually reduced the number of bricks produced.

As an aside, what Pharaoh now requests reveals just how vindictive and short-sighted his edict is. He acts concerned about the quantity of work of his slaves and how their temporary leaving would be a loss for Egypt—and yet, his edict effectively reduces slave morale and reduces their actual output. It seems to me that any reasonably intelligent man would understand this; but Pharaoh seems to be far more interested in punishing the Hebrew people than increasing (or even maintaining) their work output. From the very beginning, Pharaoh’s negative volition against the Hebrew people (and their God) was quite pronounced.

Exodus 5:13 *And the taskmasters forced them to hurry, saying, “Fulfill your work, your daily quota, as when there was straw.”*

Their taskmasters made it clear that their work output had to remain the same, by decree of Pharaoh. However, they had to personally gather a key component ingredient themselves. Before, there apparently was straw provided for them; or there were places that they would go, and there would be bundles of straw waiting there for them. But now, there is no easy substitute to be found. And they certainly do not have the time to collect it. No doubt, already, Pharaoh had been requiring as much out of them as he could get.

What was no doubt frustrating is, once the Pharaoh made an edict, he was not going to back down. Kings did not make laws and then decide, *that does not seem to be working, so let me revise*. Most societies believed their kings to either be a deity of sorts or have the approval of deities to be in that position (which belief persisted for a long time, as the concept of the divine right of kings was a part of society in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries—although, some of that philosophy came from elsewhere). Yet, if one logically considers what Pharaoh has done—he has guaranteed that there would be a decreased work output and great frustration among his slaves.

#### **Lesson 049: Exodus 5:14–19**

#### **Pharaoh Denies Straw for the Bricks**

Summary of vv. 1–13: Moses and Aaron have come before Pharaoh and have requested that all Israel be given time to leave Egypt and worship their God, separate and away from Egypt. Not only does Pharaoh refuse, but he increases the workload of his Hebrew slaves by making them find their own straw with which to make bricks. At the same time, they were not to decrease the number of bricks produced—all by order of Pharaoh. So Pharaoh laid an impossible task upon the Hebrew slaves.

Because these requirements could not be met, this was the result of Pharaoh’s edict:

Exodus 5:14a *Also the officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh’s taskmasters had set over them, were beaten...*

The system of authority worked like this. Over all was Pharaoh; under him were the taskmasters, Egyptians who oversaw whatever was being built. Under them were the Hebrew officers, who oversaw their own people and were able to communicate work orders when necessary. Apparently, when the workers were unable to do what was required, the Hebrew foremen (officers) were beaten. Here, they were beaten when the bricks were not produced in the same quantities (which was an impossible task).

This was actually quite clever on the part of Pharaoh. Obviously, if the entire Hebrew population was beaten, it would have taken a very long time, reduced production, and possibly would have caused a full-scale rebellion. Here, a representative few could be beaten, everyone would see it; and these are their brothers, so what happened could not be ignored.

Those in charge of production quotas were slaves also, as we see here; and when the production quotas were not being met, they were beaten. In today's business climate, a bonus might be withheld. At first, these supervisory positions might have seemed to be the cushier jobs, but they took on the responsibility for the crews that they managed and for the quality and quantity of their production. When production was substandard or down, they were beaten.

Exodus 5:14 Also the officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, "Why have you not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and today, as before?"

They were given an impossible task to complete; and then beaten for being unable to complete it. No doubt Pharaoh knew that he was assigning an impossible task. He may have been short-sighted, but he was not a stupid man.

There was likely an intersection of men who were elders and officers. So, some of the men who went along with Moses and Aaron and now being beaten because of this requirement of Pharaoh.

Exodus 5:15 Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, "Why are you dealing thus with your servants?"

The officers come to Pharaoh and they complain about the new policies. Although they more or less gave consent to Moses and what he did, they did not expect this kind of response from the Pharaoh.

These leaders of the slaves were able to get an audience with Pharaoh, to complain. Perhaps this was the moment that Pharaoh had been waiting for. This would give him the opportunity to separate the Hebrew people from Moses and Aaron.

Exodus 5:16 There is no straw given to your servants, and they say to us, 'Make brick!' And indeed your servants are beaten, but the fault is in your own people."

The Hebrew supervisors continue with their pleas. They complain that these new policies are not their fault. Pharaoh has laid too much on them. Pharaoh knows that they have always done their work before; but now, he has placed more work upon them than they are able to do.

Note that these men who have come before Pharaoh do not blame Pharaoh—even though this is completely his fault. They blame their taskmasters who tell them what must be produced and how—that this is an impossible task to complete.

This complaint gives Pharaoh the opportunity to explain why their work output requirements have been changed. No doubt, he has been anticipating this moment, as he has a ready answer for them.

Exodus 5:17 But he said, “You are idle! Idle! Therefore you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.’”

Pharaoh says that these new work requirements came about because the Hebrew slaves are too idle; because they are thinking about sacrificing to Y<sup>e</sup>howah. He is not going to allow this and there will be a price to pay. Pharaoh is going to work them to a point where, there is no time to even think about going out to sacrifice to their God.

One flaw in Pharaoh’s thinking is, he seems to believe that all of this came from the people. The people wanted some time off; of the people want to worship their God. So, Pharaoh punishes *them*.

Now, bear in mind that this request actually came from God and was delivered through Moses and Aaron. The people themselves had not made this request. Even their officers did not make this request (although they ratified it).

This is exactly what Pharaoh wanted. Pharaoh, by this approach, is separating the people from Moses and Aaron. The pain will be on the people, because of Moses and Aaron. Furthermore, Moses and Aaron, in Pharaoh’s estimation, will also feel guilty for what they have caused (this is logical speculation). In any case, the whole idea is to make the Hebrew people—including the elders—resent Moses and Aaron.

Then Pharaoh emphasizes that this was not simply a warning; this is their new reality:

Exodus 5:18 Therefore go now and work; for no straw shall be given you, yet you shall deliver the quota of bricks.”

Pharaoh repeats his order to them. He is not going back on his orders (something that was very rare for a sovereign of any nation to do). Insofar as the people knew, this would be their lives from thereon forward. They were placed in an impossible position.

Pharaoh intends to break them of this whole God thing. Even though he never states it outright, Pharaoh associates the lack of straw with their desire to go out and worship their God. The implication is, *back off on this whole worship thing and maybe I might back off on my requirements*. The reason we might reasonably assume this is, in the same breath, he speaks of their desire to go and worship their God and the removal of straw from their brick-making.

Exodus 5:19 And the officers of the children of Israel saw that they were in trouble after it was said, “You shall not reduce any bricks from your daily quota.”

This was very troubling to the sons of Israel; and particularly to their officers, who would be beaten for the reduced production. The people knew that they could not keep up to their former level production; and their Hebrew supervisors knew this as well. Could they now expect to be beaten each and every day?

This is not what the overseers wanted to hear. It was not their idea to go into the desert and worship God. And although things were not great in Egypt, because of Moses and Aaron (and ultimately, because of God), things had become even more intolerable. Very possibly they thought that they could reason with Pharaoh; explain that it was literally impossible for them to do what was expected of them. However, Pharaoh puts it back on them. They are unable to reason with him.

Pharaoh has, essentially, put the blame back on Moses and Aaron. The Pharaoh seems to have assumed that the Jews themselves came up with this idea of going out into the desert and worshiping God. Certainly, he did not realize that this demand came directly from Y<sup>e</sup>howah, Israel's God. The God of Israel spoke to Moses and Aaron and they took God's Word to the elders of Israel and then to the Pharaoh. Even God works through levels of authority.

We continue to see this first meeting between Pharaoh and Moses and Aaron through human viewpoint thinking. How are the people of God to understand this turn of events? Do they focus in on their hardship and suffering? Or do they recognize that God has come to their rescue. Let me suggest that is was the former for most sons of Israel. This might help you to understand why, when God brought to plagues on Egypt, they at first affected Israeli as well.

**Application:** When dealing with your day-to-day life, do you see this as one difficulty and disaster after another? Or do you see God's hand in your life? Do you look around to find someone to blame for your situation? Or do you sit back on occasion to see what God will do?

**Application:** It does not matter who you are, or what you do in life, you will run into difficult situations—sometimes unsolvable problems. What do you do when that happens?

Exodus 5:20 [Then, as they came out from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them.](#)

These officers just spoke to Pharaoh, and now they came out, and there is Moses and Aaron, waiting for them. Everything that Moses and Aaron were doing was brand new to them as well. God made it clear that Pharaoh would not respond positively towards their first coming to him; however, God did not indicate what the exact response of Pharaoh was going to be.

I have no doubt that the foremen could hardly wait to run into Moses and Aaron and give them an earful. They are extremely angry at Moses and Aaron because they have taken an intolerable situation and have made it even more intolerable. No one stops to think that God has chosen these things to occur (remember, we are viewing this meeting through man's eyes). These Hebrew officers have no solutions that they can offer. They are simply looking to place blame.

No doubt, Moses and Aaron have little to offer them by way of consolation.

The ESV; capitalized will be used below.

## Exodus 5 is the human viewpoint approach to the first meeting

1. Everything about this chapter on the first meeting between Moses (and Aaron) and Pharaoh is seen from human viewpoint.
2. In v. 2, Pharaoh says, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD."
3. When Aaron tells Pharaoh what they would like, Pharaoh says, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens."
4. Pharaoh eventually decides to let Moses and Aaron meander about in freedom; but he has the Hebrew overseers beaten—this would drive a wedge between the Hebrew elders (many of whom are probably overseers) and Moses and Aaron. On a manipulative, human level, this is brilliant. But it won't stand before God.
5. Pharaoh then gives the order that the Hebrew slaves must forage for their own straw—that it will not be provided for them anymore. Exodus 5:6–8
6. Pharaoh calls the demands of Moses and Aaron *lying words* in v. 9.
7. The taskmasters tell the slaves to produce the same number of bricks and look for straw themselves. Exodus 5:10–13
8. It is fascinating to me that the decree of Pharaoh will result in his slaves producing fewer bricks—exactly the thing that worried him when Moses and Aaron asked for time off for the Hebrew people to worship their God.
9. The foremen of the Hebrew people (who are also Hebrews) are beaten. V. 14.
10. The foremen come before Pharaoh to plead their case, and Pharaoh reiterates his decree. Exodus 5:15–19
11. These men will complain to Moses and Aaron. Vv. 20–21.
12. Moses will complain to God. Vv. 22–23.

As you see, this chapter is given over almost exclusively to seeing this first meeting between Moses and Pharaoh through the eyes of various men.

### Lesson 050: Exodus 5:20–23

### Human Viewpoint versus Divine Viewpoint

So far in this chapter, Moses and Aaron have gone before Pharaoh and have requested that the Hebrew people be given time to go and worship their God. Pharaoh has not only refused this request, but he requires that the Hebrew slaves to now gather their own straw, and yet continue to produce the same number of bricks—an impossible requirement. When they cannot produce, Pharaoh has their Hebrew foremen beaten.

Exodus 5:20 Then, as they [the Hebrew foremen] came out from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them.

There is probably some overlap between the Hebrew foremen and the elders of Israel. They might even be the same sets of people. In any case, they have been beaten for not

being able to get their people to perform an impossible task, so they appealed to Pharaoh and their appeal was shut down.

Moses and Aaron are right there, ready to meet these foremen, as they come out from speaking to Pharaoh, wanting to know what happened in their meeting. I mentioned in the previous lesson that this chapter is all about human viewpoint. Moses and Aaron see this second meeting as being important, and they want to know what happened. Maybe they tell these foremen, “We are so sorry, guys, for you being beaten and for our people being assigned more work.” This is the natural reaction of someone thinking with human viewpoint.

Exodus 5:21a *And they said to them, “Let the Lord look on you and judge,...*

The Hebrew officers are speaking to Moses and Aaron. “God sees what is going on,” they say, “Let Him see what you two have done and judge the situation.” Just what you would expect—a human viewpoint, self-righteous response.

In other words, “Since you two showed up and started asking for Pharaoh to let us go to worship our God, all hell has broken loose. Our lives are a mess and we have been beaten and we have to go out there and do this all over again. Thanks for nothing!”

Exodus 5:21a *And they said to them, “Let the Lord look on [both of] you and judge,...*

The elders are speaking to Moses and Aaron. They want God to evaluate what has just happened and to treat Moses and Aaron accordingly.

This is exactly what Pharaoh wanted. He wanted the elders of Israel to turn against Moses and Aaron. If I were to make an educated guess, it is that Pharaoh recognized Moses and Aaron as natural leaders. Therefore, rather than make martyrs of them and kill or imprison them, Pharaoh acts to drive a wedge between the people and them.

Exodus 5:21b *...because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants,...*

When this phrase is translated literally, it is a somewhat humorous phrase: “*You have made us to stink in the eyes of Pharaoh and his servants.*”

Very noticeable here is the incongruity of their smell being offensive to Pharaoh's eyes. This is called catachresis [pronounced *CAT-a-chree-sis*] or an incongruity. One word is changed for another and this is contrary to the ordinary usage and meaning of it. It draws attention to the strength of the statement. On the other hand, these men could have been so upset that they just blurted this out, barely able to think of what they were saying.

This is a shadow of things to come. Moses and Aaron would face an uphill battle with the Hebrew people for the next forty years. The Hebrews under slavery never did quite grasp the full impact of what was occurring; nor did they fully appreciate what God was doing on

their behalf. They did not fully understand the importance of their freedom. This is why Moses had so much trouble with them in the desert and why God made them wander the desert until He killed off the first generation. These foolish overseers don't see the Pharaoh as being the one out of line, but Moses and Aaron. They are short-sighted and are only able to see things from their own point of view.

Interestingly enough, we are going to go back and see this first meeting again—but, this next time, it will be from God's point of view. The use of the double narrative is quite fascinating. Right now, we are looking at the first meeting between Moses and Aaron and Pharaoh; and what happened as a result—all of it very much from the viewpoint of the Hebrew people. They will almost pull Moses and Aaron to their side, to their way of thinking (which is human viewpoint).

With chapter 7, we are going to look at this entire experience again—the first meeting between Moses and Aaron and Pharaoh—but this next time, we will see it from God's point of view. It may appear that Moses and Aaron are getting a do-over before Pharaoh, but that is not what is happening. We are going to go back and see this same meeting, but from God's viewpoint. Is there a problem which occurs here? Yes, but it is nothing. It is barely a hiccup. From human viewpoint, what is happening seems quite serious; but from God's viewpoint, it is nothing. This whole thing about no straw seems like a very big deal to those thinking from their own human standards; to God, this is nothing. It is not an obstacle or a problem.

Exodus 5:21a-b *And they said to them, "Let the Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh..."*

Both instances of *you* are plural. The elders are speaking to Moses and Aaron. It is unlikely that they fully appreciate, at this point, that God has put Moses in charge.

The officers of Israel complain to Moses and Aaron that they have made the Hebrew people abhorrent to Pharaoh; and they call for God to look on them and judge Moses and Aaron for what they have done.

I believe that this encounter between the Hebrew supervisors and Moses and Aaron went pretty much as Pharaoh expected it to go. I believe that this is an intentional setup by Pharaoh. He wants the elders of the Hebrew people to turn against Moses and Aaron, and that is exactly what has happened.

Exodus 5:21c *...to put a sword in their hand to kill us."*

The elders of Israel are telling Moses and Aaron, "You have put a sword in the hand of Pharaoh so that he might kill us." The last phrase is better understood as *you might as well have given them a sword to kill us with*.

Now, if this thing was of Moses, then their evaluation of the situation is spot on; but if this thing is of God, then these people need to get their minds right. They need to stop seeing this from a human standpoint.

*The sword in the hand* of the Egyptians is a metaphor. They would be killed by the amount of work laid upon them. The officers would be beaten possibly to death, as the people were unable to achieve the unreasonable quotas—and all of this goes back to Moses and Aaron. They are responsible for this, in the eyes of the Hebrew foremen. One man, Pharaoh, has manipulated them to think in this way and to turn on each other.

Exodus 5:21 *And they said to them, “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.”*

I cannot overemphasize this fact: what we are reading and studying here is viewing these events from human viewpoint. In Exodus 7, we will return to this very same meeting—Moses and Aaron will walk in front of Pharaoh for the first time once again. But, at that point we will see this through God’s eyes. The difference will be so striking that, you won’t even realize that you are witnessing the same event.

### **Israel’s Deliverance Assured**

The officers of Israel have come to Moses and Aaron and they have given them an earful. “Let God look at what you two have done and judge, because you have put the sword in Pharaoh’s hand to kill us!” is their complaint.

We are not told how Moses and Aaron responded. Moses goes to God and speaks to Him. Perhaps they muttered something, and wandered off, somewhat taken aback themselves. It will be obvious, by what Moses says to God, that he did not expect this particular turn of events. Moses is disheartened by what has happened.

Exodus 5:22 *So Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me?”*

Moses goes to God and offers up the same complaint. He recognizes that he has brought misery upon the people of Israel. *Is this why You sent me*, he asks. In other words, Moses is saying, “Did you send me to bring misery to Your people, Lord?”

Moses is seeing this from the human viewpoint position. He is unable to see this series of events in any other way. God has even told him that Pharaoh would resist him; but this? How could he have known that? Moses knows what he said; and he knows what Pharaoh has done. He cannot seem to see beyond this.

I want you to think back 40 years (in the life of Moses). Moses is out among his people for the first time, and he sees an Egyptian slave-driver beat an Israelite. Moses is so infuriated

that he kills the slave driver. And now, because of what he said, probably thousands of Hebrew men were beaten. Do you see how upsetting this would be to Moses?

Here is what Moses does not see: (1) this edict of Pharaoh is going to be quite temporary, because a number of events will completely overshadow Pharaoh's expectations of his slaves. (2) These things that Pharaoh does will further separate the people of Israel from the control of Pharaoh. When God calls upon Israel to walk out of Egypt, there will not be a contingent of Hebrew families who say, "Look, we can't leave Egypt. This is our home. We may be slaves, but we have it pretty good here." No one will be able to make an argument like that. God will say, "March that way, out of Egypt," and the people will move out as a whole. Not a single Hebrew will remain behind.

Moses continues to complain to God:

Exodus 5:23a *For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people;...*

Moses questions God and God's plan. "*Ever since You sent me to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people.*" In other words, Moses appears to be telling God, "It does not appear to me that Your plan is working. You have made the lives of these people more miserable."

Moses is unable to see this from God's point of view.

Despite Moses' complaints, God will allow things to get so much worse that the people of Israel will follow Moses out of Egypt. If things were just bad, but not too bad, some of them may have petitioned to remain. God has to bring *every Hebrew* out of Egypt. Every person descended from Jacob went from Canaan into Egypt; and now, every person descended from Jacob must come out of Egypt and return to Canaan.

The way that Moses views everything that has taken place is quite short-sighted. He sees the meeting, he sees the immediate results, but he does not really see God's hand in it. He does not realize that all Israel must choose to leave Egypt. There cannot be a handful of families who think, "Should I stay or should I go?" Every son of Jacob has to want to leave Egypt.

**We need to think as God thinks; we need to see things from God's view:** As believers in Jesus Christ, we can see things from His viewpoint or from our own. "*My thoughts are not your thoughts, and My ways are not your ways,*" declares the LORD (Isa. 55:8). We want to think with God's thoughts. We want to perceive the world as God, its Creator, sees it. In fact, that is what God wants for us.

Many times, Paul urges the believer to think with divine viewpoint. *Therefore, all who are mature should think this way* [as Paul has been teaching]. *And if you think differently about anything, God will reveal this to you also* [through the continued teaching of Bible doctrine]

(Philip. 3:15). **Keep thinking objectively about things above [divine viewpoint] and not about things on the earth [human viewpoint]** (Col. 3:2).

There is only one way that we can see things from God's viewpoint and that is for us to learn and understand and believe God's view of things. *If only we knew someone who has the mind of Christ.* **But the unregenerate man of the highest intellectual attainments is not given access to the things of the Spirit of God, for to him they are folly, and he is not able to come to know them because they are understood in a spiritual realm. But the spiritual man investigates indeed all things, but he himself is not being probed by anyone. For who has come to know experientially the Lord's mind, he who will instruct Him? But as for us, we have the mind of Christ (1Cor. 2:12–13).** You see? We know someone who knows the mind of Christ. Having the mind of Christ is divine viewpoint, and the apostles were able to teach divine viewpoint. We look to the epistles of Paul (and others), for in them is the mind of Christ.

Paul did not teach worldly wisdom; he did not teach some form of human viewpoint. He taught God's way of thinking. **My language and the message I preached were not adorned with pleasing words of worldly wisdom, but they were attended with proof and power given by the Spirit, so that your faith might not be in men's wisdom, but in God's power (1Cor. 2:4–5).**

To be clear, this is an order from God. God does not simply tell us, "You know, it'd be a nice idea for you to make your mind conformed to Mine." God orders us to do that: **Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renovation of your thinking, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. For I say through the grace which has been given to me to every one who is among you, stop thinking of yourself in terms of arrogance beyond what you ought to think, but think in terms of sanity for the purpose of being rational without illusion as God has assigned to each one of us a standard of thinking from [Bible] doctrine. (Rom. 12:2–3).**

None of this happens overnight. It comes from consistent exposure to the word of God, where you choose to believe in His Words.

Moses is not there yet. However, surprisingly enough, Moses will move in that direction in a relatively short period of time.

Exodus 5:23 **For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all."**

"Look, God," Moses is saying, "You talked about delivering this people, but all that has happened is, more work has been put upon them and they are not delivered even slightly."

Surely, Moses should have realized that, without sufficient pressure from God, Pharaoh was not just going to give in and grant Moses' request. I think what confused Moses was, Pharaoh did not just say *no*, but then he issued a decree.

Now, bear in mind that God has already told Moses that Pharaoh was not going to suddenly capitulate to his demands. It is clear that this would be a process, not an overnight thing.

There will be 10 plagues brought upon the Egyptian people. This allows for everyone to make a clear and conscious choice—either for or against the God of the Hebrews. When we get to that point, every Hebrew person will follow Moses out of Egypt (and thus, follow their God).

Interestingly enough, this conversation between God and Moses is continued into the next chapter—something which has already happened in the book of Exodus. You may ask, *why start a new chapter mid-conversation?* This is because Exodus 5 is all about human viewpoint. As soon as God speaks, we are hearing divine viewpoint.

## **Lesson 051: Exodus 5:20–23 6:1**

## **Transition to Chapter 6**

From time to time, during our study of Exodus, you may ask yourself, *why am I studying this? God is not going to lead another nation out from the midst of a nation with signs and wonders. God is not acting today with an abundance of signs and wonders. God is not using Israel today as He did a few thousand years ago. So what do I get out of this?*

It is a fair question. We have, as believers in Jesus Christ, a history, and this history goes all the way back to the creation of man. So we study Adam, we study what we can about creation and Adam's life after being created. We also study the patriarchs of the Hebrew people because we are learning to see things from God's perspective.

Life on earth has changed. In fact, over the past century, life in the United States has changed dramatically. However, God remains the same. His thinking is constant. He may, at one time in history, perform a variety of signs and miracles; and during another era, perform no clearly discernable signs and miracles. However, His thinking remains constant in all of that time. So, throughout the Bible, what we hope to learn is God's way of thinking. We have a better understanding of why we are here on earth and what God's plan is for our lives if we know how God thinks.

As we transition into Exodus 6, you will notice that these chapters are not always divided as we might think they ought to be. Moses and Aaron first went to Pharaoh, and asked that they be allowed to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt in order to worship their God. Not only did Pharaoh say *no*, but he then imposed some new work requirements which over-burdened the Israeli people, who already were slaves. The elders of Israel were very upset and they confronted Moses about it.

Because of this, Moses has gone to God and he has lodged his objections to what is happening (vv. 22–23). God will answer Moses in Exodus 6:1–9; and then God will tell Moses what to do next (Exodus 6:10–11). Logically speaking Exodus 5:22–23 should have

been placed with Exodus 6:1–13, since it is all one conversation (this is the second time in Exodus that a conversation is divided by chapters when it should not have been).

Furthermore, there is a very odd organization to Exodus 6 when taken as a separate unit. Moses has spoken to God—in fact, he complained to God—that the life of the Hebrew people is now much worse, after he went to Pharaoh and asked him to let the sons of Israel leave Egypt to worship the Lord (at the end of Exodus 5). God had come to Moses and asked him to do this in the first place! God will answer Moses in Exodus 6:1–9; giving Moses somewhat of a history lesson.

Then, in vv. 10–11, God will begin to tell Moses what he is to do next. Moses appears to stop God, in v. 12, and say, “Look, I just talked to the leaders of Israel, and they won’t listen to me anymore (and they saw the signs and wonders). How do you expect Pharaoh to listen to me if my own people won’t trust us?”

What God says to Moses next is more or less summed up in v. 13.

But then, right in the middle of Exodus 6, there is parenthetical genealogy, which begins with a list of the sons of Reuben, the sons of Simeon and then the sons of Levi—and this final list of the generations of Levi culminates in Moses and Aaron<sup>47</sup> (Exodus 6:14–27).

Then we suddenly return to the conversation between God and Moses which was perhaps begun in vv. 1–11 in this chapter. On the other hand, this conversation could be entirely different from the first part of chapter 6.

It is a very odd organization for this (or any) chapter.

It is very easy to become turned around when proceeding from chapter to chapter in this portion of Exodus. We tend to assume that we are moving in a chronological order, because that is the way that our own brains tend to work. However, what appears to me is, first we see this incident of Moses and Aaron appearing before Pharaoh from man’s viewpoint; and then we see it from God’s viewpoint.

When this is put into a chart format, it is easier to see what is happening.

### A Bird’s Eye View of Exodus 5–7

| Scripture  | Text/Commentary  |
|--|--|
| Moses and Aaron stand before Pharaoh for the first time—the human viewpoint version: |  |
| Exodus 5:1–3   | Moses and Aaron speak to Pharaoh and ask him to allow the Hebrew people to leave Egypt temporarily to worship their God. |
| Exodus 5:4–5   | Pharaoh’s response is, <i>not in your wildest dreams</i> .   |

<sup>47</sup> This genealogy actually culminates in Aaron’s son and grandson.

## A Bird's Eye View of Exodus 5–7

| Scripture   | Text/Commentary   |
|---|---|
| Exodus 5:6–11   | Pharaoh issues an edict to the people: they will gather the straw needed for their bricks on their own, without help from the Egyptian farmer. (It is likely slaves working for Egyptian farms provided the straw that was needed.) |
| Exodus 5:12–14  | Because the Hebrew slaves cannot meet these new demands from Pharaoh; their Hebrew officers are publically beaten.  |
| Exodus 5:15–19  | The officers appeal to Pharaoh for a reprieve and Pharaoh refuses to be moved by their requests, blaming this new regulation on the request made by Moses and Aaron.  |
| Exodus 5:20–21  | The officers complain to Moses and Aaron and blame them.  |
| Exodus 5:22–23  | Moses goes to God to complain to Him. He blames God for Pharaoh's treatment of the Hebrew people and their officers.  |
| Chapter 6 picks up with the same conversation. Moses is done speaking, and God responds.  |   |
| Exodus 6:1  | God tells Moses to watch what He does to deliver Israel.  |
| Exodus 6:2–8  | God gives Moses a rundown of His plan. There is a discussion to be had as to when did God say these things to Moses.  |
| Exodus 6:9  | Moses tries to speak to the elders once again, but they reject him. After what has happened, they want nothing to do with them.   |
| Exodus 6:10–13  | God sends Moses and Aaron back <i>onto the field</i> despite Moses complaint, "The elders and officers no longer listen to us; how can we expect Pharaoh to?"   |
| There are some movies which go back and view a situation, but from a different point of view. That is what I believe is happening here. Exodus 6:14 would be a good place to start the new chapter. |   |
| Moses and Aaron stand before Pharaoh for the first time—the divine viewpoint version:   |   |
| Exodus 6:14–15  | The genealogical lines of Reuben and Simeon.  |
| Exodus 6:16–25  | The genealogical line of Levi and his 3 sons followed out to Moses and his contemporaries.  |
| Exodus 6:27–30  | The Moses and Aaron of the genealogical line of Levi are the same who spoke to Pharaoh. Moses complains that he might not be able to speak before Pharaoh.  |

## A Bird's Eye View of Exodus 5–7

| Scripture  | Text/Commentary   |
|--|---|
| Exodus 7:1–5   | God tells Moses and Aaron what to expect when interacting with Pharaoh; and that Pharaoh would resist them.   |
| Exodus 7:6–13  | Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh, as God told them to do, and they perform the signs with Aaron's staff.   |
| <p>This is their first meeting with Pharaoh; and this is equivalent to what we have already studied in Exodus 5. You will note in this second approach to the first meeting, there is no whining or complaining; the edict of Pharaoh is not even mentioned. From the Divine Perspective, Pharaoh's schemes to stop Moses and Aaron are ignored. Like mentioning what Pharaoh had for breakfast, his edict is not relevant to this situation—not from God's point of view.</p> |   |
| Exodus 7:14–19   | Moses goes to God and God tells him what he will do for the next meeting and the first plague.  |
| <p>There is no focus this time about the complaints of the elders, the new edict of Pharaoh, or the fact that Moses and Aaron are not able to sway the minds of the Hebrew elders. All of these concerns found in Exodus 5 are ignored because they are related to human viewpoint. God does not sweat the small stuff.</p>  |   |
| Exodus 7:20–25   | Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh, give him God's warnings, and then the waters are turned to a blood red. This is the first plague; this is the second meeting with Pharaoh. |
| <p>Even in the short summary given above, you can see how different the first meeting with Pharaoh went, from the human standpoint as opposed to seeing it from God's point of view.</p>   |   |
| <p>Man's viewpoint is not really that important; so beginning with Exodus 7, we will see the meetings with Pharaoh and the plagues upon Egypt from God's viewpoint.</p>  |   |

With Exodus 7, we will go further into the conversation between God and Moses, preparing Moses to go before Pharaoh once again.

However, right now, we are beginning Exodus 6. So, to help you regroup, chapter 6 begins with God answering Moses' complaints.

By Exodus 6, God has already told Moses that Pharaoh would not listen to him. All of this is going just as God planned it; just as He told Moses what would happen. Moses appears to have become as short-sighted as the Hebrew leaders who met him. Moses has talked to God and then he talked to the Hebrew foremen—he seems to be siding with the Hebrew foremen and taking their point of view over God's.

The point of view of the Hebrew elders was, their lives were okay until Moses and Aaron began to interfere with them, and now their lives were horrible. Their Hebrew brothers, who were foremen, were now subject to beatings by Pharaoh.

Just to make certain you remember, their lives were not okay. They were crying out for deliverance before Moses showed up.

**Exodus 5 leads into Exodus 6:** The division between Exodus 5 and 6 is quite odd. For whatever reason, I have found several chapters in Exodus to be poorly divided up.<sup>48</sup> For the second time in the book of Exodus, a chapter division occurs right in the middle of a conversation between Moses and God. Here are the last few verses of Exodus 5:

Exodus 5:20–21 They [the Hebrew elders] met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; and they said to them, "The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

Moses and Aaron have gone to Pharaoh to ask to lead the sons of Israel out into the desert-wilderness to worship God. Pharaoh's response was known by God in eternity past. Because of Moses' request, he decided that the Israelites did not have enough work to keep them busy. So Pharaoh decided that the people needed to provide their own straw for the bricks; and he beat their foremen (also Hebrews) when they were unable to deliver the same number of bricks as before.

These foremen complain to Moses and Aaron about what they have done. "You have put the sword in Pharaoh's hand to kill us," they allege. By Pharaoh's edict, he placed a wedge between Moses and Aaron and the people of Israel.

Exodus 5:22–23 Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did You ever send me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all."

Moses turns (returns) to the LORD and he complains. "Did You send me so that Pharaoh will do evil to the people." And he adds, "You have not delivered Your people at all."

So, Moses questions God in Exodus 5:22–23; and God answers Moses in Exodus 6:1 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land."

Notice what God ignores in Moses' complaint: the new edict of Pharaoh, the foremen being beaten, and the elders being mad at Moses. These things are irrelevant to God.

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<sup>48</sup> Chapter and verse divisions occurred long after the text of the Bible was written; so they are not inspired.

As noted in the introduction of this verse, Exodus 6:1 is God answering the questions/complaints of Moses from the previous chapter. God sent Moses and Aaron to speak first to the elders of Israel and then to Pharaoh. After listening to Moses and Aaron, Pharaoh increased the work requirements for the sons of Jacob, as they apparently had far too much time on their hands. If Moses was able to come in and request that they take a week-long holiday, then they had too much free time.<sup>49</sup> As far as Moses could see, his talk with Pharaoh made everything worse, and so he made this complaint known to God.

Exodus 5:22–23 *And Moses returned to Jehovah and said, "Lord, why have You brought hurt upon this people? Why then have You sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You rescued to deliver Your people."*

Moses is speaking to God and he is somewhat discouraged. This is because, after speaking to Pharaoh and letting him know God's demand, Pharaoh not only said *no*, but Pharaoh placed great hardship upon the people of God as a result. The people were now mad at Moses and Aaron; the elders of Israel were mad at them; and Pharaoh didn't think much of them either.

This is a chiasmatic way to organize Exodus 6:1–12.

### Chiasm of Exodus 6:1–12 (by Hajime Murai)

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| A(6:1)     | ""He will drive them from his land" (6:1)" (םחל י)  |
| B(6:2)     | ""I am the LORD" (6:2)" (הוהינא)  |
| C(6:3-5)   | ""Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (6:3) "My covenant with them, to give them the land" (6:4)" (בקעיקחציםהרבא) |
| D(6:6)     | ""I will free you from the forced labor of the Egyptians" (6:6)" (תלבס)                                 |
| E(6:7a)    | ""I will take you as my own people" (6:7)   |
| D'(6:7b)   | ""I free you from the labor of the Egyptians" (6:7)" (תולבס)  |
| C'(6:8a)   | ""the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (6:8)" (בקעיקחציםהרבא)                    |
| B'(6:8b)   | ""I the LORD" (6:8)" (הוהינא)   |
| A'(6:9-12) | ""Go and tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave his land" (6:11)" (חל יו)                             |

From [http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02\\_Exodus\\_pericope\\_e.html](http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02_Exodus_pericope_e.html) accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> 3 days into the desert-wilderness; 3 days to return; plus whatever time would be spend on worshipping their God.

Exodus 6:1a **Then the Lord said to Moses,...**

At this point, God will enter the picture in a more active role. So far, God has simply told Moses where to go and what to say.

Exodus 6:1a-b **Then the Lord said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.**

Moses has gone to speak to Pharaoh and things did not go so well (in Moses' own opinion). God tells Moses, “Pay attention and watch what I do to Pharaoh.” What God would do would cause Pharaoh to act:

Exodus 6:1c **For with a strong hand he will let them go,...**”

Pharaoh, in his strength, would let the Hebrew people go; and in his strength, would drive them out of his land. There will be an end result, and that end result is part of what God wants.

Exodus 6:1d **...and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.”**

The NASB translates *by a strong arm as under compulsion*, which is an excellent rendering of the idea. There is a preposition involved here; the preposition b<sup>e</sup> (ב) which is pronounced as a part of the noun (it is not treated by some as an actual word, but it is<sup>50</sup>). Its basic meaning is *in*. However, the limited number of prepositions in the Hebrew tend to wear a great many hats. This can mean *among, within, into, at, by, touching, with, by means of, through*. It is the latter two uses that we have here. Pharaoh will require a little encouragement by the hand of God. Most of us have some basic understanding of the judgments/plagues/blows of God delivered against Pharaoh and against Egypt. As a result of these judgments, Pharaoh will send the people of God out of Egypt.

When it is time, God the Holy Spirit will give Moses the power and strength to explain and showcase God's signs and miracles. It will be the power and direction of God that will actually cause Pharaoh to drive the Israelites out of the land. Here, Moses is told that Pharaoh will drive the people out of the land; meaning he will desire for them to leave and he will order Moses to take them out of Egypt. The *strong hand* here belongs to Pharaoh; it is Pharaoh who will drive the people of Israel out of Egypt (but some might understand this to be *the strong hand of God*).

Even though Exodus 6:1 began with **Then the Lord said to Moses,...** , v. 2 will begin with almost the same words:

Exodus 6:2a **And God spoke to Moses and said to him:...**

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<sup>50</sup> There could be a great deal of discussion on this point, with language experts lining up on both sides of this issue.

I think that this is significant when God is said to speak to Moses in v. 1, but then again, He is said to speak to Moses in v. 2. I think what is happening here is, we are seeing two separate conversations between God and Moses. V. 1 is God's response to Moses' complaint. In vv. 2–8, God gives directions to Moses to go back to the elders and tell them some things—specifically promises. Between these verses may have been additional conversation.

Exodus 6:2 [And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the LORD.](#)

God now gives Moses a little background. Let me suggest that Moses had some passing understanding of what God is going to say—perhaps more than that—but he needs to hear it again. Vv. 2–8 are the words which God will speak to Moses, giving Moses an historical context. This will be a brief history of God's relationship to the Hebrew people.

Moses is to go to the elders of Israel and repeat this information to them (ideally speaking, they should already know these things).

Exodus 6:3a [I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty,...](#)

God tells the people of Israel, through Moses, that He is the God Who appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In order for this to make sense to Moses, he has to know who Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are. These cannot just be some set of meaningless names. These three men are from 400+ years ago; and yet, by speaking their names here, God is assuming that they are known by their names. Moses logically must have some understanding of the book of Genesis.

Exodus 6:3b [...but by My name LORD I was not known to them.](#)

What God says then is quite interesting. ["But by My name Y<sup>e</sup>howah, I was not known to them."](#) This final phrase has been somewhat difficult to understand.

V. 3 has been a source of consternation for a long time. Some have wrongly theorized that because of this statement, the writer of the Exodus had not read certain portions of Genesis (therefore, he did not write it) so he wasn't aware that the name "Yahweh" had been used of our Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Genesis. That makes no sense. First of all, this is God speaking, not the author of Exodus. God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the land of Canaan as an inheritance forever. He was known by several names to them (as well as to all the saints from the book of Genesis) but His identifying name has always been "Y<sup>e</sup>howah." The name *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* to the Old Testament believer is equivalent to our familiarity with the name of Jesus Christ. *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* was our Lord's name prior to the incarnation.

Adam Clarke offers several possible explanations which seem to be pretty good.

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Exodus 6:3 [I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Lord I was not known to them.](#)

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## Explanations of Exodus 6:3 (Adam Clarke)

[Exodus 6:3] has been variously explained. It is certain that the name Jehovah was in use long before the days of Abraham, see Gen. 2:4, where the words מִיְהוָה אֱלֹהִים Jehovah Elohim occur, as they do frequently afterwards; and see Gen. 15:2, where Abraham expressly addresses him by the name Adonai Jehovah; and see Gen. 15:7, where God reveals himself to Abraham by this very name: And he said unto him, "I am Jehovah, Who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees." How then can it be said that by his name Jehovah he was not known unto them? Several answers have been given to this question:

1. The words should be read interrogatively, for the negative particle אַל *lo*, *not*, has this power in the Hebrew language. "I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by the name of God Almighty, and by my name Jehovah was I not also made known unto them?"

Webster's translation takes this approach: And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. This approach is found in the Israeli Authorized Version, the International Standard Version (and other translations) as well.

[Let me remind you that God, when first speaking to Moses, said to him, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14b; ESV; capitalized). *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* is a play on the words *I am*. In the Hebrew, *I am* is אֲנִי; *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* is הוָה. So, not only is the word *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* found throughout the book of Genesis, but what God says here seems to presuppose the familiarity of Israel (and Moses) with His Personal Name.]

2. The name Jehovah was not revealed before the time mentioned here, for though it occurs so frequently in the book of Genesis, as that book was written long after the name had come into common use, as a principal characteristic of God, Moses employs it in his history because of this circumstance; so that whenever it appears previously to this, it is by the figure called prolepsis or anticipation.

The ESV translation reads: I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.

[As an aside, I reject this interpretation, as I believe that the writers of Genesis were actually those living at the time. I believe that they passed along the book of Genesis orally; but that their fundamental text was preserved during the time of Moses.]

3. As the name הוָה Jehovah signifies [absolute] existence, it may be understood in the text in question thus: "I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by my name God Almighty, or God All-sufficient, i.e., having all power to do all good; in this character I made a covenant with them, supported by great and glorious promises; but as those promises had respect unto their posterity, they could not be fulfilled to those fathers: but now, as Jehovah, I am about to give existence to all those promises relative to your support, deliverance from bondage, and your consequent settlement in the promised

## Explanations of Exodus 6:3 (Adam Clarke)

land.”

4. The words may be considered as used comparatively: though God did appear to those patriarchs as Jehovah, and they acknowledged him by this name, yet it was but comparatively known unto them; they knew nothing of the power and goodness of God, in comparison of what the Israelites were now about to experience.

The first explanation is the simplest and it makes the most sense to me.

Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Exodus 6:3 (edited). Bracketed words and sentences came from me.

### Lesson 053: Exodus 6:1–4

### “By My Name I was not known to them.”

Previously, God was speaking to Moses, after Moses came to Him with complaints. Moses met with Pharaoh, gave him God's demands, and Pharaoh reacted with, “No way! Furthermore, there needs to be some consequences for making such a request.” So Pharaoh increased the work requirements on the people of Israel and Moses is quite upset over this.

Exodus 6:1 The Lord told Moses, “Now you will see what I'll do to Pharaoh. Indeed, he'll send them out under compulsion [Lit. *out by a strong hand*] and he'll drive them out of his land violently.” [Lit. *land by a strong hand*]

Exodus 6:2–3 Later, God told Moses, “I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, [Heb. *El Shaddai*] and did I not reveal to them my name ‘Lord’? (ISV)

Webster's translation of Exodus 6:2b–3: “I am the LORD. And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.” (I added the quotation marks)

We are enjoined to believe in Jesus Christ as they of that era were enjoined to believe in Y<sup>e</sup>howah. In the Old Testament, those who placed their faith in the Revealed God were justified (Gen. 15:6).

### The Name of God (Explaining Exodus 6:2–3)

1. Moses was the writer of the last 4 books of Pentateuch. He probably assembled the book of Genesis from memory or from existing source material, which he (possibly) edited under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The five books of Moses are originally presented as a singular narrative. The only portion that Moses did not write was the account of his death; this was likely added by Joshua. It is possible that Joshua inserted the genealogy found in this chapter of Exodus and

## The Name of God (Explaining Exodus 6:2–3)

- it is also possible that Joshua acted as Moses' secretary.
2. *To know* is not a word which means simple knowledge; it is rarely used in that way in the Old Testament. It can refer to anything between carnal knowledge to full and intimate knowledge.
  3. Jesus Christ is the only God and He was known to the Hebrews (and the saints prior to the Hebrews) in several ways.
  4. Exodus 6:3 is rhetorical. "[Was I not known to them also as Y<sup>e</sup>howah?](#)" God is telling Moses that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and He has now come to begin to fulfill His covenant to them.
  5. As El Shaddai, God was the One who provided for all of the patriarchs' needs; however, as Y<sup>e</sup>howah, there is a more personal relationship.
  6. God for the first time in Exodus 5:1 identified Himself as Y<sup>e</sup>howah, the God of Israel.
  7. *As Y<sup>e</sup>howah Elohim of Israel*, God will now begin to fulfill the promises which He made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob some 400 years previous.
  8. Another contrast between El Shaddai and Y<sup>e</sup>howah Elohim is that the Jews will now see miracles and signs unlike anything witnessed in the past 600 years. In fact, only Noah, his family, and corrupted mankind in the flood had ever seen power which was similar to the power about to be unleashed against Pharaoh of Egypt.
  9. Moses is discouraged (Exodus 5:22), the elders oppose him (5:21) and Pharaoh does not take his demand seriously (5:2-9). Therefore Moses is having second thoughts about this. God is reassuring Moses that He really is Who He claims to be.
  10. El Shaddai, which is the English transliteration of the Hebrew word for "Almighty God," was the way in which many pre-Abrahamic saints knew Jesus Christ. It occurs thirty-one times in the book of Job (which predates the law), which is as often as the name Y<sup>e</sup>howah occurs.
  11. However, Y<sup>e</sup>howah is used much more often than El Shaddai in Genesis, which appears to support the translation, "[was I not also known to them as Y<sup>e</sup>howah?](#)"
  12. This question, with the negative particle, demands the answer, *Yes, You were known to them as Y<sup>e</sup>howah.*
  13. The point here is that Jesus Christ is one and the same God and, from this point on, He will be known to them as "Y<sup>e</sup>howah, God of Israel." The first use of this is found, as previously mentioned, in Exodus 5:1.
  14. The problem with situations like this, is that liberal theologians and Biblical critics begin with a certain mindset, get an hypothesis from the barest of evidence, and then try to justify this hypothesis by any and all means possible. The mindset involved here, in one case, is that the Pentateuch was composed by four different authors, woven from tales of old, long after the death of Moses and that this is one of the authors who is unaware of the other three, who has not used Yahweh in his portion of Genesis (I think that I am getting that theory straight).
  15. There is nothing wrong with a search for the truth about the interpretation of a passage or a concept. Nor, is there anything wrong with forming hypotheses and

## The Name of God (Explaining Exodus 6:2–3)

testing them out. Every good teacher of God's Word will do this. However, when we come across an interpretation or a translation which is not mainstream, so to speak, then we had better investigate it quite thoroughly before purporting it to be truth. There are fundamental Biblical truths accepted throughout the ages; this is often referred to as orthodoxy or orthodox truth. Interpretation of Scripture must conform to orthodoxy.

16. When such a theory does not hold up, then it should be discarded.

Here, the point is that, God was known to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as both an All-Powerful God and also as a personal God—not like the personal gods of various nations, but One Who cares about them and One Who keeps His Word.

The exodus was the primary method of evangelism for the next several centuries. When people heard of it and believed in the God of the exodus, this was salvation. Salvation is by faith in the Revealed God. He revealed Himself as the Savior of Israel, Who took Israel out of Egypt. This story would be well-known throughout the world that God's power over Pharaoh was absolute. This standoff between the God of Israel and the Pharaoh of Egypt will have some symbolic references as well as literal. By this I mean that the plagues which God uses to glorify Himself all cut deeply into the false religion and corrupt culture of Egypt. All that which is held sacred by the Egyptians will face God's wrath.

Bear in mind that, at this time, Egypt was one of the most powerful nations in human history. For them to be devastated over a period of a few months by the God of their slaves is a completely unique occurrence in history. God redeems His people from a hopeless situation, bringing them out of a great and powerful nation, supposedly guarded over by a plethora of gods. Faith in this God resulted in salvation.

Exodus 6:2–3 [Later, God told Moses, “I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty, \[Heb. \*El Shaddai\*\] and did I not reveal to them my name ‘Lord’? \(ISV\)](#)

**Another approach to Exodus 6:3:** We may want to reverse engineer this problem/question. What is different between God's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and His dealings with Moses? Almost everything that God promises Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was about the future—they did not see a fulfillment of any of God's big promises, yet they believed. It is with Moses that he will be the first man to know these promises and to see them fulfilled (or begin to be fulfilled) with his own eyes. He will see nation Israel, not completely in the land, but Moses will see the sons of Jacob as a 2 million person nation—a separate and independent and powerful people—on the verge of stepping into their land, given to them by God, and taking it. I believe that this is key in understanding what God is saying to Moses.

This seems to be backed up with the passage which follows, which is all about God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Whereas, v. 3 might be difficult to understand;

the entire context seems to be the contrast between the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the beginning of the fulfillment of these promises to Moses. Exodus 6:2–8 God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered My covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'" (ESV; capitalized)

In Exodus 6:2–8, God looks both backwards and forwards. In looking forward, He will purchase His people and bring them out of Egypt and He will guide them to Canaan, the land which He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The patriarchs received these promises, but this next generation or two of Israel would see these big promises fulfilled.

The exodus was the primary method of evangelism for the next several centuries. When people heard of it and believed in that God, this was salvation. Salvation is by faith in the Revealed God (the Hebrew people knew Him as *Y<sup>e</sup>howah Elohim*). It will be well-known throughout the world that God's power over Pharaoh is absolute. This standoff between the God of Israel and the Pharaoh of Egypt will have some symbolic references as well as literal. By this I mean that the plagues which God uses to glorify Himself all cut deeply into the religion and culture of Egypt. All that which is held sacred by the Egyptians will face God's wrath.

Now, there come a time in not the too distant future (in the book of Exodus) where Israel will exit Egypt and move about in the desert. While in the desert, several nations will oppose Israel on their path into the Land of Promise. If this great thing about God taking Israel out of Egypt was known, why would any nation try to oppose them? Simple—the people of these opposition nations did not believe in their God. Therefore, opposition to Israel was the logical outcome of their negative volition.

Exodus 6:4a I have also established My covenant with them,...

God first made a covenant with Abraham, as he would be the father of the Hebrew people. God spoke to him on several occasions, giving him more and more information each time.

Even though God spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob on many occasions, giving them more and more information about His covenant with them, God views His covenant with Israel as being a singular covenant. It is revealed little by little under the principle of *progressive revelation*. We may be less appreciative of progressive revelation in our era, as we get the Bible all at once, as a finished product. However, each time that God spoke

to Abraham (then to Isaac and then to Jacob), He revealed more information regarding His promises to them. In doing so, He revealed more information about Himself as well.

God establishing His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob indicates that this is a done deal. The covenant was given and the covenant stands. That covenant involves the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the land of Canaan. Right now, the descendants of Jacob all live in Egypt, and all of them in one location (Goshen)—which location is not a part of this covenant.

Exodus 6:4a-b [I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan,...](#)

God's covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, informed each man that this land of Canaan would be given to them and to their descendants—the land that Abraham originally traveled to, and the land where both Isaac and Jacob lived (although Jacob left the land on two occasions). We have the records of God speaking to each man and making the promises to them, that God has given them specifically the land of Canaan.

Jacob confirmed this covenant by asking that his body be buried in Canaan (and it was). Joseph, his son, confirmed this covenant, by asking that his bones not be buried in Egypt but in Canaan. This will come to pass (Jacob has already been buried in Canaan; Joseph's bones are not yet buried at this point in Exodus). For about 400 years, Joseph's bones have been stored in some sort of sarcophagus with the instructions that they be carried into the land of promise and buried. Joseph's promised land was not Egypt, even though he was the prime minister of Egypt.

Exodus 6:4 [I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers.](#)

When God sent Abraham into Canaan, he was a stranger. He was not born there; he was seen as an outsider. Even Isaac and Jacob were seen as strangers to this land, as their ancestors were originally from the Assyrian region.

Now that God has sent Moses to the Hebrew people, it is time for them to renew their faith in their God and in His covenant with them.

## **Lesson 054: Exodus 6:5–6b**

## **Slave Market of Sin**

God made a covenant with His people, beginning with Abraham. He renewed this covenant with Isaac and then with Jacob. At this point, God moves from these past promises (covenants) into the present, beginning to partially fulfill these promises:

Exodus 6:5a [And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage,...](#)

The Hebrew people—the people of God, the people of promise—have been under tremendous pressure, being enslaved to the Egyptians. In the previous chapter, we find that the Pharaoh takes slavery which has been extremely harsh and he made it unbearable.

God must allow the injustice of Egyptian slavery to overpower the sensibilities of the Hebrew people, to take them to a point where, they can no longer bear to be under Egyptian rule. Every single Hebrew adult will want to leave Egypt, despite this being their home for about 400 years.

Exodus 6:5 [And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.](#)

At the end of this verse, God says, [and I have remembered My covenant](#). We have similar phrases throughout the Bible. Our God is not forgetful; but this is known as an anthropopathism, where a human characteristic is applied to God so that we have a better understanding of Him. We might even say that God is being *dumbed-down* for our benefit. For 400 years, it did not appear that God remembered His covenant to the Hebrew people. God made these promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob over a period of perhaps 200 years; and then He allowed Jacob and all of his sons and wives to move to Egypt—away from the land of promise. At some point, the sons of Jacob (Israel) became slaves in Egypt; and the land of Canaan continued to be occupied by a number of other peoples. All of this has taken place, despite the fact that God told Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that He would give to their descendants the land of Canaan forever. It is as if, for 400 years, that God had forgotten His people and His covenant.

Over the next year or two, God is going to bring the sons of Israel actually into the land of Canaan, to take it (they will not take it). In any case, it appears that He just suddenly remembered that He had been promising this to His people, and because He remembered, He then begins to fulfill the promise.

Exodus 6:6a [Therefore say to the children of Israel:...](#)

God is speaking to Moses, telling him what to say to the people.

Now, you may think, *shouldn't God simply talk directly to the people of Israel? Surely, He is able to do that!* There is no doubt that God is able to do that (and He actually will speak aloud to all His people for a short while when He gives them the Ten Commandments). However, (1) God generally does not work that way and (2) when God does speak directly to this people (and He will), they will plead with Moses to listen to God and then to tell them what God says. Hearing God's voice was just too much for them. (3) The position of mediator is common throughout the Bible. It is God's plan to use *mediators* throughout the history of Israel (someone who stands between God and man), in order to represent the true Mediator, Christ Jesus. In the future, God will use priests and prophets as His mediators.

Moses, as a mediator between God and man, represents Christ Jesus as the Mediator between God and man. When someone *represents* Jesus by his position, actions or responsibilities, he is called a *type of Christ*. He is, in many respects, a shadow image of Christ Jesus.

Exodus 6:6a-b *Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage,...*

This is an excellent verse to acquaint a person with the tense system used in Hebrew. We think of verb tenses as being past, present or future; and you notice that there are two future tenses found in this verse: *will bring* and *will rescue*. The Hebrew verb is not directly related to time, as ours are; they are either perfect or imperfect tenses.

The perfect tense in the Hebrew often refers to a past event, or an event viewed from the standpoint of its completion. The action tends to be seen as singular, even though there may be considerable time and a variety of actions summed up by the verb.

The imperfect tense in the Hebrew often indicates a present action, a continuous action, or as a series of actions. When several present tenses are held together by *wâw* consecutives, then we are often seeing a series of various and often related actions which are consecutive and/or coterminous. Very often, the perfect tense in the Hebrew is translated by an English past tense; and an imperfect tense in the Hebrew is often translated by an English present or future tense. However, this is not a generality which should be followed blindly, nor does this always convey to us an accurate understanding of the passage.

In Exodus 6:6 above, the verbs *to bring* and *to deliver (rescue)* are both in the perfect tense. They are also Hiphil verbs, which is the causal stem. When God says this to Moses, everyone is still in Egypt. God has caused no bringing or rescuing yet. So, the perfect tense here is used for two future events, but events which are viewed from the standpoint of their completeness or singularity. God is promising to do these things, therefore, we may understand them as completed events due to their certain future fulfillment. Therefore, these are certain events which will take place in the future.

Translators have to not only be cognizant of the Hebrew stems and tenses; but also of the literary context of the passage as well in order to translate the verbs into an English tense system. Ultra-literal translations will nearly always follow the rule, perfect tenses are translated as past tenses; and imperfect tenses are translated with the present or future tenses. Young translates this portion of Exodus 6:6 as follows: *and I have brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and have delivered you from their service*. Young translates the Hebrew perfect tense by the English perfect tense, which is a type of past tense. He does this for consistency, even though these are future events (Young provides one of the most consistent translations there is).

However, contextually, we recognize these as future events.

Exodus 6:6a-b Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage,...

This is what Moses is to say to the elders of Israel who are then to broadcast this information to the people.

You have heard the verse, "You will know the Truth and the Truth will set you free." The context of that verse is related to the Doctrine of Redemption (which we studied in the previous lesson) and to the Doctrine of the Slave Market of Sin. This particular doctrine was first presented in **Genesis 14** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

### The Abbreviated Illustration of the Slave Market of Sin

1. Another way of illustrating the doctrine of redemption, is to picture yourself being sold as a slave in a slave market. You are unable to purchase yourself, as you do not have the wherewithal to purchase yourself. A slave does not have the money to purchase himself (he lacks the coin of the realm, so to speak). Only someone who is not inside of this slave market (a non-slave) can purchase you, a slave. No fellow slave can look you over and say, "I'd like to purchase this one." This is because he is in the same boat that you are in. He cannot purchase himself and he certainly cannot purchase you.
  - a. This is why we cannot be redeemed by Mohammed, Moses, or Buddha. They are men; they are in the same slave market of sin that we find ourselves in.
  - b. They are unable to purchase themselves and they are unable to purchase us. A man who purchases a slave must come from outside of the slave market.
  - c. Jesus is born *outside* of this slave market. More on this later.
2. There is a natural barrier between God and us:
  - a. We are born with Adam's sin imputed to us. Therefore, one sin led to condemnation of all men (Rom. 5:18a). In Adam, all die (1Cor. 15:22a). Because of one man's sin, death reigned through that one man (Rom. 5:17a). That means, from birth, we are sinners in God's sight, before we do a single thing.
  - b. The second part of our barrier is the sin nature. We inherit Adam's sin nature. The corruption of Adam's sin is genetically ingrained in all of us. We were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Eph. 2:3b). That is, we are prone to sin against God. By the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners (Rom. 5:19a). For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin [= the sin nature] that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now

## The Abbreviated Illustration of the Slave Market of Sin

- if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who does it, but sin [= sin nature] that dwells within me (Rom. 7:14–20). Often, in the Bible, the singular noun *sin* refers to the *sin nature*, which is actually a part of our cell structure (Rom. 7:14 1John 1:8). In short, all men (by *men*, I mean *people*) are genetically predisposed to sin. As a result, all men sin.
- c. No man, with a sin nature, goes through life apart from personal sin. At some point in our lives, we move out of child-like innocence and intentionally commit sins. **All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God** (Rom. 3:23). **God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us** (Rom. 5:8). See also Rom. 5:12.
  - d. Because we are born with a sin nature, we are born physically alive, but spiritually dead. This is something which we cannot fix on our own. We cannot decide one day to be spiritually alive; we have no way of establishing fellowship with God any more than we can physically ascend into heaven to be with God. Rom. 5:12–21
  - e. These 3 strikes against us place us in the slave market of sin; and we have no way of redeeming (paying for) ourselves.
3. The illustration is this: we are born into the slave market of sin, just as many people are born into slavery. We have no ability to purchase ourselves from this slave market, just as there is no natural mechanism for a person born a slave to purchase himself. Adam's original sin imputed to us, our sin nature, and our personal sins fundamentally separate us from God.
  4. Jesus illustrates the slave market of sin in John 8:34–36. **Jesus answered them, said, "Point of doctrine; listen: everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin [committing a sin also places you into the slave market of sin]. The slave does not remain in the [master's] house forever; [however] the Son remains forever."** The slave does not have fellowship with the master; he is not a part of the family. He can be bought and sold at any time. Therefore, the slave does not necessarily remain in his master's house forever. **[Jesus continues] "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.** Jesus is able to purchase them (those hearing Him in John 8) from the slave market of sin. Jesus is the One who is able to provide them with real freedom. They are enslaved to their trespasses and sins; and Jesus is able to set them free.
  5. The purchase price for a slave in the slave market of sin is the blood of Jesus: **You were purchased [redeemed] from your empty manner of life which you inherited from your forefathers [Judaic religious traditions], not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot** (1Peter 1:18–19). Peter pulls several things together here:
    - a. First is the concept of redemption, where we are purchased with the blood of Jesus (which is His spiritual death when on the cross; that is, when He took upon Himself the penalty due us for our sins).
    - b. The empty manner of life is the religious traditions of the Jews, which were meaningless, and tried to establish their own righteousness through

## The Abbreviated Illustration of the Slave Market of Sin

- keeping the Law of Moses. Obeying the Law of Moses (which no one is actually able to do) will not redeem the slave.
- c. Peter notes the purchase price as being the blood of Christ (which is His spiritual death on the cross).
  - d. Finally, Peter relates this purchase price to the Old Testament type of the sacrificial lamb—a lamb without spot or blemish, which represents Jesus as having no sin nature and as having committed no sin. Since Jesus is without spot and without blemish—meaning that He was sinless and without a sin nature—He is qualified to purchase us—He is both able and willing to purchase us from the slave market of sin.
  - e. Peter was quite the amazing Apostle, able to fit into 2 short verses, 4 different but related fundamental doctrines of the faith.
6. Since we are in Adam—born with his imputed sin and with a sin nature—we are born slaves to sin. By birth, we are born into slavery (which was common in the ancient world). The son of a slave is also a slave.
- a. We have no means by which we can counteract this. It is our birthright by being born in Adam (if you recall an early lesson, we inherit our sin nature from Adam).
  - b. We can only be purchased by someone who is not in the slave market of sin; we can only be purchased by someone who is not in Adam. 1Cor. 15:22 **For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.** (ESV)
  - c. Furthermore, this person must have the purchase price.
7. Jesus is outside of the slave market of sin and He has the purchase price with which to purchase us from the slave market of sin. That Jesus purchases us from the slave market of sin, is the Doctrine of Redemption.
8. To sum up: from birth, we are slaves, born into the slave market of sin. We cannot purchase our own freedom and no other slave (person born with a sin nature) can purchase our freedom either. This takes someone from outside the slave market of sin—and only one person was born outside the slave market of sin: Jesus Christ. He was born without a sin nature and without Adam's imputed sin. He paid the penalty for our sins, thus redeeming us out from the slave market (that is, He pays the purchase price necessary to free us). Jesus taught this very doctrine (which is an illustration), Paul used it as a basis for what he wrote in his epistles, and Moses and the children of Israel illustrate this doctrine.

Bear in mind that God adopting us as sons and Jesus purchasing us from the slave market of sin are illustrations; they are analogous situations (parables, if you will). The Bible is filled with analogous situations. Much of the history recorded in the Bible is to teach spiritual truth via analogous situations (it is true history; but spiritually illustrative at the same time). Jesus taught using analogous situations (called parables). Therefore, do not get bogged down in the details of an illustration and do not attempt to apply these illustrations as the reality of what is occurring.

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The history of Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt is true and accurate history; but it is also illustrative.

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See also [http://www.divineviewpoint.com/slave\\_market.pdf](http://www.divineviewpoint.com/slave_market.pdf)

R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Slave Market of Sin*, and *The Barrier*, both of which can be ordered for free through R. B. Thieme, Jr. Ministries (which is [www.rbthieme.org](http://www.rbthieme.org)).

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## Lesson 055: Exodus 6:6

## Exodus, Slavery, Redemption

So far, this is what we have studied:

Exodus 6:5–6b (God is speaking to Moses:) “And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage,...’ ”

The Israelites are literal slaves and God will purchase (redeem) them. This is both an historical record and an illustration of the true redemption of Jesus Christ.

What remains of v. 6 are these words:

Exodus 6:6c ...and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

The Israelites must be continually reminded that God is there to take them out of their bondage to Egypt and take them to a land flowing with milk and honey. In this verse we have that marvelous word *redeem*: *gâ'al* (גָּאֵל) [pronounced *gaw-AHL*] and it has only been used one time before this in Gen. 48:16. Here it is used in its full and proper sense. This means to purchase something. It is unusual that this word is used here because God is not purchasing anything, per se. With force, He will remove the sons of Israel from Egypt; with a strong hand and great judgements, He will redeem His people. It is with His power that He will pay for and free the people of Israel, who are enslaved to Egypt.

The ESV; capitalized is used below:

### Exodus and the Slavery of the Hebrew People

1. The people of Israel are enslaved to Egypt.
  2. They are unable to purchase themselves from Pharaoh. Slaves cannot buy themselves and then free themselves.
  3. Slaves are born into this slavery; they do not choose it; nor can they choose at any time to leave it.
  4. They must be redeemed from this slavery and the Redeemer must come from outside of the slave market.
  5. Moses will first propose that the sons of Israel be allowed to go worship their God. They would have remained in slavery; but they would have taken a week or so
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## Exodus and the Slavery of the Hebrew People

- off, go into the desert-wilderness, and worship their God. This is unacceptable to the palace of Egypt. Pharaoh will not agree to this.
6. God will eventually have to completely remove His people from Egypt. He removes them from slavery and they cannot be returned to slavery. There is no other acceptable approach to the problem of their slavery.
  7. God will say through Moses: “I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, Who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.” (Exodus 6:6a–7; emphasis mine). Micah 6:4a For I [God] brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery. Also see Exodus 15:13 Psalm 74:2.
  8. The first plague against the Egyptian people will be blood; and the final plague will be the death of their firstborn.
  9. God will require that the firstborn be redeemed by the blood of a young goat or lamb.
  10. The blood of these animals—which cannot in itself remove sin, which cannot actually redeem a person—is illustrative. The blood of Christ—His spiritual death on the cross—is the true redemption price for our sins.
    - 1) The blood of animals is illustrative, not real. Heb. 10:4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
    - 2) Only the blood of Jesus Christ can actually redeem us from our sins. Heb. 10:5–6 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, “Sacrifices and offerings You [God] have not desired, but a body have You prepared for Me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings You have taken no pleasure. (Psalm 40:6)
    - 3) Jesus will pay for our sins with His own body on the cross. 1Peter 2:24a He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree.
  11. The narrative of Exodus—a true historical event—is typical (that is, it illustrates divine truth). This historical events recorded in the book of Exodus tells us that God redeems His people from slavery with blood. Future from this, Jesus will redeem His people from the slave market of sin with His blood.

We understand all of this in retrospect; the Hebrew people primarily understood their actions as obedience to their God. The Hebrew people did not realize that God bringing them out of Egypt was illustrative of a greater truth. I don’t believe that Moses, the author of Exodus, understood this either.

Exodus 6:6 Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

What God is promising in this verse parallels the first advent of our Lord when He paid for our sins. We are sinners in the slave market of sin. There is no way that we can buy ourselves from our master and no way that we can purchase anyone else. We are slaves—slaves to our desires, slaves to our sin nature, and in slavery due to the imputed sin from Adam. A slave cannot purchase himself from the slave market. He must be purchased by someone outside the slave market of sin. Here, God tells the slaves Israel that he will pay for them to take them out of Egypt. At salvation, God pays for our redemption; He is the only Person outside the slave market of sin. He is the only one qualified to pay for our sins. Buddha, Krishna, Mohammed, Paul, Joseph Smith—none of them could pay for our sins; all of these men were slaves, all of them being in the same slave market as we. It requires someone outside the slave market to make this purchase. This verbiage is used because this book is authored by God the Holy Spirit and He desires that everything points toward the future coming of the Lord Jesus Christ so that there would be no mistaking His message or His death on the cross.

Although this doctrine was found in Genesis, it is a good one to repeat. The doctrine here has been abbreviated.

### The Abbreviated Doctrine of Redemption

1. The verb *to redeem* means *to purchase, to buy*.
2. *Redemption* in the New Testament refers to Jesus dying for our sins and purchasing our souls with His blood (i.e., His spiritual death on the cross). When He took upon Himself our sins and *paid the penalty* for our sins, that is what *redemption* is. It is the payment given by Jesus for us. *For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life which you inherited from the fathers [= Jewish religious traditions], not with perishable things, like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish (1Peter 1:18–19). He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed (1Peter 2:24). In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7). See also Col. 1:14 Gal. 3:13*
3. Jesus Christ paid for us; therefore, we belong to Him. *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, Whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body (1Cor. 6:19–20). See also 1Cor. 7:23*
4. Jesus Christ is qualified to purchase us.
  - 1) Jesus Christ is born without a sin nature. This is based upon the virgin birth, something which was telegraphed to us as far back as Gen. 3. A man born without a human father has no sin nature (as it is the father who passes down the sin nature genetically). Isa. 7:14 Matt. 1:23 1Tim. 3:16 Heb. 1:3
  - 2) Jesus Christ did not commit any personal sin during His life. Isa. 53:9 John 8:46 19:4 2Cor. 5:21 Heb. 4:15 7:26–28
  - 3) Although Adam's sin was not imputed to Jesus, our sins were imputed to

## The Abbreviated Doctrine of Redemption

- Jesus on the cross.
- 4) Since Jesus is born without imputed sin, without a sin nature and since He lived without personal sin in His life, He is qualified to redeem us.
  5. Because Jesus died for our sins, paying the full redemption price, all men are potentially in the Book of Life. Because Jesus has paid the price for us, our names are written in the Book of Life, unless we die without having believed in Jesus Christ. It is like a city registry. There is a registry of all citizens of a city until they die; and then their names are removed. When a person dies an unbeliever, his name is blotted out of the Book of Life. This understanding, by the way, indicates that Jesus provided unlimited atonement (He died for the sins of all mankind; not just for the sins of the elect). Philip. 4:3 Rev. 3:5
  6. God the Holy Spirit, as the divine Author of the Old Testament, portrays this act of redemption in the Old Testament as a shadow of what was to come.
    - 1) The high priest offering up animal sacrifices was a portrait of Jesus offering Himself on the cross for our redemption. **Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then...He entered once for all into the holy places** [into the Presence of God the Father after the crucifixion], **not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His Own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption** (Heb. 9:11a, 12).
    - 2) The blood of the animal sacrifices represents the actual coin of the realm; the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Gen. 22:8 Exodus 12:21 Job 19:25–16 John 1:25 Heb. 9:22 1Peter 1:19
    - 3) In the Law of Moses, there is a provision for the purchase of a relative who has fallen into slavery. One who is related to him may purchase him out of slavery. Although this is a real law which was actually used from time to time, its purpose was to look forward in time when we would be purchased from slavery to sin by our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, our Relative after the flesh (He is our relative as He is born a man), Who can purchase us out of slavery. Like many things in the Old Testament, this is a real thing (in this case, a law); and yet, it is also representative of God's plan. Lev. 25:48–49
    - 4) The thrust of the Book of Ruth is the purchase of Ruth by a Kinsman-Redeemer, one who loves her and wants to take care of her, despite the fact that she has been married (this would be equivalent to being sullied by the sin nature and being purchased by God, Who loves us). Ruth 3:9–13 4:1–13 John 3:16
    - 5) Job, in all of his suffering, when his friends comfort him little, finally gives his plaintive cry, **"I know my Redeemer lives!"** (Job 19:25). The God of Job has purchased him and he knew this.
    - 6) God's redemption is related to the blotting out of our sins in Isa. 44:22, which reads: **"I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you."**
    - 7) Jehovah Elohim is called the *Redeemer* or the *Redeemer of Israel* throughout the Old Testament. Psalm 19:14 78:35 Isa. 43:14 44:6.

## The Abbreviated Doctrine of Redemption

7. Redemption yields the following results:
  - 1) Redemption purchases the forgiveness of our sins. Isa. 44:22 Eph. 1:7 Col. 1:14 Heb. 9:15
  - 2) Because we have been redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God also **justifies** us. Rom. 3:24 5:9
  - 3) Since we have been redeemed by the blood of our Lord, we are therefore sanctified. Heb. 10:10, 14, 29 13:12
    - (1) There are 3 stages of sanctification. We are sanctified in Him through faith in Him and His death on the cross. This is positional sanctification. Acts 20:32 26:18 1Cor. 1:2 Heb. 10:10
    - (2) We grow spiritually in time, by means of grace and the knowledge of God's Word. That is temporal sanctification. John 17:17 1Thess. 4:3-7
    - (3) We received ultimate sanctification when we are raised with Him in a resurrection body. Eph. 1:14 5:26-27 1Thess. 5:23
    - (4) All 3 stages of sanctification find their basis in redemption.
  - 4) Because we have been redeemed, we will receive an eternal inheritance. Heb. 9:15 1Peter 1:2-4
  - 5) The purchase of us by Jesus' death on the cross (redemption) is the basis for the strategical victory of Jesus Christ in the Angelic Conflict. Acts 2:32-35 Col. 2:13-15 Heb. 2:14-15 1Peter 3:18, 22
8. Paul, in Colossians, speaks of God cancelling out the debt that we owe: **And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross** (Col. 2:13-14). Although the word *redeem* is not found here, the concept is summed up quite well in these verses: we are dead in our trespasses and sins, having a considerable debt to God. Jesus Christ, takes this debt and nails it to the cross, so that it has been paid off on our behalf.

Like many of the most fundamental doctrines in the Word of God, we find their origin in Genesis. **Gen 14:19 And he [Melchizedek] blessed him [Abram] and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the Possessor [or, Redeemer, Purchaser] of heaven and earth;...** 4000 years ago, Abram recorded those words, and today, we fully understand what they mean.

Some points on the Kinsman-Redeemer were taken from the following website:  
<http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/topics/redemption.html>

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Additional places to study this doctrine:

<http://www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/redemption.html>

<http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0181.htm>

There are 2 booklets at [rbthieme.org](http://rbthieme.org): *The Barrier* and *The Slave Market of Sin* (these books are free; there is no cost to order them; in *The Slave Market of Sin*, there is *the Doctrine of Redemption* in the appendix)

Scofield: <http://www.biblestudymanuals.net/redemption.htm>

11 pages on reconciliation: <http://pvccia.org/downloads/written/prep/basic/redemp.pdf>

## **Lesson 056: Exodus 6:1–9**

## **God Speaks to the Elders of Israel through Moses**

This is what we have studied so far:

Exodus 6:1 Then the LORD said unto Moses, "Now shall you see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land."

This first verse tells us what God's overall strategy is with Pharaoh.

Exodus 6:2–6 And God spoke unto Moses and said unto him, "I am the LORD. And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them. And I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered My covenant." (Niobi Study Bible)

God's mention of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob indicates that Moses knew who these men were. These were not simply names that God appeared to draw out of a hat, but Moses understood the history of these men.

God established a covenant with these men, and that covenant still stands. The terms of the covenant are that God will give to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the land of Canaan. Obviously, they are living in the wrong country to take this covenant.

God has heard His people groaning under their unjust slavery, and when He heard their groans, He remembered His covenant.

Exodus 6:6a Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD;...

First, Moses is going to go to the sons of Israel and tell them what God intends to do. Moses is to speak to the elders (the leaders) of the people of Israel, and to assure them that he has spoken directly with their God, and that He would deliver the people.

There are some missing words here; that is, this sentence is elliptical. **Therefore, say to the children of Israel** [that these are the words of God, which He spoke and asked me to convey to you]: **'I am the LORD;...'**

Obviously, Moses is not saying to the people, "I am the LORD;" he is telling them that God is speaking to them, through him.

Exodus 6:6b **...I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians,...**

The burden placed upon the people by the Egyptians is slavery. More specifically, it is the day-to-day work which the Egyptians require from the Hebrew people.

Exodus 6:6c **...I will rescue you from their bondage,...**

God Himself would rescue the people from slavery.

Exodus 6:6d **...and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.**

Redemption, as we have studied, means *to purchase*. God's outstretched arm refers to His power and willingness to engage with the Egyptians on behalf of Israel.

Because of the way that Egypt has treated the Hebrew people, God will place great judgments upon Egypt.

Exodus 6:6 **Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.'**

Just as God made many promises to Abraham; so He makes a set of promises to the people of Israel. Let's expand these words of God, and fill in some blanks: "I am Y<sup>e</sup>howah; [you are burdened by slavery and] **I will bring you out of that slavery; I will rescue you from their bondage. I will purchase you with My great power and with the great judgments** [that I will bring upon Pharaoh and the people of Egypt]."

Exodus 6:7a **I will take you as My people, and I will be your God.**

Most translations render this verse as: **And I will take you to myself for a people and I will become your God...** The words *take* and *become* are both in the Qal perfect, 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, meaning that God views them as completed actions. However, these actions would be future from the time that He speaks these words.

God chose the Jews and took them as His people in eternity past; we observed it in time when He came to Abraham and presented the Abrahamic covenant to him. At this point in history, God will begin to fulfill some of those promises which He made to Abraham.

Exodus 6:7b Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God Who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

*Know* is in the Qal perfect, 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural. Moses is to say this to the elders of Israel. This is future from this time, which is why the other verbs are translated in the future by most translators. The Hebrew does not have a past present or future tense as we know it; time must be inferred from the passage. As far as God is concerned, He took the Jews as His people from eternity past and this is a completed action. The Jews know that there was a God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (previous generations have grown and prospered under slavery, meaning they had both doctrine and their right woman). By this generation, that God seems remote and distant—it will appear to them as though God has returned to them and *will* take them to Himself as His people. This is a language where the past, present and the future tense can both be expressed by the same verb morphology and in this situation, depending upon whether you see this verse from the God-ward side or the man-ward side, can mean either.

Under the patriarchs, God gave them some guidance and comfort; but for this generation, God is going to clearly act on their behalf. The sons of Judah were clearly aware of and influenced by their God; but in the 4 generations that we studied in Genesis, there was no involvement by God in their affairs as will occur in the Exodus generation. The Exodus generation will see a new level of Divine engagement.

Exodus 6:7 I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

God tells the people what He is going to do, and He says, “This is *how* you will know that I am Y<sup>e</sup>howah your Elohim—I will rescue you from Egyptian bondage.”

Sometimes, it takes a believer a significant amount of time to recognize what God has done in his life—and particularly in the Church Age, where, in the post-canon period, we do not typically see signs or miracles. Furthermore, people often lack self-awareness, even in a society which appears to encourage *self-fulfillment* and *self-exploration*.

Prior to Jesus Christ, I know what the arc of my life was, and I was not going in a good direction. After Jesus Christ, even though I certainly noticed some big changes and a much better life, it was not until 20–25 years after I had been saved, when I looked around and realized just how much God had blessed me. It is as if at salvation, Jesus Christ had told me, “This is how you know I am the God of Israel: I will change your life and if you pursue Me, then I will fill your cup to overflowing with blessings.” God had done exactly what He had promised; and the process to get to that point has been a wonderful life.

In reviewing the arcs of my life, first as an unbeliever and later as a believer, I can see a great difference, despite having a sin nature all of that time; and despite making some bad decisions on both sides of salvation.

Exodus 6:8a *And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;...*”

God, through Moses, is promising the elders that He will bring them into the land which He gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, if most or all of the elders knew nothing of the book of Genesis, this would make little sense to them. *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Who are they? The land I swore to give to them? Where pray tell is that?*

It is reasonable to suppose that these elders knew the Word of God; that they knew the promises which God had made to their ancestors. Otherwise, when Moses conveys this information to them, the elders do not look at him quizzically, wondering, “What are you talking about?”

Exodus 6:8b *...and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the LORD.*”

*Heritage* in the Hebrew is *môwrâshâh* (מִוְרָשָׁה) [pronounced *mo-raw-SHAW*], which means, *a possession, an heritage, inheritance* (used for land and people). Strong's #4181 BDB #440. This is the first time this word is found in Scripture. This is a fascinating word, found only twice in the Pentateuch (here and in Deut. 33:4); and then 7 times in the book of Ezekiel.

Exodus 6:9a *So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel;...*

In the book of Exodus, there will be many times where we do not have a repetition of speech. That is, God speaks to Moses and tells him what to say in vv. 2–8. In v. 9, we do not have Moses repeating these words in the text; we simply know that *he spoke thus to the sons of Israel*. In this way, the Mosaic narrative does not get bogged down.

Exodus 6:9a-b *So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses,...*

Moses tried to relay the words of God to his people, but they did not listen to him. They were worn out and beaten down. Egypt had crushed their spirit with their cruel form of slavery.

The word translated *heed* is the very common Hebrew word *shâma'* (שָׁמַע) [pronounced *shaw-MAHÇ*], which means *to listen, listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and act upon, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, listen and take heed to, listen and take note of, listen and be cognizant of*. Strong's #8085 BDB #1033. They heard Moses' words, but these words did not pierce their souls. Many people reading this believed in Jesus Christ at some point during their teens or adult life; but there was a period of your life when you heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it did not reach you. You heard the words, but you did not recognize their importance. You were not moved to act on those words. I have no doubt that I heard the gospel in my life, prior to salvation, but it never really sunk in; I was not ready to *heed* it.

Exodus 6:9 **So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.**

Slavery can be practiced in a variety of ways. If you recall the slavery of Joseph in Egypt, his first assignment in the house of Potiphar was quite good and he rose to a very high position because of his intelligence and ability to adapt to Egyptian culture. The only problem that Joseph had when he was first enslaved is, Potiphar's wife chased after him.

Many years later, Joseph himself had his own house steward who was also likely a slave, and that man had great freedom and great responsibility. My point being, there are forms of slavery which can be good; and there are forms of slavery as we find here where it is so cruel that it crushed the spirit of the people. The children of Israel were crushed to the point of seemingly having no hope. Moses and Aaron coming to them, saying, "God has spoken to us and He will deliver you, His people." But, they were not ready to hear these words.

So, even though what Moses said made sense to them (God promising them the land which He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob); they were so beaten down in their lives with slavery that they simply did not believe him. Recall that when Moses first spoke to Pharaoh, Pharaoh then set out to crush this spirit in the people of Israel, placing a massive amount of additional work on them. Pharaoh knew how to crush their souls.

Ideally speaking, the elders of Israel were to hear these words of God, spoken to them by Moses, and compare them to the words of Genesis, which they knew and repeated; and the agreement of these promises would reinforce one another—but their faith in God had been beaten down.

This explains why the first 3 plagues involved the land of Goshen, where the Israelites lived. They needed to see these plagues firsthand, up close, so that they believed that their God was Y<sup>e</sup>howah; that He is God over all.

Beginning with plague #4, God would not subject Israel to the same plagues as He did the Egyptians (Exodus 8:22–23), as the people had believed or begun to believe at that point.

Exodus 6:9 **So Moses spoke thus to the children of Israel; but they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.**

We face the same things in our lives; even though we believe in Jesus Christ and grow in His grace and in His Word, this does not mean that all of life will be easy. There will be difficult times and it will not always appear to us as though things are falling right into line as they should. Moses is finding this out. God has a plan for his life and Moses is to follow this plan. God gives him simple, step-by-step directions and Moses needs to merely follow those directions.

Our own lives are not much more difficult when it comes to divine guidance. If we spend one or more hours in the Word each and every day, rebound regularly, divine guidance will

be automatic rather than esoteric. When it is time for Bible class, we know that we will be in God's geographical will if we are in Bible class. While we are there, we know that we are in His directive will as long as we are in fellowship. Throughout the day, if we avoid sins, and rebound when we do sin; and plan our schedule around Bible class, divine guidance will be a cakewalk. Life, on the other hand, is not always as easy as determining God's will.

Moses certainly went to the elders of Israel and what he said seemed to unreal to them. *Shortness (anguish) of spirit* means *discouragement, despondency and/or disheartenment*. They had been exhausted and beaten down by years of slavery; slavery which had become totally unreasonable and completely tyrannical (not all slavery has to be that way<sup>51</sup>).

## Lesson 057: Exodus 6:10–13

## Exodus 6 without the Genealogy

God spoke to Moses, telling him what to say to the elders of Israel:

Exodus 6:2–8 God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name the LORD I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered My covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'" (ESV; capitalized)

These words, Moses and Aaron spoke to the elders. But, they were quite discouraged. Pharaoh placed additional burdens on them, and beat some of them as a result.

Exodus 6:9 Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery. (ESV)

Recall that, after Moses and Aaron first spoke to Pharaoh, Pharaoh made the work requirements for his Hebrew slaves impossible to fulfill, and then he had some of the Hebrews beaten because they could not complete his work requirements.

After Moses has spoken to the people; then it is time for him to speak to Pharaoh.

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<sup>51</sup> Because of the dishonest education system in the United States, we have come to believe that there is only one kind of slavery, and that slavery is always evil. Slavery is not always evil; and it is clear that the Mosaic Law did not seek to eliminate it, but to regulate it.

Exodus 6:10–11 [And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the children of Israel go out of his land.”](#)

Moses is not given time to stop and fret over the response of the people of Israel—they will need to be convinced by the signs that God will give them all. Both Egypt and Israel will view these signs.

God tells Moses, “We are going to step 2 now, where you go to Pharaoh and tell him to let the children of Israel go out of his land. This time, there will be consequences for disobedience.”

At this point in time, Donald Trump is president (I write this in 2019). Let’s say I wanted to tell the president something very important—how difficult do you think that would be? Pretty close to impossible. Gaining access to the President of the United States is quite difficult if not impossible.

Nevertheless, God tells Moses that he is going to speak to Pharaoh.

Exodus 6:12 [And Moses spoke before the Lord, saying, “The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?”](#)

Moses protests, making the obvious observation: *if the sons of Israel did not listen to me, why should Pharaoh?* Then Moses complains that he has uncircumcised lips. He is saying, “And you know I am no good at talking. No one is going to listen to me; no one is going to take me seriously.”

Here, Moses does have a logical point. If the sons of Israel will not listen to him, how can he expect Pharaoh to listen to him? The word *heed* (*hearken* in the KJV) means *to listen and believe*. Many translate this word as, *listen* in order to move away from the King James English. But this is more than to simply listen.

Then Moses makes a remark about having *uncircumcised lips*. We are all thinking “well, I should hope so.” The NASB gives the idiomatic translation to this: [“How then will Pharaoh listen to me, seeing that I am unskilled in speech?”](#) The New English Bible reads: [“...how will Pharaoh listen to such a halting speaker as I am?”](#) The Amplified Bible says that Moses has [“...deficient and impeded speech.”](#)

That is certainly the problem when translating an idiom: do you translate what it actually says and depend upon someone to dig through the similar uses in this and other literature to arrive at what it means, or do you translate it idiomatically? We are blessed to live in an age where we can find an abundance of both kinds of translations. So you see the literal translation above and the meaning(s) below that.

In terms of logic, this is a marvelous passage. Moses makes the eloquent argument to God that, *if his brothers, the Jews, will not listen to him, then how can he expect Pharaoh to pay any attention to him? Besides, he admits, “I am not a very good speaker.”* Now,

when viewing what Moses says narrowly, from Moses' point of view, one might think, "He's right. His argument does make sense; it is valid." However, this is how it is illogical: Moses is presenting a good argument to God right off the top of his head as to why he should not be the person to speak to Pharaoh (in fact, he is arguing to God that he really ought not confront Pharaoh at all). The irony of all this is this: Moses is making a logical argument before God, Who is much more powerful and consequential than Pharaoh. Pharaoh, by comparison, is a mere gnat. So, if Moses is able to think on his feet and present a cogent argument to God; then it stands to reason, he could do the same to Pharaoh.

Exodus 6:13 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them a command for the children of Israel and for Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

No matter what misgivings Moses has, God proceeds. No matter what we think or how we feel, God has a plan and that plan moves forward. It appears that God has simply ignored Moses' argument.

There is a commandment—an order, a mandate—for the sons of Israel and for Pharaoh: to bring the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

At this point—and I do not have a good explanation why—we stop and look at the sons of Reuben, Simeon and Levi. This will give us the genealogy of Moses (although first, we have the sons of the Reuben and Simeon, who are Levi's older brothers).

We have been studying narrative, which is what most of the book of Exodus is. However, for 12 verses, we will suddenly study some genealogies. Let's see how this passage looks without the genealogies included:

**Exodus 6 without the Genealogy:** The genealogy here is sort of an odd insertion placed in an odd place. Notice the progression of the text without this section (the ESV; capitalized is used below):

Exodus 6:10–11 So the LORD said to Moses, "Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land."

It appears that Moses and Aaron went and spoke to the sons of Israel just recently, and probably for the second time. It appears that the sons of Israel lost their enthusiasm for moving forward with God's plan.

Exodus 6:12 But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?"

Moses apparently could not convince his own people of what needed to be done, and he doubles down here saying, "I should not be Your spokesman, God. I am no good at it."

It is possible that vv. 13 and 26–27 were meant to bookend the genealogy, essentially making it a footnote or a parenthetical passage.

Exodus 6:13 **But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.**

Insert the genealogies here of Reuben, Simeon and Levi. V. 26 refers directly back to the genealogies, which suggests that someone did not simply throw the genealogies right into the midst of everything.

Exodus 6:26–27 **These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said: "Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts." It was they who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, this Moses and this Aaron.**

This refers back to the genealogy in vv. 14–25. It might be reasonable to include these two verses with the genealogy and to pick up the narrative with v. 28.

Vv. 28–30 repeat information which were already found earlier in Exodus 6.

Exodus 6:28–29 **On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, the LORD said to Moses, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you."**

We do not know what meeting this was between Moses and God. Given what follows, I believe that this is the first time that God spoke to Moses in Egypt. That is, from the genealogies forward, we are going into replay mode.

Exodus 6:30 **But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?"**

We have a repeat of Exodus 6:12. Also, in Exodus 4:10, Moses said roughly the same thing. Therefore, I would assume that this is the same situation/meeting.

Is this genealogy an insertion or a footnote? Or is this genealogy a way of starting over, as it goes back to Reuben, Simeon and Levi, Jacob's first 3 sons? That is very likely, given the repeat of v. 12 in v. 30. In the ancient world, there was no way to have a simple insertion or a footnote; they just did not format their text in that way.

My reading of this is, beginning with the genealogies, this is all a reboot.

At this point, we have the genealogical lines of Jacob's first 3 sons inserted. Recall that the hypothesis that we left with is, the narrative that follows these genealogies is a reboot of what we have already studied. However, whereas the previous meeting with Pharaoh was seen from human viewpoint; this time, we will see these meetings from God's viewpoint.

## **The Family of Moses and Aaron**

The sons of Israel (Jacob) were listed back in Exodus 1:1–4. At this point, their sons and grandsons will be named, who reasonably make up the various clans of Israel. So, Levi (Jacob's son) would be a tribe of Israel; and Kohath (Levi's son) would form a clan or a family of Levi. There are 12 sons of Jacob, but 13 tribes, as Joseph receives the double-portion (so his two sons will make up two tribes); and a great many families or clans.

In our study of Genesis, we came to the realization that Joseph would receive the double-portion and that Judah would be the tribe of blessing and the ruling tribe (things which were generally reserved for the firstborn). Reuben, the firstborn, was set aside in favor of these other two tribes.

Now, interestingly enough, even though there is enough information in the final few chapters of Genesis to substantiate this, the tribe of Reuben is still given preeminence and listed first (along with the second oldest son, Simeon).

Also, interesting enough, we are not going to go through all of the brothers and their children; only Reuben, Simeon and Levi, the 3 eldest, will be listed. The line of Levi will take us to the specific line of Moses.

Despite the fact that Judah will become the preeminent tribe of Israel (Judah is the 4<sup>th</sup>-born), there was no great pronouncement in the book of Genesis by God. Now, if you recall my analysis of the final chapters of Genesis, Judah clearly took on a leadership role within his family; and, at some point in the future, he will become the preeminent tribe. Furthermore, Jacob's final words about his sons clearly placed Judah above the other tribes: "Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." (Gen 49:9–10; ESV)

However, at this point in time in the Pentateuch, we continue to view the sons of Israel (Jacob) in their birth order, where Reuben was firstborn, Simeon second and Levi third. I believe that the Hebrew people had the recitation of Genesis at this time, but that they did not fully apprehend it yet.

Interestingly enough, we have in vv. 14–16 a repeat of Gen. 46:9–11 ...and the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman. The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. (ESV)

Exodus 6:14a [These are the heads of their fathers' houses:...](#)

In order for Moses to be a deliverer for the house of Israel, he must be from the house of Israel. Recall that Moses was raised up to become an Egyptian Pharaoh—so much of the early part of Exodus verifies that Moses is a son of Jacob. Here, Moses demonstrates his birthright as a true Jew. He lists the firstborn of Jacob (Reuben and Simeon) so that we know that this is the same family line; then he lists his own personal lineage.

The Jews, for centuries, were very careful about their genealogies. There are people who study their own genealogies today, but this was a national pastime for the Jews. Their race was separated from all of mankind. They are the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Each one of them should be able to trace their line back to one of the twelve tribes (or twelve sons) of Jacob (Israel).

In the New Testament, Jesus' genealogy will be carefully laid out, going back in one case to Abraham; in the other, to Adam (and then to God). In order to fulfill the Davidic Covenant, Jesus must be in the line of Judah. This will be verified by both Matthew and Luke.

Why is this in the Bible? God also remembers these whose names are recorded in His Word forever. There are great kings from ancient eras whose names we do not know; reigns concerning which we know practically nothing. They had their day in the sun. But the people named in the Bible will be honored forever, as the Word of God is forever. God allows their names to be prominent in the Word of God because they have believed in Him.

Exodus 6:14b [...The sons of Reuben,...](#)

Reuben is Jacob's firstborn son and he brought 4 sons with him from Canaan into Egypt. These 4 sons would have established clans or families; these would be clans or subgroups of the tribe of Reuben.

Generally speaking, Reuben would have been the leading tribe, the tribe which received the double portion, the tribe which would have continued the line of promise. However, because Reuben was [as unstable as water](#), this was not the case. He is listed first here (as we would expect); but when the tribes are listed again, many centuries later, Reuben will not be named first. By that time, it will become clear to all that Reuben is not the preeminent tribe. At this point in Israel's history, that is not quite as clear, the words of Jacob in Genesis notwithstanding.

Exodus 6:14 [These are the heads of their fathers' houses: The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, were Hanoah, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. These are the families of Reuben.](#)

These sons of Reuben were born to him either in Canaan and they became the clans or families of Reuben. For the 3 sons of Israel, they may have had other sons who died; they may have had other sons who came to nothing—we do not know—but Exodus 6:14–16 is

almost word-for-word from Gen. 46. The same 4 sons are named in 1Chron. 5:3 (1Chron. 5:1–10 lists the descendants of Reuben).

Not found in Gen. 46 are the words *these are the families [clans] of...* In Genesis, these men were sons of their father; by this point in Exodus, they have become the chief families or clans of the sons of Israel.

Exodus 6:15a [And the sons of Simeon...](#)

Simeon was the second-born son of Jacob (Leah was his mother).

Simeon was a very cruel man who helped Levi destroy a family, because one of them raped their sister. We might even think of them as somewhat cowardly because, we really do not know how the family of the rapist would have responded to the crime of the rapist. Had they turned the man over, that would have been the end of the problem. However, Simeon and Levi destroyed all of the males in that family without first making an issue of the rape.

Simeon's line is mentioned in basically the same passages as Reuben's. There seem to be the most variations in the names of Simeon's six sons. Most of the variations can be attributed to vowel points (recall that the original Hebrew had consonants only without any vowels). Simeon's last son, Shaul, is followed more carefully than the rest. Simeon obviously had a wife and a mistress (or a second wife) at least. Simeon's last son, Shaul, was born of a woman who was a Canaanite.

The number of males in Simeon's line in the desert was only 22,200, half that of Reuben's family.

Exodus 6:15a-b [And the sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman.](#)

Shaul is named, and set apart from the others, as his sonship was the result of the union between Simeon and a Canaanite woman (I don't believe that we know anything about Simeon's other wife or wives).

The Canaanites were descended, of course, from Canaan, who was one of the sons of Ham (one of Noah's three sons). The Canaanites probably ventured the furthest from Noah (Gen. 10:18). They were a degenerate group which God would drive out of the land (Exodus 23:28). Simeon took a Canaanite woman as a wife or a mistress and she bore him Shaul. We follow Shaul's line in 1Chron. 4:24-27. Six generations of Shaul are mentioned in this passage until we come to his descendent Shimei, who is mentioned probably because he is one of the most notable of this tribe who found and married his right woman and, unlike most of those in Simeon's line, had a lot of children. He had sixteen sons and six daughters. His unnamed brothers did not have any sons listed. This is an illustration of grace, that a woman from the cursed race could become a Jew and end up being the mother of one of the more significant lines of the Simeon tribe.

Exodus 6:15 [And the sons of Simeon were Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman. These are the families of Simeon.](#)

Simeon is the 2<sup>nd</sup>-born son of Israel. These sons are exactly the same as those found in Gen. 46; however, there are problems with their names in 1Chron. 4:24 (Simeon's line is found in 1Chron. 4:23–43).

This table was originally placed in **1Chron. 4** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) (which table also included the Greek names).

| <b>Differences in the Names of the Sons of Simeon</b>   |                      |                     |
|---|----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Gen. 46:10/Exodus 6:15</b>   | <b>Num. 26:12–13</b> | <b>1Chron. 4:24</b> |
| Jemuel*   | Nemuel               | Nemuel              |
| Jamin   | Jamin                | Jamin               |
| Ohad*   |                      |                     |
| Jachin  | Jachin               | Jarib*              |
| Zohar*  | Zerah                | Zerah               |
| Shaul   | Shaul                | Shaul               |
| As you can see, the differences are not staggering and most can be accounted for by either textual errors or a change of spelling.  |                      |                     |
| Bear in mind that we are dealing with the portion of Scripture that most people find to be by far the least interesting; and, for a variety of reasons, should contain the most errors. The fact that ancient manuscripts on such incredibly perishable material produced a thousand years apart, possibly from different sources, <sup>52</sup> could agree so closely, is unparalleled in ancient world literature (in fact, insofar as ancient and modern literature goes, the Bible is unparalleled in a dozens of ways). <sup>53</sup> |                      |                     |
| The asterisks (*) indicate minor discrepancies.   |                      |                     |

Exodus 6:16a [These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations:...](#)

In this passage, more time is given over to the line of Levi. Unlike the other lines, there will be descendants named in Levi's line who were not all found back in Gen. 46.

<sup>52</sup> I.e., there is no reason to assume that there was an unbroken, linear line of copying between the manuscripts used to translate the Septuagint to those that we call the Massorah (those are the ones which we base our English text upon).

<sup>53</sup> I highly recommend any of the *evidence* books (e.g., *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*) by Josh McDowell (however, I don't recommend volume 2 for a new believer).

When Moses adds the words *by their generations*, we know that this line will be followed in greater detail than the previous two lines. The Levites were the priestly tribe and the tribe from which Aaron and Moses came. This line is followed in more detail in Scripture. Whereas we followed Reuben and Simeon's line for but one generation in this passage (and followed only through a few generations in other passages), the Levites are more carefully followed. They are the priestly tribe; those who represent man to God. If one is to function as a priest, he must show his ancestors to be Levites.

"By their generations" indicates that there will be more detail forthcoming about this particular tribe. Why mention Reuben and Simeon in the first place? It is proper protocol. Moses is showing respect toward them in writing this. Furthermore, it identifies him as a true Jew; he traces his heritage back to *the* Levi of Israel.

## Lesson 059: Exodus 6

## Canonicity

When studying a genealogy, some people no doubt quietly wonder, *are these really words from God?*

The canon of Scripture refers to the books which have been accepted for centuries as authoritative and inspired. Each book in the Bible is considered to have the virtual stamp of God's authority.

The word canon is transliterated from a classical Greek word that means *a straight rod, a rule, a ruler*. This word has come to mean—when related to the Scriptures—as the books with God's authority; as the books which are inspired by God. The idea is, these books must measure up to a standard or to a rule.

The first use of this word in this way (insofar as we know) is by Amphilochius (circa 380 A.D.) *where the word indicates the rule by which the contents of the Bible must be determined, and thus secondarily an index of the constituent books.*<sup>54</sup> Saint Jerome spoke of these books as being *the holy library*.

As I have discussed elsewhere, we know by the collection of the canon of the New Testament, that canonization is a very normal, organic process. Apart from Moses recording the exact words of God in the book of Exodus and elsewhere, the assertions of divinity for the books subsequent to the Pentateuch are more subtle than those in the New Testament; and these books were not recognized immediately as a part of the Hebrew canon. Did it take 10 years? 50? 100? Quite frankly, we don't know. But the canon of the New Testament was written before the end of the first century; but assembled and recognized over a period of about 350 years. That process we do know (not perfectly, but with more detail than you might suspect).

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<sup>54</sup> From the Quick Reference Dictionary, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/canon-of-scripture-the/> accessed May 1, 2019.

For over a millennium, Israel was a sovereign nation with its own kings and its own language. However, Israel fell under national discipline on many occasions until finally, it was ruled over by the Persians and then by the Greeks. There came a point at which many Hebrew people began to adopt Greek as their language of business and social interaction; and this necessitated taking their Scriptures and translating them into Greek. When they decided that it was time to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek—by that point in time (roughly 200 B.C.) they needed to know, *which writings should be translated?* They understood, to some degree, that they had the Scriptures; but there was, no doubt, many writings by many Jewish men (including scholars and rabbis) by this time. Does everything get treated exactly the same and translated into a massive anthology? Obviously, no. They clearly needed to determine, which books are properly the Scriptures? Which books are considered to have the authority of God? Identifying those books was a necessity in order for them to be translated into another and more universal language.

*Got Questions: When it came to the Old Testament, three important facts were considered: 1) The New Testament quotes from or alludes to every Old Testament book but two. 2) Jesus effectively endorsed the Hebrew canon in Matthew 23:35 when He cited one of the first narratives and one of the last in the Scriptures of His day. 3) The Jews were meticulous in preserving the Old Testament Scriptures, and they had few controversies over what parts belong or do not belong.*<sup>55</sup>

When Jesus spoke of the persecution done by ungodly Hebrews, He said: “**Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.**” (Matt. 23:34–35; ESV) Jesus here speaks of the righteous blood which has been spilled on this earth, starting with Abel (in Gen. 4) and going to Zechariah ben Barachiah (2Chron. 24:20-22). In the Hebrew canon, Genesis and Chronicles are the first and last books. By this, Jesus has implied what the Old Testament is; and by these words, the Lord has left out the apocrypha, the books written after Chronicles (which books are primarily recognized by the Catholic church, which did not pronounce them as inspired until A.D. 1546).

Regarding the New Testament canon—during the first 400 years following the LORD’s birth, there were many manuscripts floating about and there needed to be decisions made as to which were authoritative and which were not. The study of canonicity is quite fascinating because today, we have all of the information available. We know what the canon of Scripture is and we know exactly what canonicity means—and this information is available at the fingertips to nearly every believer who has an interest in this topic. It was not always so.

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<sup>55</sup> From <https://www.gotquestions.org/canon-of-Scripture.html> accessed May 1, 2019.

Got Questions: *Since our faith is defined by Scripture, Jude is essentially saying that Scripture was given once for the benefit of all Christians. Isn't it wonderful to know that there are no hidden or lost manuscripts yet to be found, there are no secret books only familiar to a select few, and there are no people alive who have special revelation requiring us to trek up a Himalayan mountain in order to be enlightened? We can be confident that God has not left us without a witness. The same supernatural power God used to produce His Word has also been used to preserve it.*<sup>56</sup>

This is a good study of canonicity.

## Canonicity (from Bible.org)

### I. Introduction

How do we know that the 66 books in our Bible are the only inspired books? Who decided which books were truly inspired by God? The Roman Catholic Bible includes books that are not found in other Bibles (called the Apocrypha). How do we know that we as Protestants have the right books? These questions are addressed by a study of canonicity.

“Canon” is a word that comes from Greek and Hebrew words that literally means a measuring rod. So canonicity describes the standard that books had to meet to be recognized as scripture.

On the one hand, deciding which books were inspired seems like a human process. Christians gathered together at church councils in the first several centuries A.D. for the purpose of officially recognizing which books are inspired. But it's important to remember that these councils did not determine which books were inspired. They simply recognized what God had already determined.

This study discusses the tests of canonicity that were used, the history of canonization and a brief explanation of why certain disputed books are not scripture.

### II. Summary: The collection of 66 books were properly recognized by the early church as the complete authoritative scriptures not to be added to or subtracted from.

### III. Tests of Canonicity

The early church councils applied several basic standards in recognizing whether a book was inspired.

- A. Is it authoritative (“**Thus says the Lord**”)? That is, does the book claim divine authority for itself?
- B. Is it prophetic (written by “**a man of God**” 2Peter 1:20)?  
- A book in the Bible must have the authority of a spiritual leader of Israel

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<sup>56</sup> From <https://www.gotquestions.org/canon-of-Scripture.html> accessed May 1, 2019.

## Canonicity (from Bible.org)

(O.T. – prophet, king, judge, scribe) or and apostle of the church (N.T. – It must be based on the testimony of an original apostle.).

- C. Is it consistent with other revelation of truth?
- D. Is it dynamic – does it demonstrate God’s life-changing power (Hebrews 4:12)?
- E. Is it accepted and used by believers – 1Thessalonians 2:13)?  
(Norman L. Geisler & William Nix, A General Introduction To The Bible. pp. 137-144).

### IV. The History of Canonization

#### A. Old Testament Canon – Recognizing the correct Old Testament books

1. Christ refers to Old Testament books as “scripture” (Matthew 21:42, etc.).
2. The Council of Jamnia (A.D. 90) officially recognized our 39 Old Testament books.
3. Josephus, the Jewish historian (A.D. 95), indicated that the 39 books were recognized as authoritative.

#### B. New Testament Canon – Recognizing the correct New Testament books

1. The apostles claimed authority for their writings (Colossians 3:16; 1Thessalonians 5:27; 2Thessalonians 3:14).
2. The apostle’s writings were equated with Old Testament scriptures (2Peter 3:1, 2, 15, 16).
3. The Council of Athenasius (A.D. 367) and the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) recognized the 27 books in our New Testament today as inspired.

### V. The Disputed but non-canonical books

#### A. The Apocrypha is not scripture.

The Apocryphal books are 15 books written in the 400 years between Malachi and Matthew. They record some of the history of that time period and various other religious stories and teaching. The Catholic Bible (Douay Version) regards these books as scripture. The Apocrypha includes some specific Catholic doctrines, such as purgatory and prayer for the dead (2Maccabees 12:39-46), and salvation by works (almsgiving – Tobit 12:9). Interestingly, the Catholic Church officially recognized these books as scripture in A.D. 1546, only 29 years after Martin Luther criticized these doctrines as unbiblical.

Below are listed several additional reasons for rejecting the Apocrypha as inspired:

1. The Jews never accepted the Apocrypha as scripture.
2. The Apocrypha never claims to be inspired (“Thus says the Lord” etc.) – In fact, 1Maccabees 9:27 denies it.
3. The Apocrypha is never quoted as authoritative in scriptures. (Although Hebrews 11:35-38 alludes to historical events recorded

## Canonicity (from Bible.org)

- in 2Maccabees 6:18-7:42). Referencing historical events does not make the written source of those events inspired.
4. Matthew 23:35 – Jesus implied that the close of Old Testament historical scripture was the death of Zechariah (400 B.C.). This excludes any books written after Malachi and before the New Testament.
- B. Other disputed books are also not scripture
1. There were other books that some people claimed to be scripture. Some of them were written in the intertestamental period and called Old Testament pseudopigrapha (or “false writings”). Others were written after the apostolic age (2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. and following). These are called New Testament pseudopigrapha. The writers often ascribed these books to the 1<sup>st</sup> century apostles (Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Peter, etc.). Evidently, they figured they would be read more widely with an apostle’s name attached. They include some fanciful stories of Jesus’ childhood and some heretical doctrines. No orthodox Christian seriously considered them to be inspired.
  2. There were some other more sincerely written books that had devotional value and reveal some of the insights of Christian leaders after the 1<sup>st</sup> century (Shepherd of Hermas, Didache, etc.). Although they are valuable historically, and even spiritually helpful, they also do not measure up to the standards of canonicity and were not recognized as scripture.

From <https://bible.org/seriespage/canonicity> accessed April 17, 2019 (edited).

The canon would be the books which could be defined as *inspired* by God. At the point when we determined which books were in the Old Testament and New Testament canons, we really had not developed a full and complete definition of *inspiration*. In fact, I don’t believe the meaning of *inspiration* was fully understood until the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which is a long time after canon of Scripture was established.

There was enough information within the canon of Scripture to determine what it meant to be a part of the Word of God; but it took theology a long time to get to the point of clearly defining that. What exactly does it mean for specific books to make up the Word of God? What exact does it mean for these books to be *inspired*?

Since the canon was closed, there have been a number of people who have claimed to author divine Scriptures—Mohammed, Joseph Smith, among others. Is there a single thing written by either of these men (or by anyone else) where you might be tempted to say, *that does make a great deal of sense; why isn’t that in our Bible?*

There have been quite a number of men who have claimed to have interacted with God or with Jesus since the closing of the canon. You may or may not be aware of any of them;

but, just like those who claim to have written Scripture after the fact, these men add nothing to theology of note. There was one child evangelist, whose name escapes me, who claimed to hang out with Jesus in heaven and have splash fights with Him in the heavenly Jordan River. Such recollections of divine interaction come across as silly at best; blasphemous at worst.

**Lesson 060: Exodus 6**

**Canonicity/Inspiration**

Since we are studying a passage that deals with genealogies, we may ask ourselves, does this really belong in the canon of Scripture? Is this really inspired? To consider these questions, we really need to understand what the words *canon* and *inspired* both mean, from a theological perspective.

For a book to be in the canon of Scripture, it must be *inspired*. However, the concept of inspiration was more fully developed *after* the canon had been determined. So first, we had the complete Word of God (the canon of Scripture) and then we used the books in the canon to define what it meant for those same books to be inspired.

An outstanding definition of *inspiration*: *God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture that, without waiving their intelligence, their individuality, their personal feelings, their literary style, or any other human factor in written or spoken expression, to communicate His complete and coherent message to mankind, recorded with perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture, in the autographs, the very words bearing the Authority of Divine Authorship.*

Let's examine the definition of inspiration and examine it phrase by phrase:

**Verbal Plenary Inspiration  
(the Accurate Understanding of Biblical Authorship)**

| Definition  | Explanation of the Definition   |
|---|---|
| <p>God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture...</p> | <p>There is a human author and a divine Author of each book of the Bible. The Holy Spirit guided or directed the human author, but did not dictate Scripture to the human author (there are exceptions to this; when we read <i>thus says the Lord</i>, that would be an example of Scripture which was dictated). The actual act of writing Scripture was probably very normal and natural. Paul hears of some problems in the church at Corinth, and so he writes them a letter to deal with those issues.</p> <p>When it comes to the actual recording of holy Scripture, there are no weird attendant happenings. That is, no one writes with a flaming pen, an angel on their shoulder, or anything like that.</p> |

## Verbal Plenary Inspiration (the Accurate Understanding of Biblical Authorship)

| Definition   | Explanation of the Definition   |
|--|---|
| ...that, without waiving their intelligence, their individuality, their personal feelings, their literary style, or any other human factor in written or spoken expression,... | Writers of Scripture did not turn into human secretaries nor did their minds go blank, and God filled their minds with His Words. All that the human authors possessed with regards to their literary skills (or lack thereof) was maintained. Their intelligence, their individual personalities, their personal feelings, their literary style, their vocabulary, and their use of common literary devices were all retained and were integral factors in their writing of Scripture. Even in the book of Genesis, the writing styles of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are distinct. |
| ...to communicate His complete and coherent message to mankind...  | <p>All that we need to know in this life about God, Jesus Christ and our place in the world is found in the Bible. There is no additional source that we must go to in order to fill in missing information (that is, we do not pursue dreams, visions, or ecstatic experiences to find truth missing from the Bible).</p> <p>This information found in the Scriptures makes sense. God reveals Himself in His Word; He does not obscure divine truth. All that we need in order to understand God and His plan for our lives is found in the Word of God.</p>                            |
| ...recorded with perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture,...   | What God wanted to say is found written in exactly the way He wanted it to be written, in the original languages. These original writings are divinely inspired—in the Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic. The King James Version Bible is not divinely inspired (but it was an outstanding translation for its time).  |
| ...in the autographs,...   | The <i>autographs</i> are either the original writings or exact copies of the original writings. As first written down, these are the words of God. So there is no misunderstanding, we do not have the autographs of any book of the Bible, but we can very nearly reproduce them with reasonable accuracy. It has been demonstrated that the Scriptures have been maintained with greater accuracy than the writings of William Shakespear (who wrote after the invention of the printing press).   |

## Verbal Plenary Inspiration (the Accurate Understanding of Biblical Authorship)

| Definition  | Explanation of the Definition  |
|---|--|
| ...the very words bearing the Authority of Divine Authorship. | Even though the Bible was written by man, subject to each man's style of writing and even to his thinking and emotions at the time of writing, it is, at the same time, the Word of God. Just as Jesus is the Living Word of God, fully God and yet fully man (John 1:1–14), so the Bible is fully God-breathed and, at the same time, a product of man. The writers of Scripture are not mere secretaries, but active participants in the process of the writing of Scripture. Yet, despite the authors being very human, their output was the Word of God. |

This doctrine was first placed in the **Genesis Introduction** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). It has been slightly modified.

### The Word of God Speaks to Its Own Authority and Accuracy

We know this first: that no prophecy [divine utterance; i.e., the Words of the Bible] of Scripture came into being from someone's personal application [interpretation or explanation of things]. For prophecy [divine utterance] was not carried along at any time by the will of [any] man, but set-apart men of God spoke being carried by [God] the Holy Spirit (2Peter 1:20–21).

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is beneficial [in the following areas]: for [the teaching of] doctrine, for testing, for correction [of error], for instruction [training and education] in integrity [righteousness and justice], so that the man of God may be prepared, thoroughly furnished [equipped] to every good [of divine quality] work (2Tim. 3:16–17).

Scripture is unable to be undone [annulled, declared unlawful, destroyed or subverted] (John 10:35b).

Every word of God is pure [refined, free from impurities]; It is a shield [protection] to those who take refuge in it. Do not add to His words, or He will correct you, and you will be shown to be a liar (Prov. 30:5–6).

And Jesus answered him, saying, "It stands written, Man will not live [be sustained] only by food, but [he will be sustained] by every word of God." (Luke 4:4; Deut. 8:3).

To the contrary, we renounce any personal [and secret] agenda of shame [or disgrace], not habitually living our lives by means of specious [or false] wisdom; nor do we corrupt [dilute or adulterate] the Word of God, but rather, we exhibit [or manifest] the Truth, uniting ourselves face to face with every man's conscience before God (2Cor. 4:2).

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We continually thank God that, when you received the Word of hearing, [the Word] of God, you welcomed it as the Word of God, not as a word of men, because it is truly the Word of God, which also effectually works in you who believe (1Thess. 2:13).

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For the Word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of the soul and spirit, as well as the joints and marrow, and is able to [accurately] judge [and evaluate] the thoughts and intents of the heart [that is, our thinking] (Heb. 4:12).

You may not fully appreciate that you actually have the ability to know and appreciate the concept of canonicity and inspiration better than Paul or Peter did—even though both men alluded to it in their writings. Furthermore, you hold that very canon in your hand (or it is on your computer screen), something that no Apostle could do. You may be surprised that you are in a better position to explore and understand a great many more things than Paul or Peter could.

**The organic development of the canon of Scripture:** As I said earlier, the New Testament canon was developed very organically and prior to the full and complete understanding of what it meant to be in the New Testament canon (*canonicity* came first; then a full understanding of *inspiration*). Theologians of that era would have understood, this is God's Word, this is the canon of Scripture; and that these words are authoritative—but they would *not* have had the complete and full understanding of *Verbal Plenary Inspiration*.

So, men from the first centuries after the birth of our Lord needed to figure out what was in the canon of Scripture before they even fully understood what it meant to be in the canon of Scripture. There were a set of requirements, the chief two being: (1) the book or letter was written in the first century (there were ways to confirm this); and (2) it was written by an Apostle or someone closely associated with an Apostle. The first condition placed the book in the right time period; and the second indicated that the book was authoritative. At the time that this was being determined, there were many books, letters, and writings being circulated (between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries). Theologians wrote things then, just as they do now, and what they wrote was often circulated. Some accepted the authority of the original writings; and a few others tried to establish their own views in their writings.

I said that this was an organic process. Christian theologians and early fathers individually had to determine for themselves what was canonical so they would know what to teach from or what writings to refer back to. If they were teaching such-and-such a doctrine, was there a place that they could read from which would back that up or help them to understand or explain that doctrine more thoroughly? Were they able to determine which letters should be studied in order to further understand their relationship with God and God's plan?

Also, the New Testament needed to be translated into a variety of languages, so translators needed to figure out, *what was the New Testament* so that they would know

which books and letters to translate. We commonly understand that there is the Old and New Testament; but I don't know if they even had such a vocabulary at that time or who thought up those designations. It was clear that there was a Jewish canon of Scripture; and soon after the end of the first century, people knew that they needed to identify and collect those books and letters which pertained to Jesus Christ and the spread of Christianity. There would be adjacent countries, and there was the command to believers to go out in all the world. Therefore, very early on, the writings of the New Testament (before there was actually a New Testament) would be translated into other languages and distributed farther and wider into the world.

God coming into the world and dying for His Own—this was a unique experience of the greatest importance, so the documentation of this act had to be preserved and disseminated. The only way this could be preserved is by historical documents; only John actually saw the crucifixion (along with some of the Lord's female followers); and it would have been too horrific to preserve graphically. So what we have remaining are the words of eyewitnesses and friends (or associates) of eyewitnesses.

By the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, even though most of the New Testament books had been accepted as authoritative, there was still no universally accepted canon of New Testament Scripture.

As local churches became more institutionalized, church councils were organized and they met and discussed the various books and letters available to them. It is not clear if these involved representatives from individual churches or from groups of area churches; nevertheless, they needed to discuss, *what is authoritative? Which writings came from the right era and the right people?* These councils (there are at least 3 that we know of) came to a consensus as to which books were canonical. Many people today think that some big religious guy (like a pope or some king) decided what the canon was, and so, there it was. But, it was nothing like that. No one person and no single organization made that decision. This was an organic process which took place over the period of 3 centuries. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, perhaps 80–90% of the New Testament had been recognized; by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the entire New Testament canon was recognized.

As some have explained this process, it was not so much that various groups and individuals determined what belonged in the canon and what did not; the authoritative writings were already in existence and they believed it to be of the utmost importance to *discover* which writings those were.

In some kind of similar process, the canon for the Old Testament had been determined; but that process is not known to us today. We know that there were libraries which had books in them; there were the synagogues where the Scriptures were read; and we know that there were translations made into other languages of the Old Testament. So, no doubt, just as organically, a canon arose out of the existing Jewish writings.

In the time of Jesus, we do not have our Lord disputing with the pharisees about which books are in the Old Testament canon (which was our Lord's Bible); but about the understanding and interpretation of those Scriptures. Long before Jesus, the canon of Scripture for the Old Testament had been recognized and accepted. Jesus accepted as authoritative the exact same books that the scribes and pharisees accepted.

My point in all of this was, at what point did Chronicles (a book we referred to when studying the genealogies) become recognized as a part of the canon? Apparently quite early on—but there would have been a period of time when it was preserved (copied and recopied) when it is not clear that the scribes believed it to be canonical (we simply do not know about this history—was it known from the first time it was copied to be a part of the canon of Scripture or did it take longer than that?).

The first time Chronicles was written down, it was canonical; but it was not necessarily recognized by man as canonical at that time—in fact, it probably was not recognized as a part of the Word of God at first.

It would be an interesting study—if there is any available material at all on it—as to when the Jews first understood that there was a canon; that there was a Word of God, and some books belonged to that set and some books did not. There seemed to be some general recognition of that when the Septuagint was translated (roughly 200 B.C.); but what led them to that recognition? Whereas we have a great deal of material about the canonization of the New Testament, I don't know that we have any information about the canonization of the Old (that is, commentary of ancient rabbis on this particular topic).

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**Lesson 061: Exodus 6:16–20a****The Descendants of Levi**

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Let us return to the inspired genealogical study:

Exodus 6:16a-b [These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.](#)

Recall that every son of Jacob was in the line of promise. The 3<sup>rd</sup>-born son of Jacob was Levi—he was the son of Jacob and Leah. Levi had 3 sons, with the same names found here as in Genesis and 1Chron. 6:1. This may not seem to be that impressive, at first; but that is because we see the Bible as being one book (which it is, in a sense). Whether you have a physical Bible or a set of Bibles on your computer, you tend to view it as a single book. However, Genesis, Exodus and Chronicles were separate books, written at very different times, by very different people; and possibly preserved separately until Chronicles was accepted as being a portion of the Word of God. Even though the scrolls of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) were probably kept together from nearly the beginning; Chronicles would have been written perhaps 1000 years later (give or take) and not necessarily recognized from day one as being God's Word. Also, we do not know the source material for the genealogies in Chronicles, but that source material had to be different from Genesis or Exodus because the genealogies in

Chronicles is much more extensive and detailed. This means that detailed genealogical records were kept somewhere, and that these were not considered to be a part of the Word of God (until they were appropriated by the writer of Chronicles).

These 3 sons of Levi are well-known and preserved throughout the Bible. Their sons will be named in the next 3 verses.

Exodus 6:16a [These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.](#)

Levi is said to have three sons. This does not mean that this was the entire line; it is very possible that he had many daughters, as these lines generally do not mention women. Gershon is mentioned many times in Numbers (actually, *the sons of Gershon* are mentioned many times). There are not a lot of details about him but about his progeny.

Kohath and Merari are also mentioned quite a number of times, but primarily in genealogies. The genealogies also make several mentions of the Gershonites and the Kohathites, but rarely do we find the term Merarites (in fact, it is found only once). Numbers would be a better time to examine these lines, as this is where they are mentioned primarily.

Exodus 6:16 [These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the years of the life of Levi were one hundred and thirty-seven.](#)

Unlike most of the previous genealogies, some specific ages will be given in Levi's line.

Some people are confused by the ages of people mentioned in the Old Testament. Those listed prior to the flood lived for centuries. After the flood, there were several changes which took place. Rain became a normal event upon the earth (prior to that, water for vegetation was by a mist from out of the ground—which would include the watering provided by springs, rivers and lakes).

A major change, which affected the aging process was the reduced gene pool and the infestation of bacteria. Bacteria no doubt existed prior to the flood, but it became more commonplace after the flood (we know this because of Noah drinking fermented grape juice; an unprecedented occurrence in the Bible). Given all of the death and destruction which occurred during the flood, and the bodies of humans and animals which would have been exposed when the flood waters began to recede, there would have been an explosion of bacteria upon the earth. The waters would have carried bacteria in great quantities all over the earth.

As a result, we have seen is reduction in the age of man over the centuries (to a low of age 30 to 40 for men in the dark ages). We think that we have extended life today, but in David and Solomon's day, the common length of life was 70 (2Sam. 5:4–5 Psalm 90:10). Today, although we might have people live into their first century, they are nowhere near as

vigorous as Moses. Moses, in his eighties and nineties (he lived to be 120), led the children of Israel through the desert and occasionally had to knock heads together. How many eighty year old's today could do that to a generation of recalcitrant thirty and forty-year-old's?

There is no question that God blessed the health of Moses greatly.

Exodus 6:17 *The sons of Gershon were Libni and Shimi according to their families.*

Gershon is said to have two sons here; but their names are listed differently in 1Chron. 6:17 (*the sons of Gershom are Libni and Shimei*). The names are close enough to suggest that there is either a minor error or simply difference of spelling in Chronicles.<sup>57</sup>

Exodus 6:18a *And the sons of Kohath were Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.*

Levi's 3 sons are found here, in Gen. 46:11 and in 1Chron. 6:16, which suggests to us that Levi had 3 primary sons born to him in Canaan. I believe that Israel was 400 years in Egypt, which would have provided ample time for the buildup to 2 million people (if Israelites had healthy productive families).

It is at this point where we may have a minor problem. When we look at the ages given to us and string them together, we cannot get 400 years in Egypt.

Exodus 6:18b *And the years of the life of Kohath were one hundred and thirty-three.*

Of Levi's sons, only Kohath's age is given. The significance of this is, we are in Moses' line here. Therefore, we are given a few more details in his line.

Levi, son of Jacob, was clearly raised up in the land of Canaan (having been born in Paddan-Aram—Gen. 29:34 31:18); and his son Kohath was born in Canaan (Gen. 46:1–11). So, about 133 years are assigned to Kohath—some of his lifetime taking place in the land of Egypt.

If he has a son late in life—Amram (who lives to age 137) and Amram has a son Moses, who is 80 years old at this time, then, we have a maximum of 133+137+80 years, which is at most 350 years in the land of Egypt. Furthermore, we are not even taking into consideration growing to an age of being able to bear children. That is simply not enough time for the span of 400 years. (I will later provide a chart of the line of Levi to make much easier to see.) The general point here is, there are not enough years between these descendants of Levi to allow for the Hebrew people to live in Egypt for 400 years.

This means that either, the common time frame of 400 years is wrong, or there is a problem with the genealogies.

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<sup>57</sup> Some Bible translations compensate for such differences, so that we find a consistent spelling of many names throughout the Old and New Testaments. However, the Hebrew letters are occasionally different.

The word *son* is found throughout the genealogies. It is the very common word *bên* (בן) [pronounced *bane*] (we tend to incorrectly pronounce it *behn*), which means *son, descendant*. Strong's #1121 BDB #119. We have a similar application of this in the English. *Johnson* means *the son of John*. So, every person with the name *Johnson* has an ancestor from way, way back whose name was *John*. In most cases, we are going back 1000+ years to find that original *John*.

So, based upon the text which follows, Amram is clearly the father of Moses (v. 20); but he is probably the grandson or great grandson of Kohath. The use of the word *bên* allows for this.

In my family, I have no sons with my name, so my line may die out with me. However, my kid brother Peter has a son, and his son has three sons at this time. It may turn out that these three sons are quite impressive kids, with a great families—so in ancient Israel, they might be known as sons of my late father, even though they are his great grandsons.

My point being, when you read the word *son* in your English Bible, it can mean either *son* or *descendant*. Apart from the context or parallel passages, we have no idea which meaning we should take in any given genealogy.

Now, either this is the case that Amram is not the literal son of Kohath, or the 400 years commonly assigned to the sons of Israel in Egypt would have to be modified considerably (making it difficult, if not impossible, for them to build up to a population of 2 million). This is a topic of great dispute in the Christian world, and we will tackle it in some detail once we get of Exodus 12.

Exodus 6:19 [The sons of Merari were Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of Levi according to their generations.](#)

Merari is Levi's 3<sup>rd</sup> listed son, and two of his sons are listed here (they may be his only sons; we do not know).

These names are preserved exactly in Num. 3:20 1Chron. 6:19 23:21. Mahli will have two sons with famous names: [The sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish](#). (1Chron. 23:21b) Aaron will name one of his sons Eleazar (Exodus 6:23, 25); and King Saul will be descended from Kish (a different Kish from a different tribe—1Sam. 9:3 10:11).

Exodus 6:20a [Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father's sister, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses.](#)

At this point, there is a sudden jump from the beginning of the line to the end of the line. We already know that Moses has an older sister, Miriam, who watched as he was taken from the Nile (we have assumed that this is Miriam). We were told earlier that two Levites married and bore Moses. This causes me to think that possibly Moses wrote down Exodus 1:1 through 2:22 when he was younger; before he knew any details concerning his

Jewish family (these details may have been written down for Moses and given to him at a later date).

At this point in our narrative, Moses has met Aaron and certainly the rest of his family and now he knows them by name. Moses would also know his ancestors, and what we are reading here may be a reflection of that. When he returned to Egypt with Aaron, there may have been a brief family reunion, during which time Moses was given a fuller genealogy (this is conjecture on my part, but it would explain why Moses includes his genealogy right here, in the middle of everything).

Exodus 6:20a **Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father's sister, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses.**

Certainly what catches everyone's attention (for those who actually read the genealogies) in the translations based upon *Textus Receptus*, which tells us that that Amram marries his aunt. She is presented as his paternal cousin or second cousin as per the Septuagint, Syriac and the Latin Vulgate (which may or may not represent a more accurate understanding; this might even be an intentional change). In Num. 26:39 we find that she is simply a daughter of Levi, making her a Levite (she is not Levi's literal daughter, but a descendant of his).

It is not a problem to marry one's relative, if they are distant enough. There are a great many differences which come into the genetic pool when someone is not a close relative.

Something which has bothered critics for a very long time is the fact that Seth and Cain both married their sisters. Today, that would present genealogical risks their children but then there was no choice. Our genes have degenerated throughout the years, and marrying one's relatives tends to bring out the worst in the genetic pools. The closer one gets to Adam, the less of a problem it is for a person to marry a relative. Genetics in the Bible would be an incredible area of study for a Christian geneticist.

## **Lessons 062–063: Exodus 6:20–6:27**

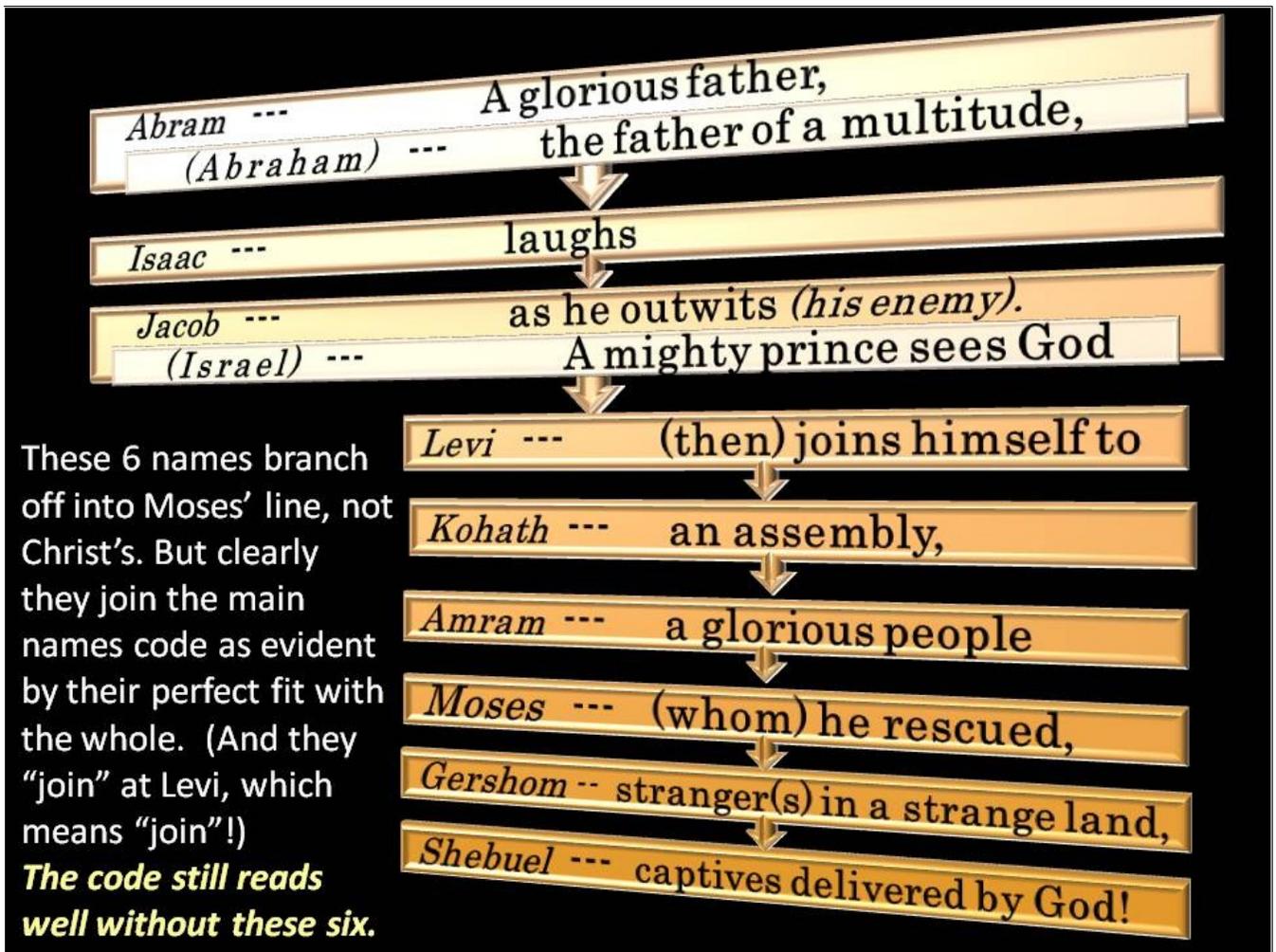
## **Levi's Genealogy Chart**

We are studying the genealogy of Moses. Amram is Moses' father, and, as we previously noted, Amram did not necessarily marry his aunt. Ancient translations differ at this point. However, even if he married his aunt, that would not change anything (apart from the *yuck* factor).

Exodus 6:20a **Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father's sister [possibly, *relative*], as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses.**

Here and in previous passages, we have followed the line from Abraham leading down to Moses. Let's see if there is any meaning to it.

The Line from Abraham ⇒ Isaac ⇒ Jacob ⇒ Levi ⇒ Moses (a genealogical chart) from [Bible Names Code](#); accessed May 24, 2019.



Note how well this genealogy describes Moses and his mission. These are the names given in Scripture, but there are likely some missing generations (between Kohath and Amram).

Moses and Aaron are descended through the line of Kohath (Num. 26:58-59). Jochebed is mentioned again in this reference in Numbers, and we know more about her than we do about Moses' father. There are times when the woman has the dominating influence in a family (I don't mean that to indicate a change of authority) and the Bible mentions this, sometimes in very subtle ways.

The Numbers passage also confirms, as we know, that the Bible does not include every generation in every genealogy. Num. 26:59 [The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt. And she bore to Amram Aaron and Moses and Miriam their sister.](#) (ESV) Now, it is highly unlikely that Jochebed is the literal

daughter of Levi, even if we are dealing with Israel living 215 years among the Egyptians. She would have been considerably older than Moses' father. So, even though this reads that she is *the daughter of Levi*, we would understand that to mean *a daughter of Levi*. In fact, because *daughter* is in the construct form, it *cannot* have a definite article.

Therefore, there are possibly several generations which fall between Kohath and Amram. However, I believe what Moses did was give the names of those three in his direct line whose lives bridged the gap between Israel's entrance into Egypt and that day that he (and Aaron) first spoke to Pharaoh. Notice that by any version, the years of these three add up to approximately 400 years. Although it may appear that this fulfills Gen. 15:16 (that the descendants of Abraham would return to Canaan in the 4<sup>th</sup> generation), it really does not. Again, we will examine all of this in more detail in Exodus 12:40.

What I think is occurring is, we get the names of the men who entered into Egypt; and the names of their sons (either born in Canaan or in Egypt). Then we look at the generation of those who walked out of Egypt, along with their fathers (the genealogical chapters of Chronicles will bear this out). There are 1 or more generations in between who are not specified. So, here, we are seeing those who walked into Egypt and those who walked out of Egypt (and their fathers).

So, Amram and Jochebed (Amram's aunt or relative) are the parents of Aaron, Miriam and Moses (who will all walk out of Egypt). All of them are descended from Levi in the family or clan of Kohath. Levi entered into Egypt as an adult; and Kohath was born to him in Canaan and was likely a youth when entering into Egypt. From Kohath is *descended* Amram. Amram is Moses' actual father.

When we consider the ages of these patriarchs who are given, we also come up short a generation or more:

Exodus 6:20b *And the years of the life of Amram were one hundred and thirty-seven.*

If we add together the ages of those in Moses' line: Levi (137), Kohath (133), Amram (137) and Moses (80, at the time of the Exodus), we get 487 years. One person says that this is barely allow us enough time for a 400 years of Israel living in Egypt. However, we do not even have that much time, as Kohath appears to have entered into Egypt with his father (Gen. 46:11), so that makes the maximum length of time, given the figures here, as 350 years (which allows for the idea that each mother gave birth near the end of her life (or, more accurately, near the end of the life of her husband). Whereas, such a thing is possible (Abraham was siring children quite late in life), this still does not get us to 400 years.

The most logical explanation (again) is this: (1) we are missing a generation (or several) in this line for a 400 year residence in Egypt; or (2) we are not missing any generations for a 215 year residence (a popular theory believes that the Hebrews lived in Egypt for only 215 years).

As we see in such passages as Num. 26:28–34, it is common in the Bible to list one's genealogy by naming the tribe (Levi), the clan (Kohath) and the immediate family (Amram, Moses' actual father). In between the clan and the family grouping could be several generations of men.

In Num. 3:27–28, the total of the Amramites, Izharites, Hebronites and Uzzielites was 8600. This would mean that the immediate family of Moses of those his age and younger would be about 2000+. This is highly unlikely (if not impossible). Even if Moses' actual father had the name Amram, this is a different Amram here.

I believe that Chronicles further clears up this problem for us. In 1Chronicles we will see that the generations of slavery was at least nine or ten and not three. 1Chron. 7:25 gives us at least ten linking generations between Ephraim and Joshua. Bezalel, who designed the tabernacle, was at least seven generations from Jacob (Exodus 31:2–11 1Chron. 2:1, 4–5, 9, 18–20). Elishama, who is found in Num. 1:10, is at least nine generations removed from Jacob (1Chron. 7:22–27). This fits in rather well with the 400–430 years that the Jews spent in Egypt. It yields generations which are 43 years in length (which is about right for those times; notice that Moses married at age 40); and it squares quite nicely with the population of Israel at the Exodus.

There is another theory which places Israel in Egypt for 215 years, which follows the Septuagint reading of Exodus 12:40, but that would give us about 21 years per generation, which is too short, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to squeeze out 2,000,000 adult male Jews in 215 years from 70–75 original Jews.

Isn't it fascinating how these genealogies can actually impact some theories of Scripture and Jewish history? We see this as simply a list of names, but they end up being much more than that.

Exodus 6:21 [The sons of Izhar were Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.](#)

Izhar is a son of Kohath, a brother of Amram; and one of his sons is Korah, who will play quite a part during the time Moses and the children of Israel will be in the desert. Korah would be Moses' (probably younger) cousin.

Although there are other Nepheg's and Zichri's in Scripture, I don't believe that these particular men are mentioned again.

Exodus 6:22 [And the sons of Uzziel were Mishael, Elzaphan, and Zithri.](#)

Uzziel is a son of Kohath and a brother of Amram. Uzziel would be Moses' uncle and Uzziel's sons would be Moses' cousins. His sons, named here, are contemporaries with Moses. Assuming the birth order of Exodus 6:18 just as it stands, then his sons would likely be younger than Moses.

Two of his sons will be mentioned again in Lev. 10:4. Their father, Uzziel, will be found in the line of Levites in 1Chron. 6; but these sons will not be named there.

Exodus 6:23a [Aaron took to himself Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Nahshon, as \[his\] wife;...](#)

Even though we all remember Moses as the hero of the Exodus, and that Aaron was just called in as sort of a backup, Aaron plays a very important part in Israel's history. He is the father of the priesthood. Interestingly enough, Aaron's genealogical line is far more important to Israel than Moses' (the priesthood is based upon being born in the line of Aaron).

Again, in v. 23, we have a rare situation; a woman is mentioned in a genealogy.

Aaron was the head of the Jewish priesthood and priests in the Old Testament had wives. Priests in the New Testament (which is every believer) also had wives. Some groups of believers and church groups are completely confused about this issue. They cannot distinguish Israel from the church. Further, there are some groups who presume that when Paul states celibacy is the preferred state of life (because you can dedicate more of your life and time to God), that this should refer to anyone who is high up in the church or high up in spiritual things. This all goes back to such groups being confused as to what a priest is. **The priesthood in the Old Testament was based upon ancestry and that requires marriage and cohabitation.** There is no way to mistake this. In the New Testament, priesthood is based upon believing in Jesus Christ; we are all priests (including women). Furthermore, since the New Testament is filled with mandates concerning husbands, wives and children, that means that many of us *priests* marry and have families. The concept of there being cloisters of monks living off in the mountains somewhere, completely apart from women, is unrelated to Scripture. The sort of spiritual hierarchy found in the Catholic Church is nowhere to be found in the Bible.

Exodus 6:23b [...and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.](#)

These are the sons of Aaron born to his wife Elisheba. The first two would die the sin unto death; and the last two would be the heads of the Aaronic priesthood.

Eleazar and Ithamar will become the two principle lines of the priesthood. Every priest will trace himself back to either Eleazar or to Ithamar.

Exodus 6:23 [Aaron took to himself Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Nahshon, as wife; and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.](#)

Here, the sons of Aaron are named—and they receive much more prominence in Scripture than do Moses' sons. What is a key difference between Moses and Aaron's sons? Quite obviously, their respective mothers. Here, Elisheba is afforded great respect in Scripture—we are told more about her genealogy than we know about Moses' wife.

Moses' wife, on the other hand, is not given much respect in the Scriptures. She abandons Moses at least twice. As we have previously studied, she apparently refused to circumcise their second son, causing a great deal of difficulty to their own family—Moses almost dying the sin unto death as a result.

As an aside, you may ask, *why did Moses almost die the sin unto death if she is ultimately at fault?* Moses is the husband; therefore, he is the head of the household. All family decisions rest on his shoulders, no matter who makes them.

Apparently, Moses told his wife, "You need to circumcise our second son," and she said, "No." At that point, Moses needed to act in order to circumcise him. He did not. Her *no* was so firm and unwavering, that he decided not to take that decision any further (this is all reasonable conjecture). Since Moses' has the authority, he takes the heat.

Back to the original concept of Aaron's sons versus Moses' sons. The key difference is the mothers. Here this is hinted at by giving more prominence to Elisheba than is normally given to women in genealogies. Why is her father and sister named? Very likely, both of them had a strong impact on Elisheba's character and spiritual advance, who then impacted the spiritual advance of at least two of her sons.

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Outlines are excellent for expressing a genealogy (when there are no divorces or second marriages). This helps us to identify who is who and how they are related in a glance.

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### The sons of Levi (Exodus 6:16–25)

1. **Gershon** (Exodus 6:17)
  - 1) Libni
  - 2) Shimei
2. **Kohath** (Exodus 6:18)
  - 1) Amram (by Jochebed, a daughter<sup>1</sup> of Levi). Exodus 6:20 15:20 Num. 26:59
    - (1) Miriam
    - (2) Aaron (by Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon). Exodus 6:23
      - a. Nadab (who will die the sin unto death)
      - b. Abihu (who will die the sin unto death)
      - c. Eleazar (a daughter of Putiel) (Exodus 6:25)
        - (a) Phinehas
      - d. Ithamar
    - (3) Moses (1Chron. 23:15), who will marry Zipporah (Exodus 2:22), daughter of Jethro (Exodus 18:2), who is also called Reuel (Exodus 2:18).
      - a. Gershom
      - b. Eliezer
  - 2) Izhar (Exodus 6:21)
    - (1) Korah (Exodus 6:24)

## The sons of Levi (Exodus 6:16–25)

- a. Assir
- b. Elkanah
- c. Abiasaph
- (2) Nepheg
- (3) Zichri
- 3) Hebron
- 4) Uzziel (Exodus 6:22)
  - (1) Mishael
  - (2) Elzaphan
  - (3) Sithri
- 3. **Merari** (Exodus 6:19)
  - 1) Mahli (1Chron. 23:21)
    - (1) Eleazar
    - (2) Kish
  - 2) Mushi (1Chron. 23:23)
    - (1) Mahli
    - (2) Edersheim
    - (3) Jeremoth

Moses' cousin is Korah; and he would become troublesome to Moses in Numbers 16.

<sup>1</sup> This means *a female descendant of*.

Exodus 6:24a [And the sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph.](#)

Many times, the Bible sets up two people or two families to be contrasted. Throughout the time of the patriarchs, there were Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau; and later, the sons of Jacob were contrasted. Here, we appear to be contrasting the sons of Aaron with the sons of Korah. Aaron does not have the inside track as Moses' brother; he is where he is because of his positive volition. Although we do not have any of the details of his calling, I would suggest to you that he was far more compliant than Moses was.

Korah would be the cousin of Moses and Aaron; and his sons would be Moses and Aaron's first cousins once removed (if I understand this [chart](#) correctly).

The sons of Korah are spoken of during the exodus and quite often in the psalms. Such passages are not direct references to the 3 persons here, but to Korah's descendants.

Exodus 6:24b [These are the families of the Korahites.](#)

Although, throughout the Pentateuch, we can find places where God tells Moses to write stuff down and it appears that he does (and this is repeated to the people of Israel); it is not clear *when* Moses wrote down this history of the Exodus. If I were to make a guess, Moses did not wait until the end of his life to do this, but that he wrote throughout his time

in the desert—and possibly even before (when we come to Exodus 15, it will be clear that Moses wrote that song down right then and there—it is a song of victory).

This genealogy will represent a change in the narrative of this portion of Exodus. We will go from the human viewpoint approach to Moses and Pharaoh (Exodus 5) to God's viewpoint (Exodus 7); this genealogy bridges the gap between the two views.

Moses' recent association with Aaron very likely allowed Moses to fill in a lot of gaps in his own genealogy—and perhaps, that is why his genealogy is placed here (that is, the human viewpoint reason why). Passages in the Scriptures often fulfill a dual purpose of the dual authors—the Holy Spirit provides the divine viewpoint approach; and the human author provides the human approach. The first time Moses meets with Pharaoh, it appears that this whole thing could end very badly. This first meeting appears to have been a spectacular failure. However, this is because Exodus 5 gives us the human perspective. From this point forward, we will see the God's perspective of this matter. Some of the issues brought out in Exodus 5 (like the increased workload) are not even mentioned in Exodus 7. That is because there are many problems in the spiritual life which are unimportant. Moses, Aaron, and all Israel focused, for a time, on the increased workload that Pharaoh put upon the people. From the human standpoint, that additional workload was a very big deal. From God's perspective, it was nothing, and will not even be mentioned in Exodus 7.

I think that what ties all of this together is, Moses goes back to the origins of his people, and he belongs to a people chosen by God for a specific purpose. As he reviews the genealogical lines, he puts himself more in line with the divine perspective. God takes the long view of things, and one way to appreciate the long view is to look back at one's genealogy. This is particularly true for Moses, who is among the chosen people.

Moses may not fully appreciate his place in the plan of God right yet, but he will be the founder of nation Israel. Abraham is the father of the Hebrew people; and Moses is the founder of the Hebrew nation (even though Moses is unable to see Israel actually established as a nation in Canaan).

Exodus 6:24 [And the sons of Korah were Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph. These are the families of the Korahites.](#)

This verse logically relates to v. 21 ([The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri.](#)). Vv. 23 and 25 are all about Aaron's line. I do not know why Moses, checkerboards these two lines. Perhaps he is setting up a contrast with the two lines.

Moses grew up in the palace of the Pharaoh, so these are his relatives, but relatives with whom he did not grow up.

Exodus 6:25a [Eleazar, Aaron's son, took for himself one of the daughters of Putiel as wife; and she bore him Phinehas.](#)

This line of Aaron does not continue on through his first or second son, but through his third son, Eleazar. At this point in our narrative, we have no idea why that is. In the later portions of Exodus and in Leviticus, Aaron's first two sons, Nadab and Abihu, will enjoy some prominence as the first sons of Aaron. However, they will suffer the sin unto death, as will many sons of Israel, future from our present narrative.

The fact that this genealogical line jumps over the first two sons—Nadab and Abihu—and goes to Eleazar, the third son. We may only speculate why that is the case. Did Moses have enough insight at this time to recognize the Aaron's first two sons were losers? Or did Moses write this later in the future, when that became apparent? Or did Moses put in information about the first two sons, and that was later edited out (by Moses or by Joshua)?

In any case, Eleazar and Phinehas will both be important to Israel's future (future from this point in the Mosaic narrative). Nadab and Abihu, like much of the Exodus generation, will die the sin unto death.

We do not know when exactly he begins to write this information down. Having this genealogy right here suggests that Moses may have been writing some of this down even as it occurred. The two accounts of the first meeting with Pharaoh suggest that Moses wrote this information down from the first 15 or so chapters in at least two sittings, with some time between this genealogy and what came before or after. Nadab and Abihu will not die until Lev. 10:1–2.

Over the next few months and then 40 years, there will be some massively significant events concerning Israel that will take place; and most of them will be recorded after the fact—months or years later (but recorded by Moses). This could explain why this genealogy goes directly to the third son of Aaron (but that could be a matter of editing after the fact as well).

This also may explain the choppiness of the narrative of Exodus 5–7 (Aaron and Moses meet with Pharaoh, the Pharaoh imposes more work upon the Hebrew people, suddenly we are in the middle of a genealogy, and then in Exodus 7, we will be back to what appears to be the first meeting between Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron). This is how a person might record these events while being removed from them a few years. It is almost as if Moses records the events of Exodus 5, is distracted for a time, returns and writes some of Exodus 6, is distracted again, and returns to write Exodus 7–15 or so, almost from one sitting. It is possible that there are even years in between the writing of Exodus 5 and most of 6, and between Exodus 6 and 7.

On the other hand, in Exodus 15, we have a song apparently written by Moses and sung by Moses and the Exodus generation upon their final exit from Egypt, after seeing the army of Pharaoh buried under the waters of the Red Sea (or Sea of Reeds). Moses had to write this song immediately after those events took place. If Exodus 15 became a part of the official record according to when it was written, then that would suggest that Moses has recorded these chapters as they occurred.

However, Exodus 15 may have been written before these previous chapters and then just inserted. We know when the Song of Moses had to be written; we do not know when these other events were recorded.

Exodus 6:25a [Eleazar, Aaron's son, took for himself one of the daughters of Putiel as wife; and she bore him Phinehas.](#)

Eleazar, Aaron's third son, will be one line of the priesthood; Phinehas is a person in that line and he is a notable figure, albeit a minor one, in Israel's recorded history. Eleazar will be mentioned over 40 times in the Pentateuch alone; and Phinehas, who will be mentioned 10 times between here and the book of the Judges. You may or may not have heard their names before, but these are prominent men in Israel's early history.

Exodus 6:25b [These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites according to their families.](#)

The last statement in v. 25b sums up vv. 23–25a. Mostly Aaron's line is examined. We will hear much more about Phinehas in Num. 25.

Surprisingly, we hear nothing of Gershom, Moses' son, or of his wife. We find out later in Exodus 18 that apparently Moses' wife and children deserted him and returned to her father in Midian (although some translations suggest that Moses *sent her away*; the particular verb used does not specifically mean that).

There are two authors of any portion of Scripture: the human author and the Divine Author. Their motivations for recording particular passages in Scripture can be quite different. Moses, when recording this genealogy, possibly left out his wife and sons because they are not with him at this time. God the Holy Spirit leaves out their names because, ultimately, it is Aaron's line which will become important to Israel.

We know, not by this short genealogy, but from others, how the Levites are related to Amram, Moses' father, but we do not know that from this context. At this point in time of the narrative, not of the writing of the narrative, it is very possible that all Moses knew of his progeny was written here. However, by the listing of the ages of certain of those in his line, those who likely bridge the time between Jacob entering the land and this point in time, Moses is setting up bookends which extend throughout the 400 years of captivity of the Jews (*bookends*, by which I mean, those who entered the land and those who exited the land).

Vv. 26–27 look back to the genealogies just listed. Both verses begin with a demonstrative pronoun, which means *this [is]*, *this one [is]*; *these [are]*; *these ones [are]*. So, if we accept these verses as closing out the genealogy above, then it is also reasonable to include v. 13 ([But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.—ESV](#)) as the beginning verse for the genealogy, which matches up with vv. 26–27.

In the Hebrew, this passage (vv. 26–27) begins with the words *This Aaron and Moses* and ends with *this Moses and Aaron*. However, it is quite difficult to translate this literally into English and still end up with sentences which make good English sense.

Exodus 6:13 **But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt. (ESV)**

Exodus 6:26 **These are the same Aaron and Moses [in the genealogy just studied] to whom the Lord said, “Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies.”**

V. 26 goes back to vv. 13 and 20 and assures us that this is the same Aaron and Moses. We appear to have the generations listed who enter into Egypt originally and those who exit Egypt (along with their parents). There seem to be missing generations during the time of their living in Egypt, some of which can be found in the first 10 or so chapters of 1Chronicles.

*Armies* is an unusual choice of words here, because the Hebrew people are slaves. They have no armies. God can see into their future and when they leave Egypt, they will begin to organize themselves into fighting units. God will cause them to be grouped and organized into these military divisions because once they leave Egypt, they still have a part in God's plan which involves the destruction of the Canaanites who now occupy the promised land.

An effective military requires authority and discipline and order. In order for Moses to guide the people out of Egypt and up to southern Judah, they need to have a well-defined system of authority over them, as well as discipline and order. They have had this in the past, but that was when they were slaves. Now, they have become God's army and God's army requires an authority structure.

Some believe that beginning with v. 26, we are continuing the conversation which was begun in Exodus 5:22 and continued through 6:13. However, I believe that the genealogies restart the narrative altogether.

Exodus 6:27a **These are the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt.**

In the list of names, Moses and Aaron would stand out; and the author (Moses) assures us that these are the same persons, who are found throughout the rest of the Pentateuch. At least 3 times in this chapter we have a reference to Moses and Aaron bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt (vv. 13, 26–27).

Exodus 6:27b **These are the same Moses and Aaron.**

V. 26 begins with the words *Aaron and Moses*; and v. 27 ends with the words *Moses and Aaron*. Whereas, this can sometimes be clumsy in the English, it does not matter in the Hebrew, as their subjects and objects are not determined by word order but by the Hebrew syntax.

Moses is pointing out from his very abbreviated and scattered genealogy that the Moses and Aaron descended from the tribe of Levi. These are the men about whom this book is written. That is, there is no novel or story here that is made up; Moses and Aaron are real people with a real heritage. The latter conclusion is what God the Holy Spirit would expect us to draw.

## Lesson 064: Exodus 6:28–7:2

## Moses the mediator; Aaron the prophet

**Aaron Is Moses's Spokesman** (these subtitles come from the NKJV)

Separating chapters 6 and 7 right here was a mistake.

### Chiasm of Exodus 6:28–7:7 (by Hajime Murai)

A(6:28-29) "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you." (6:29) (רַבֹּד)  
B(6:30) "How will Pharaoh listen to me?" (6:30) (יַמַּע)  
C(7:1-2) "...and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet." (7:1)  
B'(7:3-5) "Pharaoh will not listen to you." (7:4) (יַמַּע)  
A'(7:6-7) ...they spoke to Pharaoh (7:7) (מְרַבֹּד)

From [http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02\\_Exodus\\_pericope\\_e.html](http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02_Exodus_pericope_e.html) (slightly edited; ESV; capitalized used); accessed October 18, 2017.

The genealogies which we have just studied, along with vv. 26–27, give us an introduction; then Exodus 6:28–30 properly begins Exodus 7. With v. 28, I believe that we are going back to the beginning—well, nearly back to the beginning. Moses and Aaron have arrived in Egypt and God gives Moses his marching orders. They are summed up in vv. 28–29.

Exodus 6:28 *And it came to pass, on the day the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt,*...

God initially speaks to Moses when he is in Midian. Moses is married to a Midianite woman, he is shepherding the sheep of this Midianite family, and God appears to him in the form of a burning bush. However, here, in v. 28, God is speaking to Moses *in Egypt*. God began talking to Moses in Midian. However, Moses and Aaron came into Egypt together, and God speaks to Moses once he arrived in Egypt. In fact, from Midian forward, God will speak directly to Moses on many occasions.

We have the phrase *on the day of*, which does not always refer to a 24 hour day. This can refer simply to a period of time. Because of the way that Exodus 7–12 are written, we

cannot pin down exactly the number of times that God spoke to Moses. It may have been before each and every plague, but that is not necessarily the case.

We will see that Exodus 6 will end with God speaking to Moses; Moses then speaking to God; and Exodus 7 will begin with God answering Moses' concern from Exodus 6:30. There is nothing to indicate that there is some passage of time between those two verses.

The verse and chapter divisions were made long after the canon had been determined. Sometimes they are quite good; and on occasions, quite terrible. V. 28 stops mid-sentence, which is continued in v. 29. Because some translators treat these verse divisions almost as sacrosanct, both Rotherham and the *Wiki*-translation put a period at the end of v. 28. However, v. 28 continues into v. 29:

Exodus 6:29a ...that the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "I am the Lord.

In Exodus 4–5, we do not have a time where God speaks to Moses *while in Egypt*, prior to his first encounter with Pharaoh. It would be my hypothesis that, God did speak to Moses in Egypt (as it says here) and that the next encounter with Pharaoh in Exodus 7 will actually be Moses' first encounter with Pharaoh.

Recall that Moses, when traveling from Midian to Egypt, had a fairly significant trip. At one point, he appeared to be dying the sin unto death. Then, soon after, he meets up with his brother Aaron and they seem to share as brothers would after such a long time. Then they traveled on together back to Egypt.

It should not seem out of the ordinary that God would speak with Moses once more, after arriving in Egypt, but right before speaking to Pharaoh. There is so much which takes place that God may need to reorient Moses to His plan.

Exodus 5 gives us the human perspective of Moses and Aaron going before Pharaoh for the first time. On the other hand, Exodus 7–12 gives us God's perspective of each time Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh. This particular meeting between God and Moses is not mentioned in Exodus 4–5, because that account is the human viewpoint version of the first meeting with Pharaoh. However, God's meeting with Moses in Egypt is mentioned here, because this is the divine viewpoint version of this meeting.

You may recall back in Exodus 5, Aaron, when meeting with Pharaoh, said something that God did not tell him to say. He suggested that, if the Hebrew people don't get out to the desert-wilderness and worship God, that God would bring some sort of discipline upon them. God did not say that; and Aaron apparently went off-script. Nobody will go off-script in Exodus 7–12. If Moses or Aaron misspoke during any of those meetings, it will not be recorded.

Exodus 6:29b *Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you."*

Before Moses and Aaron met with Pharaoh, God told Moses to speak exactly the words which He says to him. There was to be no going off-script.

God tells Moses to speak directly to Pharaoh. Moses does not yet think like God thinks. Therefore, it is very important for him to remember what God says and to say exactly that and no more. Throughout Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, Moses will be very careful to quote God and to let the reader know that this is what God has said. Throughout these 3 books, there is nearly always a clear differentiation between what Moses says, what God says and what the general narrative is.

By the time we get to Deuteronomy, Moses is thinking like God thinks, and so, he speaks for God throughout most of the book. In the book of Exodus, every time that God speaks, we are informed that God is speaking. At no time are we confused about God's words as over against Moses' or anyone else's words. But, in Deuteronomy, Moses just speaks for God. Deuteronomy is Moses' final set of sermons to the children of Israel. Only on occasion, does Moses quote God specifically; but he still speaks throughout Deuteronomy with great spiritual authority. Furthermore, people in Jewish history have held up Deuteronomy as being equivalent in authority to Exodus. I am not aware of anyone suggesting that Deuteronomy is less authoritative than Exodus. Moses' confident address in Deuteronomy stands in stark contrast to his words in v. 30.

Exodus 6:30a [But Moses said before the Lord, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips,...](#)

I believe that Moses said this at least twice to God. He said it once when in Midian, when God appeared to him as the burning bush; and he says this again to God, after entering Egypt (he comes back to Egypt with Aaron at his side).

When Moses is first confronted by God in the Midian desert, he complained that he was not a very good public speaker. Now he is in Egypt, God is speaking to him again, and God again says, "[Speak \[2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperative\] to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, all that I say to you \[2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix\].](#)"

So, God is not saying, "This is what I want you to say to Aaron;" God is saying, "This is what I want you [2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular], Moses, to say to Pharaoh." So, even though God sent Aaron to meet Moses, and said that Aaron would be his mouthpiece; God again tells Moses that he personally should speak directly to Pharaoh.

And Moses again complains that he is not good at speaking in public, which is what he means by saying that he has uncircumcised lips. "If I cannot speak well, then Pharaoh will not listen to me and act," Moses explains to God.

The verb *to say, to speak* is the Qal imperfect, which suggests that Moses may have said this several times.

What is ironic is, Moses has had actual training to become a pharaoh, which training would have included public speaking (in some form or another); and Aaron has not. Moses had

been trained to become king of Egypt for a considerable number of years; Aaron received no such training himself. Yet, Moses' plaintive plea is...

Exodus 6:30b ...and how shall Pharaoh heed me?"

"If I am tongue-tied," Moses explains, "then how can I expect Pharaoh to listen to me?"

It was always God's plan for Moses to speak directly to Pharaoh; otherwise, He would have appeared to Aaron continually and given him orders. However, Moses, although he had a royal training forty years ago, has since lived out in the desert as a shepherd and a recluse, as it were, and he lacks confidence. But Who does Moses really lack confidence in? God. God came to Moses, not to Aaron; therefore Moses ought to respect God's thinking on this matter.

God's intent is for Moses to be a type of Christ, acting as a mediator between man (Pharaoh) and God. This position of mediator does not include an extra guy.

In any case, God and Moses had at least two conversations about Moses speaking to Pharaoh directly; once when God appeared to Moses as the burning bush (Exodus 4:10–16); and at least once in Egypt (Exodus 6:28). Moses presents to God the same complaint at least twice.

The genealogy was then inserted because Moses is about to deliver his country Israel. The savior of Israel must show himself to be genetically a Hebrew (at least twice in Exodus, Moses is presented as a Hebrew—when his background is first given in Exodus 2 and in the genealogies which we have just studied. Similarly, the books of Matthew and Luke will also present two genealogies in order to show that Jesus Christ also has legal and genetic claim to the throne of David.

At this point, we have come to the end of Exodus 6 and the beginning of Exodus 7. Whoever designed the chapter breaks in Exodus has to have been quite confused. I am not following their thinking at all. This is again a time when the chapter breaks right in the middle of a conversation. Exodus 7:1 occurs immediately after 6:30; Exodus 7:1 is God's response to what Moses said in Exodus 6:30. There are also verse breaks which are illogical (between vv. 28 & 29; and then between 10 & 11).

Notice how these passages hold together:

Exodus 6:28–29 On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, the LORD said to Moses, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you."

Exodus 6:30 But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?"

Exodus 7:1–2 And the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and

your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land.” (ESV; capitalized)

As you can clearly read, there is no need for a chapter break at this point. Exodus 7:1–2 is God’s direct response to Moses’ concern.

## Lesson 065: Exodus 6:28–7:1

## Defining Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh

Despite the odd chapter break, Dr. Peter Pett is able to present the first 13 verses of Exodus 7 as a chiasm.

### Exodus 7:1–13 as a Chiasm (from Dr. Peter Pett)

#### Yahweh Encourages Moses To Go Forward (Exodus 7:1–13).

- a Yahweh tells Moses that He has made him as a God to Pharaoh, with Aaron as his prophet (Exodus 7:1).
- b Moses is therefore to say all that Yahweh commands, and Aaron must communicate it in diplomatic style to Pharaoh, with the aim of him letting the children of Israel leave the land (Exodus 7:2).
  - c Yahweh promises that He will harden Pharaoh’s heart (make it firm and strong in the wrong direction) and will as a result multiply signs and wonders in Egypt The result is that Pharaoh will not listen to them. Yahweh will then lay His hand on Egypt and bring forth His ‘hosts’, that is His people the children of Israel, and He will do it by great judgments (Exodus 7:3–4).
  - c Then the Egyptians will know that He is Yahweh, when He stretches out His hand on Egypt, and bring the children of Israel out from among the Egyptians (Exodus 7:5).
- b And Moses and Aaron did what Yahweh commanded. That is what they did (Exodus 7:6).
- a And Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh (Exodus 7:7).

Note that in ‘a’ Yahweh tells them that He has made him as a God to Pharaoh, with Aaron as his prophet, while in the parallel their ages are given. This suggests that we are to see a significance in their ages. This may lie in the fact that eight intensified is the indication of a new beginning and thus Moses is to be seen as the Deliverer while Aaron is eight intensified plus three, the one who makes the deliverer complete. See the commentary in respect of this. In ‘b’ Moses is to say all that Yahweh commands, and Aaron must communicate it in diplomatic style to Pharaoh, with the aim of him letting the children of Israel leave the land, and in the parallel they do what they are commanded. In ‘c’ Yahweh promises that He will harden Pharaoh’s heart and will as a result multiply signs and wonders in Egypt (make known that He is Yahweh). The result is that Pharaoh will not listen to them. Yahweh will then lay His hand on Egypt and bring forth His ‘hosts’, that is His people the children of Israel, and He will do it by great judgments

The final verses of Exodus 6 lead us naturally into Exodus 7. It is the same conversation continued:

Exodus 6:28–29 On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, the LORD said to Moses, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you."  
Exodus 6:30 But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?" (ESV; capitalized)

Moses, for the second time, has complained that he is not a good public speaker (he made this complaint to God when God appeared to him as a burning bush). Since Moses will not be the only person in front of Pharaoh, God needs to set things up so that the typology (that is, the shadow imagery) will be right.

Exodus 7:1a So the Lord said to Moses: "See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh,...

God, as He always does, makes the most of what He has to work with. Moses continually claims that he is not a good public speaker, so Moses will be portrayed like God to Pharaoh.

God uses many of His Old Testament saints as types. Although typology is mentioned in the New Testament, this is one of the few Old Testament passages where it is at least hinted at.

Moses would speak to Pharaoh with the authority of God. He would act with the authority of God. Moses, therefore, will be God to Pharaoh. Pharaoh will look at Moses—even when he is silent—and recognize his authority and power. Aaron would look to Moses to be guided as to what to say.

The typology being established is, Moses will be a type of Christ.

At some point in this series of meetings, Moses will step forward and speak to Pharaoh directly, metaphorically casting Aaron aside. Aaron will still be there, but having a somewhat reduced role in God's grand theater.

Exodus 7:1b ...and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

God sets up a parallel. Several men in the Old Testament are types; so, on occasion, God has to define the type. Right here, both Moses and Aaron will go before Pharaoh. Therefore, since Moses is going to be a type of Christ; then Aaron's place must be defined. Aaron will be like a prophet, who speaks God's words to Pharaoh. Aaron is an extra person who is not really needed; his speaking directly to Pharaoh is an extra step that is not really needed. Nevertheless, God allows for it, defining the proper typology.

Aaron, in this capacity, will not be a type of Christ. It would not make any sense for there to be two men who represent Jesus Christ standing side-by-side. Therefore, God here defines Aaron's role as the prophet of Moses, Moses being a type (or, *shadow*) of Christ.

A prophet speaks God's Word to man; a prophet represents God to man. Moses will be as if he is God to Pharaoh; and Aaron will speak, as if he is Moses' prophet. Moses has the truth, the authority and the power. Aaron will do and say exactly as Moses instructs.

Exodus 7:1 [So the Lord said to Moses: "See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.](#)

God nearly always works through intermediate sources when dealing with man. He prefers to work through man to deal with man. This is the relationship of the prophet and the priest; the priest represents man to God and the prophet represents God to man. God does not work in any other way. Certainly, God is able to go directly to the Pharaoh and cause the Pharaoh to let His people go. However, that just is not the way that God functions in His relationship to mankind. In our generation, God does not speak to us directly as He did in the Old Testament, but He speaks to us through His Word and we have intermediary agencies involved. For instance, the pastor-teacher today is the one that we look to for instruction and he looks directly to the Word. We both do so under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

This is one of the differences between how God deals with angels and how God deals with mankind. God appears to entertain angels in large convocations, where He apparently teaches both fallen and elect angels (as in Job 1–2). But with man, God uses men to stand between Himself and other men. One of the few exceptions to this rule will occur in this book, where God will speak directly to the Hebrew people, giving them the Ten Commandments. After that experience, the Hebrew people will beg Moses to speak on behalf of God.

So there is no misunderstanding, God does speak directly with some men, but only during specific periods of time; and such direct contact is limited. As we have studied in the book of Genesis, that does not always culminate with perfect results. God spoke to Abraham and Abraham, for the most part, went along with God's program. God spoke to Jacob, Abraham's grandson, on several occasions, and still, Jacob fought against God and God's plan on many occasions (in fact, God immortalized Jacob's attitude and actions with a wrestling match wherein God injured Jacob's leg; the wrestling match itself was illustrative of Jacob's contentious interactions with God).

Exodus 7:1 [So the Lord said to Moses: "See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.](#)

God will set this up so that Aaron speaks on behalf of Moses (acting as a prophet for Moses), even though this configuration is not God's first choice. Because of the odd configuration (Moses and Aaron standing before Pharaoh), God specifically defines Moses and Aaron's functions.

A *prophet* is a man who represents God to man. We will cover the doctrine more thoroughly in Deut. 18:15. Throughout the Old Testament, God has consistently set up types; that is, a person, a series of events, something which is analogous to the Person and work of Jesus Christ; or something which foreshadows the first advent of our Lord. We observed such foreshadowing when Abraham took his only-begotten son to sacrifice to God—the only time God has ever required anyone to present their son to Him as if a sacrificial lamb. Then, right before Abraham could slit the throat of his young son Isaac, God provided for him a substitute; a scapegoat, to be sacrificed in his stead. This was a beautiful analogy to God offering up His Own Son as our substitute

God's preference here is to have one man between Himself and Pharaoh—that man Moses to act as a mediator; to act as a prophet. However, since Moses has weened out on speaking directly to Pharaoh, Aaron will step in to speak for Moses, confusing the type. Therefore, God immediately sets up a type of mediatorship, a position that our Lord Jesus Christ occupies on our behalf; the God-man Who stands between us and God. God sets up the type by appointing Moses to be God **unto Pharaoh**; and Aaron would act as a prophet—the man who would speak God's will to man, represented by Pharaoh. Moses would be the Christ figure, the mediator between God and man; Aaron would be his prophet. This may seem unnecessarily complex, but that is because it is. Aaron is an extra person thrown into the mix who does not have to be there (Aaron is only added into this mix because Moses doubts himself and he doubts God).

Exodus 7:1 [So the Lord said to Moses: “See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.](#)

What God has actually said to Moses is a bit tongue-in-cheek. Moses is God's preferred spokesman to Pharaoh and Moses is hemming and hawing about it. So, instead of God speaking to Moses and sending Moses to the Pharaoh and Moses speaking God's words to the Pharaoh; God will speak to Moses and then Moses will speak to Aaron. Then, both Moses and Aaron will stand before Pharaoh, but only Aaron will speak to Pharaoh. Moses will be there, just as God will be there; standing silently.

It is actually a fairly humorous thing which God has said to Moses. God will speak to Moses and tell Moses what to tell Aaron to say; then Moses will speak to Aaron. There will be a point at which Moses just starts doing all of the talking (which happens in the narrative without any fanfare).

One thing which is extremely important in this verse (but not to the immediate context) is the use of the word *prophet*. We continually look back on prophets as being rather unusual men who tell their contemporaries about the future. That is not their primary function. Their primary function is that of being a mouthpiece for God. God speaks to man through the prophets. Aaron will speak the words of Moses to Pharaoh. Some of the things which he informs Pharaoh of will come to pass shortly—however, he is a prophet because he is speaking on behalf of Moses, who acts as if he is God, as both men stand before Pharaoh.

Therefore, before we know anything about typology (typology began to be developed with the writing of the New Testament), God clarifies exactly how Moses and Aaron will be typified. Moses would be like God to Aaron; and Aaron would be Moses' prophet. Typically speaking, Moses will represent Jesus Christ. Aaron, in this role, will not be a type of Christ, *per se*, but he will act as Moses' prophet.

Interestingly enough, later down the road, Aaron will become the father of the priesthood—a priest is a man who represents his fellow men to God (a priest offers sacrifices to God on behalf of the people there). A prophet represents God to man. When you put these two functions together—prophet and priest—you get a mediator between man and God—someone equal to both parties and Who speaks to one on behalf of the other. This very much describes the function of Jesus Christ, Who is fully man and fully God—equal to both parties—and therefore, He is able to mediate between the two parties.

Now, think about how clever this was of God: in the end, both Moses and Aaron will typify the Lord Jesus Christ. Moses was unwilling to play a solo role (for awhile), so God brought in Aaron and made Aaron every bit a type of Christ.

## **Lesson 066: Exodus 7:2–3**

## **God Warns Moses that Pharaoh Will Resist**

God is speaking to Moses and Moses again claims that he is not up to speaking directly to Pharaoh. Aaron will be brought into the picture, and he will be called Moses' prophet.

Exodus 7:2a [You shall speak all that I command you.](#)

God is speaking to Moses, and He is telling Moses that *he* will say everything that God communicates to him. Because Moses feigns a problem with public speaking, he will first say all of God's message to Aaron, then Aaron will repeat these words to Pharaoh. It will be Moses' chief responsibility is to hear and repeat what God says. God prefers for Moses to say this to Pharaoh; but God will allow Moses to start out by saying these things to Aaron.

Interestingly enough, this essentially defines what a prophet does—he is to say whatever God tells him to say. V. 1 tells us that Moses will be as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron would be his prophet—saying exactly what Moses tells him to say.

Exodus 7:2b [And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land.](#)

God's chief requirement of Pharaoh is that he willingly send the children of Israel out of Egypt.

When God's will is first presented to Pharaoh, the request will be for him to let the children of Israel go outside of the land of Egypt to worship for a week or so. Most people know the story of the exodus, that Moses would lead the people out of Egypt for good. Furthermore,

this is God's ultimate aim. So, why simply ask for a part of that? Why does God tell Moses, "Ask Pharaoh to send the people out to worship Me for a week or so"? Since the ultimate aim is to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt entirely, why not make that request?

God is giving Pharaoh a request that he could reasonably grant—had he been a reasonable and humble man. No way, no how would Pharaoh agree to send the sons of Israel out of the land forever (not until God beats him and the people of Egypt down). So God makes a reasonable request of Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of Egypt for a short time. So God sets this up in such a way that Moses (through Aaron) makes a request which ought to have been granted.

Exodus 7:2 You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land.

Moses is still going to say whatever God tells him to say. Moses will speak quietly to Aaron first, and then Aaron will repeat it to Pharaoh.

God first gives Moses a brief outline of what is to come. In our lives, God knows what is coming next, and knows that it is best that we simply experience it as it happens. In this case, the negative volition of Pharaoh is going to be quite powerful; so Moses is going to hear a lot of, *no way's* from Pharaoh before he finally lets Israel go. There will be times when Pharaoh will agree to let God's people go to worship Him, and then he withdraw that offer or he will attempt to negotiate the terms and conditions with God. As soon as Pharaoh feels strong enough to oppose God (which strength is sometimes given to him from God), then he opposes God. God does not give him the negative volition to oppose Him; God gives Pharaoh the strength to oppose Him (and sometimes, Pharaoh strengthens himself).

Exodus 7:2 You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land.

God specifies exactly what the duties of Moses and Aaron are. Moses is to tell Aaron everything that God tells Moses; then Aaron will speak to Pharaoh. The verb used here is the Piel perfect of *shâlach* (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAHK*] and it means *to send, to send away*. In the Piel (intensive) stem we have more of the concept of sending *away*. Throughout much of Exodus, this verb is translated *to let go*. However, Pharaoh is in command in his country and what occurs must be as a result of a mandate from him. He will, at some point, order the people to leave the land; the intensive stem carries with it the concept of a royal command or mandate. The perfect tense suggests a singular or a completed action; Pharaoh will eventually send the people away for good; not for just a week-long feast and worship service out in the desert. However, due to the perfect tense, God has to make it clear to Moses that even though Pharaoh will do this, he will not do it immediately after the next confrontation.

Moses and Aaron must be prepared for what will happen.

Exodus 7:3a [And I will harden Pharaoh's heart...](#)

God warns here, for the first time, that He will harden (strengthen) Pharaoh's heart

God is laying out what will happen in general. He says that "[I, even I, will harden Pharaoh's heart.](#)" What this sounds like is, men are no more than chess pieces that God moves around a chessboard. Charley Brown may want to move to the right, but God causes him to move to the left instead. That is what this sounds like.

Men have struggled with this and similar passages for a very long time. This word indicates the strength to exercise one's negative volition toward God and His plan. In this verse, the Hiphil is used, which is the causative stem, indicating that God is associated with making Pharaoh's heart strong. We may reasonably assume that God did not enter into the soul of Pharaoh and turn the switch from positive to negative. Pharaoh was not thinking, *hmm, I think this must be God, so I must believe in Him and let his people go*; and then God steps in and changes his mind. God does not say, at this point, *I can't have this; Pharaoh needs to remain negative towards Me.*

The explanation is, God has given Pharaoh the strength to resist; God has made Pharaoh able to further resist God, which free will choice is in his soul. Every person chooses their relationship with God; they choose if they have an interest in God and in Who He is. Will they choose to pre-judge Him? Will they choose to reject Him? Will they choose to ignore or deny Him? God provides us with the information about Himself; but He allows us to choose what we want to believe.

Pharaoh is in the position where he actively fights against God; he publically and actively resists God. Even when circumstances beat him down to where he is unable to resist God due to being overwhelmed, God gives him the strength to continue to express his negative volition, which negative volition is already there. God is not change Pharaoh's volition; God is giving Pharaoh the strength to act on his volition.

As a kid, I was in a number of fights, and I won and lost in about equal amounts. One neighbor kid and I used to fight, and I was bigger and stronger than him, but he was far more passionate about fighting. I recall one time, I clearly had him beat, and he kept coming on to me, when I wanted to walk away. So we kept fighting to a point where I would beat him and walk away, and then he would come at me for more. I recall that he did this 3 or 4 times after I was done fighting, and each time I had to overpower him (there were no permanent injuries, no hospital visits after, no broken noses—I think we mostly wrestled). Even after the final time, had he been given the strength, he would have come back after me for more. So, my understanding of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is, even when he was beat down, he was still negative towards God. God gave him the strength to express his anger and obstinance toward God. Even if God knocked him down; God gave him the strength to stand up again. God did not make him obstinate, but God gave him the strength to act on his obstinance. God did not cause Pharaoh resist Him; but God gave Pharaoh the strength to resist Him.

Let me offer another analogy. At one time in our legal past, when the police arrested a suspect, they had virtual *carte blanc* when it came to dealing with the suspect. They could question them for hours on end, without sleep, without food, until they got the person to admit to the crime. Now, the person might not have committed the crime, but is so beaten down by the interrogation that he confesses to the crime, seeing that as his only way out. Under normal circumstances, a person is not going to confess to a crime that they did not commit; and you can ask them to confess 3 or 4 times, and they won't. However, you can put so much pressure on a person that, they might give in and confess to something they did not do, 6 hours later or 10 hours later or 15 hours later.

Pharaoh is not going to be forced to act against his own free will. He is going to be given the inner strength to exercise his own volition. God will not allow Pharaoh to be beat down to the point where he is defeated and will agree to virtually anything. God will give Pharaoh the strength to be able to continue to exercise his own volition.

I gave the analogy of a suspect being grilled without the rights and privileges which we have developed. If the suspect is given food at regular intervals, allowed to use the bathroom and given time to sleep; then he will continue to have the strength to resist—particularly if he is innocent. Essentially, this is what God does for Pharaoh. God allows for Pharaoh to strengthen himself; or God gives him the strength.

Exodus 7:3b ...and [I will] multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.

Simultaneous to strengthening Pharaoh's heart, God will provide great signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. God's signs and wonders would not be for Pharaoh alone, but for all Egypt and all Israel. These signs reveal that God is both theatric and appropriate for His audience.

The *multiplication* of the signs and wonders is also in the Hiphil stem, meaning that God will cause these signs and wonders through the instrumentality of Moses and Aaron. The perfect tense means that God is seeing this action as a whole (as He is the One speaking), even though we see this series of events as a process.

My translation: I will [certainly] strengthen [or, *harden, make obstinate*] Pharaoh's heart so that I may multiply My signs and wonders in the land of Egypt.

God is explaining to Moses that (1) Pharaoh will send the people out of Egypt eventually; (2) Pharaoh will not do that immediately; and (3) this is the reason why—so that God can multiply His signs and wonders in the land of Egypt.

What God did in Egypt was on a grand scale. The signs and miracles wrought there were very different from what Elijah did and very different from what Jesus did. It is the same power, but God is always cognizant of His audience. If there are hundreds of thousands who will view His great power, then He has to make His great power manifest in such a way as to be clearly visible and understood to that number of people.

Jesus, on the other hand, might have dealt with crowds of a few dozen—even hundreds in some cases—and His miracles could be more subtle and better suited for a smaller crowd. God, through Moses, was interacting with a very large number of people (two great nations); and God has to deal with a very large audience—an audience of millions. Jesus, on the other hand, primarily dealt with the people who came to Him, and so these would have been, by very definition, smaller in number than all of the Hebrews combined with all of the Egyptians. Those who came to Jesus might number in the 10's or the 100's. A few times, they numbered in the 1000's. But what Jesus did before these crowds was appropriate to their size.

Cecil B. DeMille in his movie *The Ten Commandments* was one of the few producer/directors to recognize just how theatric God is (in some instances). We will see that throughout the next few chapters. We do not always recognize this when we read the words that Moses writes; but these signs and wonders are designed to catch the attention of the Hebrews and the Egyptians as a whole; they were designed to affect millions of people. Very often, when we see a movie about a historic event, it gets Hollywood-ed up. DeMille did not have to Hollywood-up God's miracles in Egypt. What we saw in this movie was likely very similar to what God did.<sup>58</sup>

## Lesson 067: Exodus 6:28–7:5

## God Gives Moses the Overall Game Plan

Moses has been speaking with God since the end of Exodus 6, preparing for a meeting with Pharaoh.

After the genealogy given in Exodus 6, this is the narrative which we are studying:

Exodus 6:28–29 **On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, the LORD said to Moses, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you."**

God is speaking to Moses in Egypt and Moses is about to go before Pharaoh.

Exodus 6:30 **But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?"**

Moses balks again, just as he had done in Midian. Moses claims that he is not up to the job given him by God.

Exodus 7:1–3 **And the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. But I will**

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<sup>58</sup> There was another movie put out recently called *the Bible*. After seeing their *Moses* on screen for 5 minutes, I stopped watching the series. They portrayed him as a nutjob with crazy eyes. That was enough for me to know that they were very confused about who Moses was.

harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, (ESV; capitalized)

God then defines how exactly Moses and Aaron would act before Pharaoh and what their roles would be. God also tells Moses how Pharaoh would react. God is preparing Moses for meeting Pharaoh.

Then God warns Moses:

Exodus 7:4a **But Pharaoh will not heed you,....**

Regardless of what Moses says or does, Pharaoh would not do what God wants him to do (the verb used here means *to hear and obey*). As a result of Pharaoh's negative volition, God would bring great judgements upon Egypt in order to bring His people out of Egypt.

God is giving Moses a look into the future and it is often very important to prepare people for what is going to happen in the future, when you recognize what will happen and they do not. I was a real estate agent for many years, and a good agent continually prepares their customers for the process of buying a house, which is almost never a smooth process. There are problems which occur along the way, and each problem could balloon into a great crisis, if the buyer is not prepared for it. For instance, when dealing with a family who might buy 3 or 5 houses in their lifetimes, and you show them a house, and they are all excited by that house; and then it comes time for inspections (a good agent will always push his people toward getting inspections—even for a brand new house). However, inspections will always bring bad news. When inspecting a house, the inspector who says, at the end of his inspection, *there are no problems with this house*—that might be your day to go out and buy a lottery ticket as well. About 99% of the time, there are problems. Therefore, you, as the agent, must prepare the people for what the inspection will potentially reveal. When the inspector comes up with \$5000 worth of repairs that need to be done, the novice buyer panics and thinks that the house he loves is about to collapse into a pile of rubble before him. Now, if you warn the buyer in advance that there will be repairs suggested by the inspector, and that these repairs<sup>59</sup> could run as much as \$10,000, and if you emphasize that it is not a big deal—warning them in advance there may be a considerable number of repairs—then the buyers are much less likely to freak out.

Even when it comes to new houses, inspections are important. The good agent prepares a person for the fact that, the brand new house that he wants to buy may not be without defect. The new buyer looks at this clean, shiny new house and assumes everything is absolutely perfect. The agent should help ground the buyer in reality and prepare him for the imperfections which may be discovered in this brand new house.

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<sup>59</sup> An agent looks at the house when a buyer does, but often in a different way; and often very critically, so educated guesses about the actual condition of the property can be deduced.

There was a builder in a particular area near where I live who built houses almost designed to produce black mold. I was inside perhaps 5 or 6 of this builder's homes, and they all had the same problem—they took in water (when it did not flood) and they produced mold. A good home inspector would have been able to deduce that there would be problems, even when the house is brand-spanking new. When I purchased one of his houses as a repo, I figured out what the problems were which caused the creation of mold and eliminated those problems—at the cost of a few days work and perhaps \$2000 in supplies. A good home inspector would have recognized the same problems which I cured. A great home inspector could tell the buyer what needed to be done for such a house; whereas a good home inspector would simply warn of the considerable and foreseeable problems which could potentially happen. Every person who bought this builder's houses could have been guided by the inspector as to how to deal with these problems before they happened; or talk them out of paying so much money for a house that was so poorly designed.<sup>60</sup>

If a realtor guides even new home buyers to have inspections, and to warn them that, even with new houses, there can be some fundamental problems, the buyers are not panicked when these problems are revealed. A realtor deals with a dozen or more such transactions every single year, and they know the importance of inspections. This allows their buyers to have clear eyes when purchasing a home.

This is exactly what God is doing for Moses and Aaron. He is telling them enough about the future so that they do not freak out and panic; and then become disheartened. God's great signs and wonders might impress Moses and Aaron; and in their minds, they might think, *Pharaoh has got to let the people go after this*. But God is warning them that, he will not. Pharaoh is going to require a great deal of convincing.

Exodus 7:4a-b **But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt...**

God's *hand* is often used to represent things that *He would do*. *God's hand* represents things over which He has control.

Throughout the next month or two, God would apply great pressure upon Pharaoh and upon the people of Egypt. Yet, despite all of this divine pressure, Pharaoh is going to resist God.

Exodus 7:4c **...and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.**

*My armies* is the masculine plural of tsâbâ' (צָבָא) [pronounced tsaw<sup>b</sup>-VAW], which means, *that which goes forth, army, war, warfare, host; army, host; host (of organized army); host (of angels); host {of of sun, moon, and stars; of all creation}*. Strong's #6635 BDB #838. Because they have been slaves for a few hundred years, the people of Israel do not feel

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<sup>60</sup> Whether or not there should have been automatic state or county inspectors is a whole other conversation. Personally, I think that it comes down to, *buyer beware*; and for the buyer to get a private inspector.

as if they are an army; because the Egyptians have beaten them down—but they are God’s army and they will function as God’s army.

In order to bring the Hebrew people out of Egypt, God will execute great judgments. This is the masculine plural noun *sh<sup>e</sup>phâṭîym* (שִׁפְטִים) [pronounced *sh<sup>e</sup>-faw-TEEM*], which means *judgements, judicial decisions, judicial renderings, divine decisions based upon God’s judicial requirements; acts of judgment*. Strong’s #8201 BDB #1048. So, what God will do to Egypt involves more than massive tricks or miracles; these things that God does are judicial acts. Pharaoh will resist God, and God will render a just decision in response to his negative volition.

Exodus 7:4 **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 the land of Egypt by great judgments.**

Pharaoh is going to hear the demands of Moses and reject them. God wants His people removed from Egypt, and Pharaoh will resist. God will bring great judgments against Egypt and Egypt’s gods in order to achieve the eventual outcome of bringing Israel out of Egypt.

Exodus 7:5a **And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt...**

What God would do will make it clear that He is God, that He is sovereign over all. Therefore, He is sovereign over the land of Egypt.

God *stretching out His hand* is a reference to God causing specific things to occur in Egypt. His hand represents God’s power and sovereignty, which results in specific actions.

*Lord* here is YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly *yhoh-WAH*], and this is the personal, specific name for God in the Old Testament. Most of the time, this is a reference to Jesus Christ in the Old Testament (but it can refer to any specific Member of the Godhead).

The signs and wonders which God will do will be so amazing, that even some of the Egyptians will recognize that Moses represents *the God* (that is, they will turn against a lifetime of religious indoctrination). God’s power will be undeniable. By the time we come to the 10<sup>th</sup> judgment, all Israel will recognize that this is their God; and all Egypt will fear their God. In fact, all Egypt will demand that the sons of Israel leave Egypt permanently, recognizing that their presence in Egypt is a burden upon Egypt. It is reasonable to assume that the Egyptians want Israel to leave *and to take their God with them*. Even though that is shortsighted, it is my estimation that those are the feelings of most of Egypt. They believe that, if Israel leaves, as Moses and Aaron are demanding, then their God will leave with them.

Exodus 7:5b **...and bring out the children of Israel from among them.”**

The people, who the Egyptians believed to be their slaves, will exit Egypt, led by Moses; and they will go into the desert to worship their God. To be more precise: the Hebrew people will not simply exit; but all of the Egyptians will urge them to leave. This urging suggests that the Egyptians were fully cognizant of what was happening. They knew that this God was acting on behalf of Israel, and the one sure way to end all of this destruction is to remove Israel from Egypt. God's signs were designed to reach all of Egypt (as well as, all of Goshen, the land in Egypt where Israel lived).

This is at least the sixth time that God has told Moses that He would bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt; God has told Moses almost as many times that Pharaoh would not let the people go at first. This would indicate that repetition of Bible doctrine is called for at times. In this immediate context alone, Y<sup>e</sup>howah has told Moses that He will bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt three times.

**Application:** If you attend a doctrinal church or if you are listening via electronic means to a doctrinal teacher, you will hear certain principles repeated on several occasions. Important principles need to be repeated until you believe them and they become an integral part of your soul.

**Application:** I was brought up spiritually by listening to R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s tapes, and eventually moved to Houston, in part, for his teaching (I began listening to the tapes around 1972 and was in Houston in 1978). Since then, I have gone back and re-listened to studies which I heard *live*, and what is quite remarkable is, listening the second time through, I got far more out of it, and felt like I remembered nothing from the first time. What had happened was, I develop a greater understanding of the plan of God, so that there was much more depth in the lessons that I heard for the second time. More things fit together and made sense. As an aside, something else was quite amazing to observe: even though I listened to lessons from the Bible from R. B. Thieme, Jr. that he had given 30 years or more previously, his applications to life and to the United States were right up-to-date. It is as if he were teaching live in the 2000's, having been exposed to all that I had experienced living during that time.

**Application:** There are some principles of doctrine which R. B. Thieme, Jr. repeated again and again, which I occasionally repeat almost verbatim. Truthful principles from the Word of God stand forever.

**Application:** When the Bible is taught accurately, then it is always up-to-date. Even though the events that we are studying took place 3500+ years ago, there are still applications to our lives today.

So far, this is where we are:

Exodus 7:5 [God is speaking to Moses:] [And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.](#)"

God is preparing Moses to go in to speak to Pharaoh.

Exodus 7:4–5 [God is speaking, giving guidance to Moses] **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 the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.**”

God has also made it clear to Moses that the Pharaoh would not listen to him. God tells Moses this again in this passage. It is a passage like this that makes me think about divine guidance. People who lack God's Word in their soul, who are immature and whose production falls somewhere between very small and nonexistent, still often express a concern with or interest in divine guidance. It is a mystical experience to many of them or they want someone else to tell them what to do so they can pick and chose from those directives so that they can do the things that they would most like to do.

If you know God's Word, you will get enough specifics to handle 90-100% of the things in your life. What Moses had to do here was clear. God spoke to him directly and repeated it three times and told him what would happen as a result of him speaking to Pharaoh. There would be no surprises (if Moses thought about the words that God said). You will recall from Exodus 5 that there was a glitch (Pharaoh increases the workload of the people). However, in this recounting of the same events, that will be unimportant in the grand scheme of things. Pharaoh's increasing of the workload of Israel will mean nothing in God's grand plan. Even though the people of Israel and the elders were extremely upset about that, and it caused them some difficulties for a few days, Pharaoh's directive became a trivial matter when God began to put His plagues on Egypt.

Exodus 7:5 **And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.**”

v. 5 gives us the big picture. The Egyptians will acknowledge Who God is; and God's show of power will bring the people of Israel out of Egypt. The Egyptians will know that the LORD is God, because He will lead the Hebrews out of Egypt. Such a thing is unheard of in human history, before or after the exodus.

**Application:** Here, God is speaking to Moses and He is telling Moses exactly what to do and what to expect. So, what about divine guidance when God is not right there audibly telling you exactly what to do? For the young or immature believer, the beginning is simple: (1) you rebound (you name your sins to God) when you sin; (2) you attend Bible class whenever the doors are open (preferably 7 days a week) and you study your notes for an hour on the off days (or make use of electronic media); and (3) you do not make any drastic changes in your life (i.e., quit your job because you don't like it there, leave your mate because he/she is an unbeliever, get married, get divorced, etc.) These are not

tough directions. As the immature believer grows in grace and knowledge, he (or she) will learn how to make increasingly difficult, life-changing decisions.

Nevertheless, the hardest people to explain these things to are those who have been saved for one year or ten years when they haven't grown spiritually at all. They have been out of fellowship nearly all that time because they never knew how to regain the filling of the Spirit; or those who have been involved in self-study, most of this taking place when they are out of fellowship. In fact, for several years, they might be involved in self-study and now they fancy themselves as experts in all things theological. Furthermore, they want everything justified to them; particularly the last point where I said, "Don't make any big life decisions." "Where does my Bible say that?" they will demand. Paul, in writing to the carnal and immature Corinthians (1Cor. 7:26-29), told them to stay wherever they were in life because that would spare them a lot of trouble. Far too many of us make major decisions as immature believers, the consequences of which we have to live with for the rest of our lives. Our lives would be simplified and eased greatly if we postponed all major decisions until we experienced some actual spiritual growth so that our course of action is crystal clear.

At this point in time, Moses and Aaron's course in life is crystal clear. As an aside, this suggests that both brothers have enjoyed some spiritual growth. It is my theory that Moses, when young, had Hebrew teachers who also taught him the Word of God (the books of Genesis and Job); and that Moses also learned divine viewpoint from his father-in-law in Midian (this is conjecture, but Moses was clearly raised with a first-class education; and his father-in-law's priesthood is mentioned several times). We do not know about Aaron's spiritual growth, but it is reasonable to expect that God provided opportunities for him as well. Both men will act in accordance with the will of God (a notable exception for Aaron is what he does during the *golden calf* incident).

Exodus 7:6 [Then Moses and Aaron did so; just as the Lord commanded them, so they did.](#)

Moses and Aaron, therefore, did what God told them to do. God has given them a set of directions, and they will do what God tells them to do. Moses has modified God's plan somewhat, but Aaron seems to be willing to do whatever God requires of him.

In this chapter, the focus continues to be upon God's plan and the execution of God's plan.

Exodus 7:7a [And Moses was eighty years old....](#)

Because of the genetic differences, a man of eighty in those days was as powerful as a man of thirty or forty today (particularly when we are speaking of Moses).

This gives us part of the time table in Moses' life. Of all places, we find the timetable for Moses' life in Acts 7:19-53 spoken by Stephen, immediately prior to Stephen's death. In fact, Stephen gives us more detail about Moses's early life than Moses does in Exodus (we have studied much of this passage already).

Stephen tells us that Moses was nursed for three months by his birth mother, raised in the palace of the Pharaoh by the Pharaoh's daughter for his youth, receiving his education there. He had been educated in all things, up until the age of forty, and he had, during this time period, accomplished a great deal as a prince ("he was mighty in word and deed"). It was at age forty that he went out among the Hebrew people to see the stalk from whence he came. We are not given a precise reason for this. Possibly his adopted mother, the queen, had told him of his origins; possibly he was intrigued by the teachings of a Hebrew teacher brought into the palace. Whatever the reason, Moses is drawn to his people, who are enslaved to the Egyptians.

When Moses sees a Hebrew slave being abused, he kills the Egyptian abusing him. After killing this Egyptian slave driver, Moses left Egypt for Midian in order to save his own life. It became apparent that *everyone* knew what he has done. Moses will then spend 40 years in the Midian wilderness region as a shepherd, having been adopted by a Midianite family headed by a priest.

At this point in our study, Moses is 80, and he appears to be in his prime at this age. (Can you imagine being in your physical and mental prime at age 80?) He had received invaluable training in the palace for forty years, some spiritual training for forty years in the desert at the hand of his father-in-law, and now it was time for him to act. We might understand these events in Moses' life as God preparing him to become one of the greatest men in human history.

Exodus 7:7 [And Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh.](#)

At this time, when Moses and Aaron would appear before Pharaoh, Moses is 80 and Aaron is slightly older at age 83.

Although Moses interacted with God a lot, Aaron also spoke with God on occasion. Obviously, for Aaron to come to Midian to meet Moses, he required God to guide him. And here, we have the plural *they spoke*, indicating that both Moses and Aaron spoke with God.

The two men will appear before Pharaoh and they will perform some signs and wonders (which we have already seen), and ask for the people of God to be given time to go worship their God.

This is a rare chiasmus over the length of several chapters. The parallels are not easy to identify until Murai explains them at the end.

### **Chiasmus of Exodus 7:8–10:29 (by Hajime Murai)**

A(7:8-13) Rod: ["If Pharaoh demands that you work a sign or wonder"](#) (7:9)  
B(7:14-24) River: ["This is how you shall know that I am the LORD"](#) (7:17)  
C(7:25-8:11) Frogs: Pharaoh had promised to let them go unconditionally but he changed his mind

## Chiasmus of Exodus 7:8–10:29 (by Hajime Murai)

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| D(8:12-15)   | Gnat: The magicians failed to bring forth gnats   |
| E(8:16-28)   | Flies: "I will make an exception of the land of Goshen" (8:18)                                  |
| E'(9:1-7)    | Pestilence: "the LORD will distinguish between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt" (9:4) |
| D'(9:8-12)   | Festering: "The magicians could not stand in Moses' presence" (9:11)                            |
| C'(9:13-35)  | Hail: Pharaoh had promised to let them go unconditionally but he changed his mind               |
| B'(10:1-20)  | Locust: "so that you may know that I am the LORD" (10:2)  |
| A'(10:21-29) | Darkness: "you do not appear before me again!" (10:28)  |

A: Demand to make a miracle, demand to get out. B: You may know that I am the LORD. C: Withdraw of the promise. D: Mismanagement of the magician. E: the LORD will distinguish.

So often, what is in the middle of a chiasmus is the most important aspect of this portion of Scripture. What God does, in His actions in Egypt, is differentiate the people of Israel from the people of Egypt (in truth, the differentiation is between those who believe in the Revealed God and those who do not).

From [http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02\\_Exodus\\_pericope\\_e.html](http://www.bible.literarystructure.info/bible/02_Exodus_pericope_e.html) accessed October 18, 2017 (slightly edited).

### Aaron's Miraculous Rod

Have you ever seen a movie or a television show where you view the same event, but through a different pair of eyes? So, you have one perception of the event when you initially see it take place, according to the recollection of Charley Brown; but, when you see it from Lucy's perspective, you begin to reevaluate what you first thought about what you saw.

There are two ways to understand the meetings of Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh in Exodus 5:1–1 and in Exodus 7:8–13 are either two different meetings or they are the same exact meeting, but from a different perspective. I understand it to be the latter, and I will teach it with that understanding. Quite frankly, I have no idea if this is the consensus approach or if I am presenting a unique view of these chapters.<sup>61</sup>

Exodus 5:1–5 is seen almost from Pharaoh's perspective. He receive Moses and Aaron into his palace, they come in and Aaron makes some demands. Pharaoh says *no*; and much of the remainder of Exodus 5 is what Pharaoh does about this request. "If you and

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<sup>61</sup> I will refer to commentators when I am struggling with a passage. Also, when I am putting together a more in-depth study of a chapter (as I did with the book of Genesis), then I read through perhaps 30 commentaries, liberally quoting from them throughout.

your people so much time on your hands as to think about going off into the desert to worship your God, then you have far too much free time.” Then Pharaoh increased the burden of the people to the point that even the elders of Israel wish that Moses had not returned to Egypt in the first place. Everything is seen from man’s perspective; and whatever narrative follows is directly affixed to Pharaoh’s decree.

Beginning with Exodus 6:14 (the genealogies in the previous chapter), we see this same event but more from God’s perspective. The genealogies reveal the first two lines of Jacob through Reuben and Simeon, but those lines are not followed out. The next line is Levi, and God follows this line out all the way to Moses and Aaron. That is God’s perspective. God sees these events in the context of the larger picture. To man, Pharaoh increasing the workload on the Hebrew people was a very big deal. In the perspective of God’s plan, that is not even a blip on the screen.

These meetings with Pharaoh are a series of events, each one of which has a demand from God, and, beginning with meeting #2, consequences for Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Pharaoh’s continued negative response.

Once we complete this meeting in Exodus 7, I will go back and explain in more detail about the two perspectives.

Exodus 7:8 [Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,](#)

Many times when God speaks, we do not know exactly how this is occurring. Since God is speaking to both Moses and Aaron, I would lean toward this being an audible voice, which they both hear. I do not have any idea where they are when this occurs or if there is any sort of physical manifestation of God.

Exodus 7:9a [“When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Show a miracle for yourselves,’...”](#)

Moses and Aaron would stand before Pharaoh, and claim to represent God. Therefore, Pharaoh possibly reasons that they ought to be able to perform some sign or miracle to prove that they really do represent God. Logically, this would have been Pharaoh’s expectation from the first meeting.

It is reasonable for Pharaoh to expect some sign or miracle at the hand of Moses, as he has court magicians who appear to perform amazing things based upon the power of the gods of Egypt (they are called *magicians* in most translations, but a better name for them would be *religious illusionists*).

## Lesson 069: Exodus 7:9–10

## The Staff of Moses and Aaron

Moses and Aaron are about to speak to Pharaoh. God tells them to first get his attention by performing a miracle.

Exodus 7:8–9a Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Show a miracle for yourselves,'..."

The word *miracle* is the masculine singular noun *môwphêth* (מִוֶּפְתֵּת) [pronounced *moe-FAITH*], which means, *a wonder, sign, miracle; a proof [of divine involvement] a sign [of a future event]*. Strong's #4159 BDB #68.

This statement I believe provides the best evidence that we are speaking of the first meeting here. Does it make sense that God told Moses and Aaron what to do before Pharaoh, but then to hold back during the first meeting?

Does it make sense for God to be saying, "Okay, why don't we do the miracle thing this time, since we forgot to do it in the first meeting?"

So God is now preparing Moses and Aaron for their *first* meeting with Pharaoh.

Exodus 7:9b "...then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent.'"

God tells Moses to tell Aaron to cast down his staff before Pharaoh. Even though Moses did not want to speak to Pharaoh directly, the line of authority is preserved. God tells Moses what to do and Moses tells Aaron what to do.

Now, you may recall from much earlier in this narrative that God gave Moses the power to do this thing (Exodus 4:3). However, we do not hear that mentioned at all when we *sat in* for the first meeting with Pharaoh in Exodus 5. In Exodus 7:10, Aaron will do just exactly as God is saying here.

Exodus 7:9 "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Show a miracle for yourselves,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent.'"

Interestingly enough, Moses will be speaking before Pharaoh, although he is quietly speaking to Aaron, telling him what to say or do next.

At this time in the narrative, we will be told that Moses and Aaron go from speaking with God into the presence of Pharaoh. In future meetings, this might not even be mentioned. That is, in one verse, we will have God speaking to Moses (or Moses and Aaron), and in the next, it is clear that Aaron (or Moses) is speaking to Pharaoh. What is most often the case is, there is no repetition. That is, God says X to Moses; then Moses comes before Pharaoh and he says to Pharaoh, "X."

Exodus 7:10a So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded.

Moses and Aaron get an audience before Pharaoh. Like many of the details of this narrative, we do not know exactly how this was achieved. It is even possible the this Pharaoh actually remembers Moses or knows who Moses is. When he hears that Moses desires an audience with him, Pharaoh might be intrigued.

Throughout the Scriptures, God does audience-appropriate signs and wonders. Here, Moses and Aaron are speaking before Pharaoh and a small audience (I would guess this audience is between 10 and 40 people—palace guards, magicians, and servants of various sorts).

Moses then speaks to Aaron—perhaps quietly or perhaps loud enough for all to hear. “Take your rod,” Moses says, “and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent.” Aaron, who follows Moses’ directives, now does this:

Exodus 7:10b *And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants,...*

Aaron throws his rod down before Pharaoh, and that rod becomes a serpent. Although I would assume that Moses and Aaron both have their own staffs which they use, sometimes the staff is called Aaron’s and sometimes it is Moses’.

This leads to the logical question:

### **The Staff of God—Does it Belong to Moses or Aaron?**

1. In Exodus 4:2–4, the staff that Moses is carrying is the staff with which God does a sign before him.
2. This staff will be the staff used for these signs of God. Exodus 4:17
3. It will be called the staff of God. Exodus 4:20
4. In Exodus 7:9–12, it is the *staff of Aaron* which is used to do the sign-miracle from Exodus 4:2–4.
5. For the second meeting with Pharaoh, Moses is told to take the staff used in the previous meeting. Exodus 7:15
6. It is called Aaron’s staff again in Exodus 7:19.
7. In the second meeting, it is Aaron who will lift up the staff and wave it over the waters of Egypt, turning them to blood. Exodus 7:15–20
8. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, prior to the plague of the frogs, the staff again will be attributed to Aaron. Exodus 8:6
9. In the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> plague (the plague of lice), the staff is attributed to Aaron. Exodus 8:16, 17
10. The staff is not mentioned in the plague of the flies (which does not mean that it was not used). Exodus 8:20–32
11. The staff is not specifically mentioned in the plague of the livestock becoming diseased or the boils. Exodus 9:1–12
12. When the staff is named in the plague of Hail (the 7<sup>th</sup> plague), and it is attributed to Moses. Moses is the one who is acting on God’s direction now. Exodus 9:23
13. The staff is attributed to Moses for the 8<sup>th</sup> plague, the plague of the grasshoppers.

## The Staff of God—Does it Belong to Moses or Aaron?

Exodus 10:13

14. When the sons of Israel will cross through the Red Sea over dry ground, Moses will lift up his staff over the sea. Exodus 14:16
15. There are at least 3 possible explanations:
  - 1) One explanation here is, Moses insists that Aaron take the lead when speaking to Pharaoh, so God says, "Give Aaron your staff, then." This is not recorded, but a possible explanation.
  - 2) Since Moses insists that Aaron take the lead, then perhaps God allows either Moses' staff or Aaron's staff to be used in these sign miracles. However, this is never stated outright.
  - 3) The third explanation is, this is Moses' staff from the beginning, but when Aaron is holding it, it is called *Aaron's staff*. Such a reference does not necessarily refer to original or ultimate ownership of the staff, but simply to whomever is holding the staff. When Aaron begins doing the miracles (actually, pointing towards the miracles), it is called his staff; and then, when Moses begins to act according to God's direction, and he holds the staff, then it is called his staff. This seems to be the simplest explanation for this minor problem.
16. The trickiest verse is Exodus 17:5 [And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go."](#) (ESV) Moses did not strike the Nile River; but Aaron did (comparing vv. 19 & 20 of Exodus 7).
  - 1) Here we have the principle of authority. Moses is the human authority. When he tells Aaron to strike the waters of Egypt, Aaron is acting under his direction. Therefore, we could either say that Moses struck the water (as it was done under his direction) or that Aaron struck the waters (which he actually did).
  - 2) We have the same thing when David is king over Israel. We will speak of David defeating the Philistines, even though, it was Joab and his army which often did the fighting. David, as a younger man, was a general over Israel's armies; but he did not continue to fight in these battles after being made king.
  - 3) Solomon is said to have built the Temple of God. Solomon may have never lifted up a hammer or put his hand on a saw or anything else like this (I would guess that he did have some plans which he may have developed himself—or that David developed). Whatever actual labor Solomon did regarding the Temple was minuscule by comparison to all of the labor done. However, we continue to speak of him as the one who built the Temple.
  - 4) Similarly, you may call upon a builder to build your house. This builder basically coordinates all of the subcontractors involved in the building of your house. However, he might never hold a nail gun in his hand throughout the entire process. He may not lift a single 2x4 up, or nail any siding in place. Yet, he is called the builder of your house.

I realize that this may not be a burning theological question, but minor details like this can cause a person to become confused and even doubt the Bible.

Exodus 7:10b [And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants,...](#)

Notice that Aaron is performing the signs and wonders. Shy and retiring Moses wasn't quite ready for the spotlight. What is being done here at this first meeting is just to warm Pharaoh up to God's power. God moves in small steps with us prior to salvation and in spiritual growth. Prior to our believing in Jesus Christ, if we happen to be the kind of hard-heads who require a bit of encouragement, we will notice in our previous lives as unbelievers that we faced a little pressure, then we heard the gospel; we faced a little more pressure, and we heard (or thought about) the gospel again; and God would continue to raise the stakes. Being the kind of person that I was, I had to come to a point of great emotional pain before I turned toward God. I wasn't saved right at that point in time, but God got my attention. Here, God gets Pharaoh's attention. However, Pharaoh is negative toward God and he will remain negative towards God. When the pressure becomes unbearable, then Pharaoh will relent; however, when the pressure is removed, Pharaoh becomes strengthened in his negative volition. Without the painful application of pressure, Pharaoh's default position is *against God*.

You may have heard the terms *enforced humility* and *genuine humility*. When Pharaoh faces a plague which wears down his soul and he agrees to relent to God, that is *enforced humility*. If, after the pressure is removed, and he still agrees to relent to God, that would be *genuine humility*.

When raising our children, we often apply pressure on them. When they do something wrong, we sometimes only counsel with them; explain what they did was wrong and why and enjoin them not to do it again. The second time might bring another lecture and a scolding. The third and fourth times might result in moderate discipline, which would intensify on the fifth or sixth offense (depending upon the offense; some offenses may require strict discipline from the beginning). If we can achieve favorable results in our children without beating the daylights out of them; that is certainly the preferred method.

Furthermore, it is helpful to inform your child, from time to time, of the overall game plan. "Your mother and I want to raise you so that you are indecent and moral, capable of living your life without us being there. We want you to have the maximum number of opportunities as an adult. Therefore, we try to guide your choices, so that you do not make choices which will limit your options later on in life."

It is very possible that, on this occasion, Pharaoh is sitting back, looking to be entertained. How many people come to him each day and say, "We come to speak to you from the God of the Hebrews." If this is what Pharaoh heard originally, then he may have thought to himself, "This could be fun!" or "This could be interesting." Like anyone else, Pharaoh might enjoy being entertained.

At the same time, if Moses and Aaron become a problem, Pharaoh can deal with that as well.

As Pharaoh observes what Moses and Aaron are doing, bear in mind that he has his own magicians in reserve—men in whom he has some trust—whom he can bring out when necessary, to compare their *powers* to those of Moses and Aaron.

Exodus 7:10b-c [And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants and it became a serpent.](#)

There are some who maintain, with good reason, that the "sea-serpent" is a crocodile. The words in the book of Moses are so ancient, that certain of them are translated by reasonable, educated guesses. The crocodile was common in Egypt, a deadly symbol of power and strength and was very likely worshipped as a deity of sorts. Since there is no indication that the kind of animal that they saw was unusual, we should assume that it would be an animal common to that area; something which is reptilian (serpentine) from the sea would likely be a crocodile.

Exodus 7:10 [So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent.](#)

What God is doing is slowly getting Moses involved in speaking before Pharaoh. Furthermore, God wants Pharaoh to see who has the authority. Even though it is Aaron speaking directly to Pharaoh, God wants Pharaoh to see that Moses is telling Aaron what to say and do. Moses has refused to speak before the Pharaoh because he feels as though he does not have the agility to think on his feet before Pharaoh. In reality, Moses has more public speaking ability than almost anyone else in the land of Egypt. This would have been a part of his training to become Pharaoh.

We have often seen role reversals in Scripture. The younger brother Moses will be telling older brother Aaron what to do. It is possible that Moses and Aaron understood this; but it is also possible that they were just so dumbfounded by the entire situation that they did not fully appreciate what God was doing with them.

This sign may be seemed to some to be somewhat impressive; but Pharaoh has his own people. He has his own magicians who are also capable of performing miracles by sleight of hand.

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**Lesson 070: Exodus 7:10–11****Doctrine of Magicians**

Moses and Aaron and going before Pharaoh. This is their first meeting with Pharaoh, but seen from the divine perspective this time.

Exodus 7:10 So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

Under Moses' direction, Aaron throws his staff down on the ground, and it becomes a serpent—perhaps a snake, perhaps a crocodile.

Exodus 7:11a But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers;...

Had Pharaoh seen something like this before? Pharaoh has his own religious illusionists at his beck and call. He calls in his wise men and sorcerers.

*Wise men* is the masculine plural adjective *chăkâmîym* (חֲכָמִים) [pronounced *khuh-kaw-MEEM*], which means, *wise men, those capable of knowing [judging]; intelligent men; men who are skillful*. Strong's #2450 BDB #314. The word translated *sorcerers* is the masculine plural, Piel participle of the verb *kâshaph* (כָּשַׁף) [pronounced *kaw-SHAF*], which means, *sorcerer, sorceress; to practice sorcery; whisperers [of spells]; practitioners of witchcraft*. Strong's #3784 BDB #506.

What seems logical is, Pharaoh sent messengers to his wise men and sorcerers. Were they on call 24 hours a day? Were they nearby? Let me suggest that they were. In the message, it is possible that Pharaoh also said, "Listen, these two guys turned a staff into a snake. Then he grabbed the snake and it became a staff again." So, I believe that they walked into the palace knowing what Moses and Aaron had done; and that they were prepared to do something very similar. This is conjecture, but I believe that I am accurate here. I would not be surprised if they had done this before Pharaoh previously (or, something like this). When he called for his wise men and sorcerers, the message may have included this: "Remember that time you turned a staff into a serpent?"

Whether Pharaoh had seen them do this before or not, the magicians of Egypt have come prepared. They will be able to seemingly duplicate the miracle done by Aaron.

Moses and Aaron have come before Pharaoh and Pharaoh has asked them, "Can you do something to prove to me that you are from God?" It is only logical that, if Moses and Aaron said that they had come at the will of the Living God that Pharaoh might ask them to somehow prove that. Aaron then threw down his staff and it turned into a serpent. So Pharaoh calls in his magicians to compare their tricks. This might be called a *magic-off*.

Exodus 7:11 But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

It appears that there are a group of men called the magicians, who are a subset of the sorcerers. Pharaoh sends for the wise men and sorcerers; but it is the category called *magicians* who actually perform this trick.

In the Hebrew, the word *magicians* acts as the subject of the next verb; while *wise men and sorcerers* are direct objects. This is why I believe the magicians to be a subset of the sorcerers.

The masculine plural noun is *char'êṭôm* (חַרְתָּוּם) [pronounced *khahr-TOHM*], which means, *an engraver, a writer [possessing information of the occult]; a diviner, a magician, an astrologer, mystic*. Strong's #2748 BDB #355.

They appear to be able to nearly duplicate what Aaron has done.

I believe that the magicians of Pharaoh's day learned some sleight of hand and a variety of other tricks, and entertained Pharaoh with them (he did not necessarily know that these were tricks). They likely had the added dimension of being advisors of Pharaoh, whether in the religious or political realm.

Now, if this seems strange to you, there are many musicians and actors who believe that they have great insight when it comes to politics, and they are forever sharing this with us.

The wise men are those in the Pharaoh's kingdom whose opinion he respects; who he calls upon when he runs into a problem that he is struggling with. The word translated *secret arts* in *The Emphasized Bible* and *enchantments* in the KJV in this passage is the Hebrew word *lahaṭ* (טְהַל) [pronounced *LAH-hat*]<sup>62</sup> and it actually means *a flash or a bit of fire*. This word is found in only one other place in the Bible: Gen. 3:24, where the angels guard the garden of Eden with *lahaṭ*. Therefore, we do not have an exact understanding of this word. This appears to be some sort of reference to light, but how should be understand it? Is their *light* a reference to some divine relationship (they have the light or are related to the light of angels or of God); or is the *light* a reference to knowledge which they have?

I believe that this word is more related to standard magician fare, when there is a flash of light (fire, whatever), and then whatever trick they were doing has been performed.

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The term magicians is used in three passages in the Bible. When Joseph is in Egypt interpreting the dreams of the Pharaoh; when Moses is bringing the plagues upon Egypt, and in the book of Daniel, where dreams are being interpreted.

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### The Doctrine of Magicians

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1. The Hebrew word is *chartôm* (חַרְתָּוּם) and the Chaldean word used in the book of Daniel is the same.
  2. BDB definitions: *diviner, magician, astrologer; engraver, writer (only in derivative sense of one possessed of occult knowledge)*. Strong's definitions: *a horoscopist (as drawing magical lines or circles); magician*.
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<sup>62</sup> Which is very similar to the word *lâṭ* (לָט) [pronounced *lawt*], and this does mean *secrecy, mystery* and possibly *enchantments*

## The Doctrine of Magicians

3. The word is translated variously: *magicians* (KJV, RSV, ASV, NEB), *sacred scribes* (*The Emphasized Bible*), *magicians* or *soothsayer priests* (*The New American Standard Bible*).
4. Sometimes I have used the translation, *religious illusionists*, which I believe is a brilliant translation.
5. James Strong points out that this has the same root word as *cheret*, which means "engraving tool or writing instrument." The root word means "to engrave or to write." This suggests that they may be seen as much as intellectuals as magicians, as we might think of them.
6. Wilson tells us that these were men who, in the early ages, pretended to be of profound learning. He also mentions the possible same root as does Strong, but only as a possibility and not as a fact engraved in stone.
7. The best place to go to understand the meaning of this term is the Bible. It is found in Gen. 41 where the Pharaoh has some disturbing dreams and he calls upon his "magicians" and his wise men to interpret the dreams (Gen. 41:8). This indicates that they were learned in interpreting dreams. However, they were not always able to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh (Gen. 41:8, 24).
8. We again see these "magicians" in Pharaoh's court when Moses and Aaron announce God's plagues upon Egypt. The magicians attempt to duplicate the miracles of God and come close on three occasions; however, they will fail the fourth time (Exodus 7:9-12, 19-22 8:5-7, 16-18).
9. The magicians appear to be a subset of the "wise men and sorcerers" which the Pharaoh calls to his side when first speaking to Moses and Aaron. They stepped forward out of this group and performed a miracle similar to what Moses and Aaron did (Exodus 7:9-12). Subsequently, they were the only ones called in when Moses brought on a new plague to Egypt (or, the only ones mentioned).
10. In order to perform these miracles, these magicians employ their "secret arts or enchantments" (Exodus 7:11, 22 8:7, 18—see below). These are not a set of magic powers, but sleight of hand and various kinds of magic tricks. Magicians are able to do tricks right before your very eyes that you just are unable to see. Their ability to approximate some of the plagues of God by no means confers upon them special miraculous powers.
11. At some point in this process, the magicians will finally give up trying to imitate these plagues and they admitted that the miracles done by Moses and Aaron were the work of God. Exodus 8:19
12. We do not know if any of the magicians trusted in the God of the Hebrews, but they testified that these miracles done were the handiwork of God. Heb. 8:19
13. The magicians were themselves harmed by a plague which kept them from appearing before Pharaoh. Exodus 9:11
14. The magicians of Daniel's time gave their advice on matters of wisdom and understanding (and Daniel's advice was ten times better). Dan. 1:20
15. The magicians are grouped with the conjurers, sorcerers and master astrologers in Dan. 2:2 (the ESV reads: *the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans*). This suggests that they do not have equivalent functions or

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equivalent meanings.

- 1) The *enchanters* (elsewhere, *conjurers*, *astrologers*, *horoscopists*) should be translated *conjurers*, *magicians*. The unused root from which the word comes most likely means, *to lisp or to practice enchantment*. We might consider these to be practitioners of black magic today. They might cast spells or put curses upon people or perform acts of magic.
- 2) The *sorcerers* are those who practice magic arts, sorcery and charms with the intent to do mischief to man (as Wilson puts it). The root word means, *to whisper or mumble a spell*. They do not appear to be radically different from the conjurers, except that they speak in tongues (or in a language which is not understood by the hearers).
- 3) The *Chaldeans* actually means *someone from Chaldea*. The meaning behind this word in this context is variously given as *wise men*, *master astrologer*, *astrologer* or *magician*. In the context of Daniel, I would not necessarily group them with the practitioners of the Satanic arts as we know them, but would consider them likely the wise men of the kingdom; the philosophers or even the religious types.
- 4) The contrast here is simply based upon the difference of the root words. The magicians are more closely associated with writing or engraving and the others are more closely associated with speaking. We might associate them today with the authors of Satanic religion. All of these people were thought to be wise and associated with predicting the future, reading dreams and interpreting dreams, and with magic spells and incantations.
- 5) It is not clear if they are able to verbally communicate with the demons. I once thought yes; and now I doubt it. Whatever interaction is allowed between man and demons appears to be carefully monitored by God.
16. Daniel was able to answer questions and interpret the king's dreams that all these others could not (Dan. 2:28 4:6-8 5:11).
17. In the context of the Exodus, instead of the word *magician*, a reasonable translation would be "religious illusionists" or "religious miracle-workers." This takes into account what they did in the presence of Pharaoh was more than just magic tricks. Their illusions were accompanied with pronouncements of (human) wisdom.
18. That there is an association between people who do sleight of hand and human wisdom is not a concept without parallel in the modern world.
  - 1) Actors and actresses are constantly giving us their political opinions; and many of them actually make *ads* in order to sell their particular points of view.
  - 2) There is a duo of magicians today named Penn and Teller. Penn is a libertarian and he often presents his viewpoint on various mediums, completely apart from his chosen profession.
19. Unregenerate man turns to a lot of different kinds of people today for advice: friends, psychologists, palm readers, self-help authors, and basically anyone who has their hand out for money claiming to know more about life than the seeker

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does. Certainly, some people in Christian ministry imitate this. These were the people who kings turned to for questions which they themselves could not answer. The magicians were a part of this group. In the time of Moses, we do not have the Pharaoh bringing in several types of advisors but just the magicians. By Daniel's time, there had developed a larger group of religious advisors. In our time, this field has expanded a great deal. Nevertheless, there is but one way to truth and the many deviations away from that truth are Satanically inspired. Jesus Christ told us "**Narrow is the way and few that are that find it**" and "**I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man comes to the Father but by Me.**"

The magicians (or *sacred scribes* or *religious illusionists*) were said to have practiced secret arts or incantations. Very likely this was simply some magic done to impress the king "to prove" that they were of God. Therefore, we should also examine:

## The Secret Arts/Enchantments

1. The magicians of Pharaoh's court used enchantments or secret arts to duplicate the miracles of Moses. There are two words used in Exodus which are translated "enchantments" in the KJV.
2. Lahat (לָהַט) is used only once in this context (Exodus 7:11). Its root word is flaming. If you have ever seen a magician cause a sudden blaze or flash of fire or a spark, this is the root meaning. At first, when the magicians learned that they had a little competition from Moses in the realm of magic arts, they brought a little flash or a visual display in order to impress Pharaoh. When they realized that this was less theatrical and more difficult to imitate, they dispensed with the flash and tried just to duplicate Moses' miracles (after all, Moses did not use any props other than the staff of Aaron). The same word is found in Gen 3:24, where the *flaming* sword to the entrance to the garden of Eden is turning every way to guard the garden.
3. The second word used is lâṭ (לָט) and it means secret or covered. By implication, it is a secret enchantment used by the magicians prior to performing some act of magic. It is the magician mumbo-jumbo which is a prelude to the act, not unlike a drum roll. It is a set of words, or a spell, which sounds good and mysterious to the hearer, which sounds as though it is part of what makes the wonder come to pass. Elsewhere in the KJV, this is translated "softly, secretly and privily."
4. The words are obviously different and, unfortunately, translated exactly the same Exodus seems to have the problem throughout. People have been stumped by the "hardening" of Pharaoh's heart due to three different words being all translated exactly the same in the KJV.

These magicians were, in the beginning, able to duplicate what Aaron did.

As previously discussed, Exodus 7 is the first meeting between Pharaoh and Moses, but presented from a different perspective than in Exodus 5. The divine perspective of Exodus 7 will be continued throughout the subsequent meetings and plagues.

Exodus 7:10 [So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded. And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent.](#)

Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh to meet with him the first time. Aaron performs a miracle with his staff, as God had given him power. His staff became a serpent.

Exodus 7:11 [But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.](#)

Pharaoh had possibly seen something like this before. He calls for his wise men and sorcerers, among whom were his magicians (or, *religious illusionists*).

Whatever the backstory was, these religious illusionists were able to duplicate what Aaron did. It is my contention that they had done a similar trick before Pharaoh, and Pharaoh simply called them in to reprise this illusion. No doubt, God was fully aware that this would happen.

Exodus 7:12a [For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents.](#)

Aaron casts down his rod and it becomes a serpent. Several of these magicians will act and appear to do the same thing, so that it will seem more spectacular.

I do not believe that God granted the religious illusionists any great powers or that Satan interceded on their behalf. I believe that what they did was a trick. Magic tricks can be quite impressive as well as deceptive.

The religious people in Pharaoh's court may have been demon-possessed or had demonic affiliations, but I don't see that as being necessary element to the narrative (furthermore, nothing is said in the text which suggests this).

It has been proposed that these were small, rigid crocodiles (or other serpentine creatures), which, when cast to the ground, came to life. Others have suggested that the Egyptian cobra can be rendered immobile by applying pressure to its muscles at the nape of the neck, after it has been charmed. That has been done in Egypt in 1954 and pictures were taken of the event, according to the *New Bible Dictionary*. Both are reasonable possibilities, the latter more so than the former.

God has given demons a certain amount of latitude in their dealings with men. At one time, enough latitude to where the demons actually cohabited with human females, forming the basis for all mythology and causing God to send a storm upon the earth and floods to

wipe out this half-human, half-angelic race. It is also clear that God allowed more demon possessions during the time of our Lord walking the earth than we appear to have now (and it is possible that they were less inhibited and demonstrative in their possessions, as they must act within divine limits).

In any case, what we have here is very likely a divine miracle followed by a magic trick. Compared to what will occur, this is small potatoes.

Exodus 7:12 [For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.](#)

What Aaron did was not a trick, but an actual transformation. What the religious illusionists did was a trick (there are some commentators who claim that Satan helped them here—I don't believe that, myself).

I have seen magic performed close up and from a distance, by those trained in the arts, and I could not see how they did it (in fact, in most cases, I could not even begin to guess how they did it).

Apparently, what these men threw down (or appeared to throw down) were serpents; but, at that point, Aaron's serpent swallowed their serpents up.

Scofield, who wrote brilliant, concise notes for the Bible, writes: *As Moses' rod was the rod of power, the rod of the King (Deut. 33:4–5) so Aaron's was the rod of life, the rod of the Priest. As here the serpents, symbols of Satan, who had the power of death; (Rev. 12:9 Heb. 2:14) are swallowed up, so in resurrection death will be "swallowed up in victory"; (1Cor. 15:54 Num. 17:8).*<sup>63</sup> I would only disagree with Scofield in this point—I believe that this is the exact same staff, called the staff of Moses when Moses held it.

Even if there is demonic power involved—and there is no indication of that—God's power is always greater. As it is expressed in the New Testament, "**Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.**" Based upon what I have read, I do not doubt that Penn and Teller could duplicate these tricks of the Egyptian *magicians*. Could they produce a serpent to eat up the other serpents? That would be a much more difficult thing to do. Interestingly enough, that may have seemed to be less spectacular, but it is something that the religious illusionists could not have done.

Exodus 7:13 [And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.](#)

We studied the word *to grow hard* back in Gen. 48:2. Jacob was near death and his son Joseph was coming in for a blessing; so Jacob *strengthened himself* and sat up. It is the same word. In fact, the *only* place in the KJV where this word is translated *to harden* is in

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<sup>63</sup> C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Notes from the Scofield King James' Bible*; from e-Sword, Exodus 7:12.

this particular narrative in Exodus about the Pharaoh. This is a very common verb, occurring over 300 times in the Old Testament, but only translated *to harden* between Exodus 7:13–14:8. How is this word usually translated? Most of the time, it is translated by some form of *to strengthen*, because that is what the word means. In fact, in the KJV, over 90 times, it is translated by some form of *to make strong, to strengthen*. There are actually 60 (give or take) *different* translations for this word in the KJV, and only 9 times, is it translated *to harden*. As a result of that unfortunate translation, people have been confused about what is happening here. It is too easy to have the mistaken notion that God, at some point, changes the volition of Pharaoh. However, that is not what is occurring.

Equally unfortunate is, there are perhaps a dozen or more excellent modern translations which fall back to KJV vocabulary—particularly when a passage is fairly well-known.

And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said. (KJV)

Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. (ESV)

And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as Jehovah had said. (Green's LT)

Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as Yahweh had spoken. (WEB)

I could have given many more examples. There are two problems here: (1) the translation *harden*, is only used in this section of Exodus; and (2) God appears to be doing the hardening in the KJV; and therefore, many current translations use the passive voice (*was hardened*). That is not consistent with the meaning or the morphology of this word.

The KJV, even though it is over 400 years old, still exerts considerable influence on today's translations. There are quite a number of relatively recent translations which even continue with the *Old English* style of the KJV (such as, the Third Millennium Bible), because so many people associate that form of English with the Holy Bible.

The word in question here is *châzaq* (חָזַק) [pronounced *khaw-ZAHK*], which means, *to tie up, to bind; to hold fast, to adhere to, to be stuck to; to be strong, to be firm, to increase in prosperity, to strengthen*. Strong's #2388 BDB #304. The most common translation, *to be strong, to be strengthened*, is most often appropriate.

Secondly, we must consider the morphology. This verb is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect. The Qal stem is the normal stem for a verb; the Niphal stem is the passive stem and the Niphal stem is *not* used here (therefore, it should not be translated by a passive verb, as per the 4 translations above).

It is *possible* to translate this *and he [He?] strengthened the heart of Pharaoh*. However, there are two problems with doing this. Generally, when an unspecified subject for a verb is given, somewhere very nearby we know who is doing the action. That is not clear in this passage. *God* is not found in the context of this passage. He can be found back in v. 8, but that is a different scene (God is speaking to Moses). Since then, Moses and Aaron have gone before Pharaoh and they are speaking with Pharaoh and demonstrating the power of God.

Furthermore, a sentence with a subject, verb and direct object in the Hebrew can have these 3 things show up in any order; and the subject and object are often differentiated with an untranslated direct object marker in the Hebrew. This marker is not found here. Therefore, it is more likely that *the heart of Pharaoh* is the subject of the verb rather than the object. Therefore, we have the following translations, which I believe to be more accurate:

And Pharaoh's heart was stubborn, and he hearkened not to them, as Jehovah had said. (Darby)

Still the king was stubborn [<sup>he</sup>hardened his heart] and refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the Lord had said. (The Emphasized Bible)

Yet Pharaoh's heart stiffened and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said. (JPS)

But Pharaoh's heart remained steadfast, and he did not hearken to them, as the Lord had spoken. (The Complete Tanach)

...yet Pharaoh's heart was stubborn and he hearkened not to them to do as the Lord commanded them. (C. Thompson)

And still Pharaoh's heart was as hard as *stone*; he did not pay any attention to what Moses and Aaron said, just as the Eternal had predicted. (The Voice)

...and the heart of Pharaoh is strong, and he has not hearkened unto them, as Jehovah has spoken. (Young's updated LT)

Still the king was stubborn and refused to listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said. (NCV)

Pharaoh, however, remained obstinate and, as Yahweh had foretold, refused to listen to Moses and Aaron. (NJB)

Pharaoh continued to be stubborn. Just as Jehovah had predicted, he would not listen to them. (NSV)

Pharaoh, however, was obstinate; as the LORD had foretold, he would not listen to Moses and Aaron. (REB)

But the king continued to be stubborn [IDI], just as Yahweh had predicted, and he would not pay attention *to what Aaron and Moses/I said*. (Translation for Translators)

You will note that the previous 5 translations leave out the word *heart*. That would be a metonym, where *Pharaoh* is substituted for *Pharaoh's heart*.

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There is one more thing to consider here. I went backwards in the passage and said, *You cannot find God until v. 8*. But, clearly *Y<sup>e</sup>howah* is found in this verse. Generally speaking, when a subject is found in the Hebrew, it is well defined first; and then subsequent verbs are not affixed to that subject because they do not need to be—as the subject is previously defined.

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### An Example of a Well-Defined Subject

Exo 4:24 And it came to pass, on the way at the inn, that the LORD met him and sought to kill him.

Exo 4:25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet and said, "Surely a bloody husband are you to me."

Exo 4:26 So He let him go; then she said, "A bloody husband you are, because of the circumcision." (Niobi Study Bible)

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You will note that there are 3 persons in this passage: the LORD, Moses and Zipporah. Whenever a feminine singular verb is found, it refers to Zipporah. In v. 24, at the end, there are two verbs, and God is clearly the subject of both verbs, and Moses is the direct object of each verb [God (the subject) speaks to Moses (the object) back in v. 21].

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Therefore, since we have 3 verbs (vv. 21, 24) where God is the subject of the verb and Moses is the direct object, when we come to v. 26 and read *So He let him go*, we assume that God is the subject and Moses is the object, as that is the case for 3 previous verbs in context with a masculine singular subject and a masculine singular object.

For many people, I realize that this is way more detail about the construction of the Hebrew than you want to read. But my point is, we have a well-defined subject and object established in this passage; which is *not* what we find in Exodus 7:13. Therefore, we match the masculine singular verb with the masculine singular noun which is right there, next to the verb. We accept that masculine singular noun as being the subject of the verb.

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Hence, we translate:

*Pharaoh's heart was stubborn (or, became strengthened), and he did not listen to them [Moses and Aaron], as the LORD had said.*

A more unwieldy and less likely translation would be:

And Pharaoh [lit., *he*] strengthened his [own] heart [lit., *Pharaoh's heart*] and did not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

As convoluted as that translation is, it is still logically and grammatically more likely than, *He [God] strengthened Pharaoh's heart...*

A correct understanding of the translation leads us to a possible pattern. Pharaoh strengthens his heart and then he goes on negative signals towards what Moses and Aaron are saying.

Let me see if I can illustrate this in another way. Have you ever talked to someone about politics and suddenly, they go into what appears to be a memorized monologue? I am not saying that they memorized the exact words to say, but that they memorized a set of points that they are going to say. If you don't hear that in your day-to-day life, perhaps you have listened to *Talk Radio* and a caller will be like that. That is, the caller has a set of bullet points that he wants to get out there into the air waves, and he will give his set of points as quickly as he can, undeterred by the host. Very often, while this person is giving his talking points, the host will often try to get the caller to have a conversation (I hear this on Mike Gallagher more often than anywhere else). In any case, that caller so often has to get his bullet points out there, into radio-sphere, and he cannot be dissuaded from this mission.

So Pharaoh looks at what is happening, and takes in just the information that he wants to take in; and he uses that to strengthen his heart. What he sees is, Moses and Aaron turned a staff into a serpent; but his magicians did the same thing. Therefore, everything is equal (Pharaoh tells himself everything is equal). By telling himself that, Pharaoh strengthens his heart. *I don't have to listen to Moses and Aaron because my own magicians did exactly the same thing*, he tells himself.

If you have lifted weights and you attempt to strengthen some portion of your body (your legs, your upper body, your core), you do not do this one time, and your body is done with exercise. You do it, you do it again, and you keep doing it, strengthening whatever portions of your body you want to strengthen. It is a process, it is not a one-time event (lifting weights one time and quitting accomplishes very little). We might view Pharaoh as doing this throughout this passage. Each time he strengthens himself, he is strengthening his negative volition towards God. Near the end, he will become so despondent by circumstances that God will graciously give him that strength that he desires. God does not give Pharaoh the negative volition; God gives Pharaoh the strength to exhibit his negative volition.

*Pharaoh's heart was stubborn (or, became strengthened), and he did not listen to them [Moses and Aaron], as the LORD had said.*

So Pharaoh, taking all of this in, chose not to listen to the words of Aaron (which is what God said would happen). Pharaoh's heart grew hard (stronger) against God. What happened indicated that the God of Moses and Aaron is stronger than whatever gods the magicians might claim. But Pharaoh refuses to come to that conclusion. Pharaoh *chooses*

only to see that, Aaron made his rod into a serpent; his magicians duplicated that trick; and so it is a wash, in Pharaoh's eyes.

Interestingly enough, there is a meme from the internet which illustrates negative volition quite handily.

**BamaLu on Stupidity** (an internet meme); from [Dopl3r.com](http://Dopl3r.com); accessed July 30, 2019.

Another less clever way to put this: *people believe just what they choose to believe. Or, people gravitate towards evidence only when it supports their preconceived views.* In this way, we have described Pharaoh and his thinking.



## Lesson 072 Exodus 5:1–9 7:10–13

## Moses' First Meeting with Pharaoh

So far, this is what we have studied:

Exodus 7:10 Then Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and did what the Lord had commanded them. Aaron threw his staff in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a serpent.

Exodus 7:11–12 Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and sorcerers, and they—along with the Egyptian magicians—did the same thing with their secret arts. So each one threw down his staff and it became a serpent, but Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

Exodus 7:13 Yet Pharaoh's heart was stubborn [Lit. *strong*] and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had said would happen. (ISV)

We are going to, in this lesson, is go back and compare Exodus 5 with Exodus 7, concentrating on the actual meeting with Pharaoh that takes place.

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I believe that Exodus 5 and Exodus 7 are the same event. Both chapters portray the first meeting with Pharaoh, but with a different emphasis. In Exodus 5, we are looking at the first meeting between Moses and Aaron and the Pharaoh of Egypt; we also see how this affects the people of Israel.

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In Exodus 7, the emphasis upon Pharaoh's edict is set aside. In fact, it is ignored completely. This is seen as the first of a series of meetings between Moses and Aaron and the Pharaoh. God's power and purpose are now are the forefront. Pharaoh is allowed his negative volition simply because it is used by God to glorify Himself.

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I will attempt to show how these two meetings could be identical. The chief argument for this view is, Moses and Aaron would have showed these signs from God on their first meeting with Pharaoh; they would not have waited until the second meeting (the signs which God gave Moses are recorded in Exodus 7 but not in Exodus 5).

I should point out that there are no clear parallel passages in these two chapters. One of the few sections where there are similarities (Moses objecting to playing a big part in God's plan) occur in two different places with Moses saying different things.

The Niobi Study Bible is used below; its subtitles are included. This Bible was inconsistent about capitalizing pronouns that refer to God. I capitalized some of them to provide some consistency.

I found some minor problems with the Niobi Study Bible's translation, so I also dealt with those problems in this comparative study. In one particular verse, I used another translation.

### First Appearance of Moses and Aaron Before Pharaoh

| Exodus 5:1–9  | Exodus 7:8–13   |
|---|---|
| Preliminary considerations; God speaks to Moses in Midian.  | Preliminary considerations; God speaks to Moses in Egypt.   |
| This is not a contradiction; it simply means that God spoke to Moses twice.   |   |
| This first meeting with God would have taken place <i>before</i> Moses reunited with his brother Aaron.                   | This second meeting with God would have taken place <i>after</i> Moses and Aaron met and returned to Egypt together.  |
| Prior to meeting Pharaoh, Moses complains that he is not eloquent enough to speak directly to Pharaoh. Exodus 4:10        | Moses complains that he is of uncircumcised lips, and therefore, unable to speak directly to Pharaoh. Exodus 6:12, 30                                       |
| God says that Aaron will do the speaking (Aaron is not yet on the scene, but God will bring him to Moses). Exodus 4:14–17 | God will make Aaron like a prophet for Moses, who will be like God to Pharaoh (Aaron is with Moses at this time, as he came to Moses in Midian). Exodus 7:1 |
| God promises that He will strengthen Pharaoh's heart in Exodus 4:21.  | God promises to strengthen Pharaoh's heart in Exodus 7:3.   |
| God promises that He will use His great power to bring Israel out of Egypt. Exodus 3:16–17, 19–20                         | God promises that He will bring the people of Israel out of Egypt. Exodus 7:5   |

## First Appearance of Moses and Aaron Before Pharaoh

### Exodus 5:1–9

This preliminary meeting with Moses occurs in Midian. God is telling Moses for the very first time what was going to happen.

### Exodus 7:8–13

This preliminary meeting with Moses occurs in Egypt; which suggests that God spoke again to Moses.

When a coach gives his players a pep talk in the locker room, does that mean he never speaks to them out on the field? God speaks to Moses in the locker room (Midian), but then God speaks to Moses again when he is on the playing field (in Egypt).

Exodus 5 is the human view of the first meeting with Pharaoh.

Exodus 7 is the divine view of Moses and Aaron's first meeting with Pharaoh.

The emphasis is upon Pharaoh's negative volition and his angry reaction to God's demands. Pharaoh wants to discourage Israel from listening to Moses and Aaron.

The emphasis in Exodus 7 is on Moses and Aaron following God's instructions. All we know about Pharaoh is, he expresses negative volition towards God, as God said he would (Exodus 7:3–4).

Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh and tell him what God wants. The emphasis in Exodus 5 is Pharaoh's negative reaction to what God wants and upon what Pharaoh does to illustrate his negative volition.

#### **Aaron's Miraculous Rod**

And the LORD spoke unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, "When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, 'Show a miracle for yourselves,' then you shall say unto Aaron, 'Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.'" (Exodus 7:8–9)

The signs of God are not mentioned.

#### **First Encounter with Pharaoh; Let My People Go**

And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness.'" (Exodus 5:1)

And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers. Now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents; but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. (Exodus 7:10–12)

Moses and Aaron first met with the elders of Israel, and then *afterwards*, they went in to speak with Pharaoh. Nothing miraculous is recorded in Exodus 5.

## First Appearance of Moses and Aaron Before Pharaoh

### Exodus 5:1–9

Although God's demands are given, there are no signs or miracles done by Moses or Aaron. However, Moses and Aaron had first spoken to the elders of Israel and they did those signs before them (Exodus 4:29–31).

And Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go." (Exodus 5:2)

Pharaoh expresses his negative volition towards the words of God. From his words, one can tell that he has hardened his heart against God.

As soon as Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? Moses and Aaron show him the staff and how God turned it into a serpent.

And they said, "The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Let us go, we pray you, three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice unto the LORD our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword." (Exodus 5:3)

And the king of Egypt said unto them, "Why do you, Moses and Aaron, delay the people from their work? Get you unto your burdens!" And Pharaoh said, "Behold, the people of the land now are many, and you make them rest from their burdens!" (Exodus 5:4–5)

### Exodus 7:8–13

Moses and Aaron do as God has commanded them and does the sign that God gave to them. God's demands are only mentioned back in v. 2 (where God is speaking to Moses).

Yet Pharaoh's heart was stubborn [Lit. *strong*] and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had said would happen. (Exodus 7:13; ISV)

These 2 verses are direct parallels; but they are presented as two sides of the same coin.

Who or what did Pharaoh harden his heart against? The demand that he let the Hebrews go to worship God (Exodus 5:1).

The emphasis of this second account is, Moses and Aaron reveal the signs of God to Pharaoh and his court (I am assuming that they speak to Pharaoh in a semi-public forum).

In Exodus 7, only Pharaoh's negative volition is mentioned; what he actually did as a result of his negative volition is found in Exodus 5, but not in Exodus 7.

You will note in Exodus 7, Pharaoh does not say anything like, "Do you dare show your faces before me again?"

## First Appearance of Moses and Aaron Before Pharaoh

### Exodus 5:1–9

And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying, "You shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tally of bricks which they made heretofore, you shall lay upon them; you shall not diminish any thereof. For they are idle; therefore they cry, saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.' Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labor therein, and let them not regard vain words." (Exodus 5:6–9)

### Exodus 7:8–13

From Exodus 7, we will launch into the first plague. We are no longer interested in what Pharaoh said, his edict, or the people and their being upset.

God first offered the Egyptian people grace. "Let My people go into the desert-wilderness to worship Me; then they will return."

Pharaoh said *no*, so God would respond with judgment. Grace comes before judgment.

In Exodus 5, we see how Pharaoh reacts, what he does specifically; and how the people and the leaders of Israel respond.

In Exodus 7, we simply note that Pharaoh rejects God's demands. From there, we go to the first plague.

Exodus 5:1–5 is the actual meeting of Moses with Pharaoh.

Exodus 7:8–13 is the actual meeting of Moses with Pharaoh, although what God said to Moses was certainly a part of that meeting (vv. 1–2).

Exodus 5:6–9 is what Pharaoh did as a result; and vv. 10–23 is the aftermath of Pharaoh's edict.

Exodus 7 then proceeds directly to the next meeting between Moses and Pharaoh.

It should be clear that there is little or no overlap between these two chapters. However, that does not mean that we are not viewing the same meeting, but from 2 different viewpoints.

My position is that Exodus 5 and Exodus 7 represent two views of the same meeting. The other alternative is, Exodus 5 is the first meeting and Exodus 7 is the second one. Right before the second meeting, Moses or Aaron would say to the other, "Hey, we forgot to do the snake thing. Let's go back and show him the snake thing this time." Personally, I don't believe that is how it went down. It would be logical that, if Moses and Aaron claimed to have come from God, the Pharaoh might have asked, at the very beginning, "How can I know this?" This would have been at the beginning of the first meeting, just as it was an integral part of the meeting with the elders of Israel.

You will note that all of the worry and concern and problems which came out of chapter 5 mean nothing at this point. We never consider those things again. It should be clear that each narrative has its own purpose.

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I believe the idea is, there is the divine understanding of human history and there is the human understanding. We can easily set aside all of the human viewpoint worries and concerns, as they mean nothing when God's plan moves forward.

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The idea that we see the same meeting take place twice, leads us to the logical question...

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### **Why are their two versions of the same meeting?**

1. The first approach to the first meeting focuses more upon Pharaoh and how he dealt with Moses and Aaron and the demands of their God.
2. This first approach allows us to see how easily Moses and Aaron were discouraged.
3. The initial estrangement between the elders and Moses and Aaron is a shadow of things to come. Nearly any kind of pressure would put Moses at odds with some or most of the people he delivers.
4. When we go back and revisit this same meeting, we see it through God's viewpoint.
5. In Exodus 7, this first meeting is seen as a series of God-directed events. We move directly from the first meeting to the first plague to the reaction of Pharaoh to that plague.
6. Exodus 7 is the first of a series of meetings where God determines the agenda.
7. Under God's agenda, the negative response of Pharaoh is a minor detail. God knew he would be negative and God was ready with an immediate response.
8. When viewing all of this from the human perspective (Exodus 5), it is easy to get bogged down with inconsequential details; and it is easy for man to break faith with God (as the elders of Israel did).
9. If you choose to see this from God's perspective, then you can enjoy the ride.
10. Let me suggest an analogy of a train taking you from point A to point B. You know that along this trip, there are mountains, desert, rivers and snow. You could spend the entire train trip worried about, *how can we cross that river? Or, the mountains ahead are huge; how can we go over them?* Or you can simply go to the dome car and watch and enjoy the scenery. Which is the smartest approach? Now, you may counter and say, "Well, we are not on a train; this is real life; and I face real suffering!" True, but God is greater than your life, He is greater than your suffering, and He has made provision for you all along the way.
11. Is your life like the meeting of Exodus 5 or Exodus 7? The strength of your faith and the knowledge of Bible doctrine determines your reaction to life.
12. These are the two approaches to life. Most of Gen X<sup>1</sup> will focus on the details, the problems, the difficulties, and they will rebel against God. These people will die the sin unto death out in the desert-wilderness. Some specific members of Gen X will survive and thrive (Joshua, for example). That is because he will focus on God's plan and upon God's promises. Joshua did not worry about going from point A to point B. He knew that if God promised Israel that they would take the land of Canaan, then that was as good as done. He did not have to sweat the details; he simply had to follow God's lead.

The application is this: we are in the midst of God's plan. We can focus on a plethora of details and upon human viewpoint, but God's plan is going to go forward, with or without us. Life is much easier when we see it from God's perspective and act accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> Gen X is the generation of adults who leave Egypt. They constantly doubt God; they rebel against Moses' authority; and despite seeing the greatest miracles ever done by God on a large scale, they continually complain about their lives. Because this generation of adults was unable to move into Canaan and take it, God left their bodies strewn throughout the desert-wilderness before He will lead them into Canaan.

## Lesson 073: Exodus 7:10–13

## Socialism vs. Communal Living

So far, this is what we have been studying:

Exodus 7:10 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

Moses and Aaron come before Pharaoh in what I believe is their first meeting with Pharaoh (a meeting which we have already studied in Exodus 5). Beginning with Exodus 7, we are studying the plagues of God from God's perspective. In Exodus 7, we see this first meeting as one of a series of meetings, where God always has the upper hand. We will go through these meetings relatively quickly now, as we will not get bogged down with the human perspective.

God has given Moses and Aaron an unusual gift in the power of the staff (it is called Moses' staff when he handles it and Aaron's when he wields it).

Aaron casts down this wooden staff and it is transformed into a serpent (probably some kind of reptilian creature). This is a real transformation which takes place. It was an actual wooden staff which turns into a reptile of some sort. This is a true miracle.

Exodus 7:11–12 Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

The magicians of Egypt come into the palace and perform a trick which appears to be what Aaron did. Their staffs *appear* to become serpents—however, I personally do not believe that this is a real transformation. I do not believe that God gave them this sort of power.

In any case, the staff of Aaron (which is now a reptilian creature) swallows up the creatures which these magicians have produced.

Exodus 7:13 Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. (ESV)

As we have previously discussed, the verb *to harden* actually means *to strengthen*; and it is an active verb, rather than a passive one. So Pharaoh strengthens his own heart. He surveys the situation and believes that his magicians are equivalent to Moses and Aaron; so he sides with his own people. Even though what Pharaoh's religious illusionists did is not equivalent, Pharaoh still *chooses* to consider their power as equivalent.

**Moses and Aaron meet Pharaoh and Aaron turns his rod into a snake** (by Robert Leinweber; Czech artist 1845-1921); from [Evangelicals for Social Action](#); accessed June 11, 2019.



As an application, most of you who follow this study understand that the United States enjoys a special relationship with God; and R. B. Thieme, Jr. called that national status *the client nation*. Israel was a client nation to God during the Age of Israel. It would make for an interesting discussion of whether modern-day Israel is a client nation to God.

I write this in 2018–2019, after Donald Trump has been president for 2 or so years. It is clear to me that the United States is on a downward spiral (not *because* Trump is president). There are so many things which have happened in this nation which are symptomatic of that; but what has stood out to me for a very long time is, the lack of young people in our local churches (by young, I mean, under 30). I have been to many fine churches (and not-so-fine churches), and what these churches seem to lack is an overabundance of young people. I began to notice this around 1980 or so. That is not a good sign. To whom can we hand off the torch? Is there a generation of young people coming up who believe in Jesus and desire to know the Word of God?

Every generation rises up and then gets older and passes from the scene. A generation might be great, but if the generation which follows is not, a nation can fall into a great downward spiral. The faith of each generation is critical.

The lack of young people in most churches is far more disconcerting than the current president or previous president; or the direction of one U.S. party going hard left into socialism.

Depending upon the many individual decisions which will be made over the next 2–6 years, President Trump might be the grace God has offered us before judgment. This generation coming up has a choice to make: will they see government as the answer to their

problems? Or God? Will they want to give more power to the government and express a desire to have the government take care of them from birth to death? There are a great many people today who trust government far more than they trust God; they believe in their government and leaders (at least of their own party), but do not have this same faith in God (for those who believe in God).

One of the truly insane notions in the United States today is that, a truly noble government is a socialist government and that, somehow, the socialist approach is the most Christian approach. The kind of government which God prefers is very well-defined in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Nowhere in these books can we find any socialism (although there is certainly a small footprint welfare program provided; one which requires work and one which involves the private sector). These books describe a law and order society, based upon written law; where the God of the nation is the LORD (in other words, Jesus Christ is the God of the nation). In nation Israel, there were well-defined systems of authority (such as the court system, set up by Moses at the suggestion of his father-in-law).

For his reelection Obama presented his vision for a responsible government as *the [Life of Julia](#)*,<sup>64</sup> a fictional woman whose life intersects with government many, many times. When she has a need or if she has a problem, the federal government is right there, ready to help her to meet that need, and to get her over that bump in the road. If we have a generation of people who believe in the Life of Julia is the ideal reality, then they think that government is a benevolent system of nice people who are ready and willing to help us out. They believe that government is designed to give us citizens assistance whenever we need it. If we have a generation of young people who believe that, then we will be looking at severe divine judgment. If we have young people who look to God to solve their problems when they cannot, then we will enjoy more grace and more prosperity.

Throughout life, there are problems. This is true of every person, no matter where they live. God provides Bible doctrine which makes it possible for us to deal with most of life; and when a problem appears to be too big or unsolvable, we as believers have a close relationship with the Creator of the Universe. We may always come before the throne room of heaven and make our petitions known.

What is problematic is, if most people see government in the role of God. “I have a problem; what agency of government can I go to in order to solve that problem?” Quite frankly, government can never be big enough to address all of your problems along with all of mine. One or both of us will get the short end of the stick.

Before we move forward in the Exodus narrative, there is a problem to clear up. There appears to be a nod to socialism in the Bible, in the book of Acts. However, we will find out that it is not really socialism, but what happened there was more akin to communal living

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<sup>64</sup> This has been removed from the Obama-Biden website. Otherwise, I would have cited that link. The original Life of Julia was an interactive page, where you could check in at various ages to see what President Obama’s policies would do for you each part of your life.

(which is not quite the same as socialism). The local church in Jerusalem faced so many intense difficulties over such a short period of time that they, as a church, chose to own all things in common. This approach did not last long and the Jerusalem church did not prosper over the long run. However, it was an attempt to respond to a very desperate situation. The troubled church in Jerusalem had much more in common with small communes in the United States than with a socialist form of government.

In the United States, during the hippie era (at the end of the 1960's and early 1970's), many groups of hippies tried a communal approach to farming. In the United States, because we enjoy great freedom, people may enter into a socialist-like contract with a small group of like-minded individuals and run with it (better described as a communal contract). No doubt, there are still some communal farms here and there in the United States; but it would be my guess that most of them have gone by the wayside. They must be self-sustaining and they must have internal agreement, philosophically speaking.

There several fundamental differences between socialism and a communal farm (or a communal church, as we have in Acts)—in socialism, everyone is subject to the whims of the government, but on a communal farm, this is a contract entered into willingly by all participants. So, if someone who had agreed to the social commitment (or if someone is born into this commune), becomes dissatisfied with their life on the commune, then they may simply leave. At any point in time, if someone of the commune is unhappy with the ways things are going, he can pick up and leave and rejoin the capitalist world. Another point of superiority of a communal farm over socialism is, the farming community is usually so small that, people in the commune can affect real policy change, because there are so few people there. A disgruntled member of the commune may or may not get what he wants from his complaint; but he can express his concerns to the very people who can act on them (or choose not to act on them).

On the other hand, if a nation or even a state turns to socialism, it is nearly impossible for a significant percentage of individuals to make any changes. Under socialism, it is really a very small group of people who guide the nation (and most often, it is one man). In [Venezuela](#), there have been millions of people on the streets protesting their socialist government and its policies (which have destroyed Venezuela); and still, to this point in time (2019), Nicolás Maduro is still in charge, inflation is at an insane rate, and the most basic food, water and necessities are not available for huge portions of the population. The people there have real problems and their socialist government is completely unable to deal with those problems.

Communist China, as of late, is making moves to have more control over [Hong Kong](#), one of the great economic powerhouses in the world, and the largest demonstrations in Hong Kong's history cannot necessarily stop China from doing what it wants to do with Hong Kong.

What is a key factor in Democrat socialism is, you can vote socialist policies into being (or entrust politicians with a socialist bend with power), but once a state or country has gone

socialist, there is virtually no way back—at least, not without a great deal of pain and suffering and lives lost.

In a free speech democracy or republic, all kinds of governments can be discussed and debated; but if a socialist government is voted into power and that government begins to remove our basic freedoms, then it becomes much harder to remove that government. Too often, speech criticizing the government becomes sedition in a socialist government.

Now, let's return to our narrative. We got to this tangent by considering that the United States is a client nation to God, just as Israel was, millennia ago. We considered the thinking of young people today, many of whom believe that socialism is their ultimate answer to right the wrongs of a country.

Back to our narrative:

Exodus 7:13 [Nevertheless, the heart of Pharaoh was strengthened, and he did not listen to Moses and Aaron \[lit., \*them\*\], just as Yahweh had promised \[lit., \*spoken\*\].](#) (CLV modernized)

God told Moses and Aaron that Pharaoh would not listen to them; that Pharaoh would reject what they had to say. Now, Pharaoh rejected their petition even though they went into this meeting with at least one divine sign to present to Pharaoh. Pharaoh discounted what he saw, as his magicians do the same thing (or so he rationalized).

The way that this meeting is presented in Exodus 5, Pharaoh considers Moses and Aaron's presence there before him and decides that the Hebrew people have far too much time on their hands, and so he increases the work of the Hebrew slaves, requiring them to do the impossible. This causes a rift between Moses and Aaron and the elders of Israel (which I believe was Pharaoh's intent—had he simply killed Moses and Aaron, that would have made martyrs out of them).

In this chapter, the additional work for the slaves and the rift are not mentioned. They are simply not pertinent to God's plan. What Pharaoh decides to do in an attempt to stop God's plan is not even a blip on the screen in Exodus 7. God's plan is moving forward, even if Pharaoh wants to stop it; and even if the elders of Israel are not fully on board. God knew all of this would take place, and He is ready to go to the next step, no matter what anyone else is thinking or doing.

Moses and Aaron leave the palace and then go to speak to God. All of the stuff that Pharaoh does in response (which we already studied in Exodus 5) is really unimportant to the big picture. All is under control; God has it handled.

As an aside, I am hoping that you recognize that what we study here in Exodus, even though these events took place over 3500 years ago, has some pertinence to today. That is, we should realize that we can learn from these things and develop the right mental attitude in life as a result.

Moses and Aaron have gone before Pharaoh and have asked for the people of Israel to be allowed to temporarily leave Egypt and worship God; and Pharaoh refused in the strongest way possible. As we studied a few chapters ago, Pharaoh not only said *no*, but he piled so much work on the Israelites as a response, that they were unable to do what he required of them.

Moses and Aaron will return to Pharaoh a second time in vv. 15–20, but this time with a judgment from God. Because these have been called plagues commonly from the era of the KJV till now, these might be categorized more accurately as judgments against Pharaoh and against Egypt.<sup>65</sup>

The subtitles are from the NKJV.

### The First Plague: Waters Become Blood

What we will study from this point forward through to Exodus 12 are the 10 plagues (or, *judgments*). The number 10 in the Bible often signifies completeness, as in the *Ten Commandments*. An 11<sup>th</sup> plague is not needed, just as an 11<sup>th</sup> commandment is not needed (when Jesus said, “**Love your neighbor as yourself**,” He was not giving the 11<sup>th</sup> commandment; He was merely summarizing the final six commandments<sup>66</sup>).

These plagues will happen in quick succession, one plague after another. They are also recorded in such a way as to move the narrative along. You may recall that back in Gen. 24, we seemed to have virtually every conversation and every thought recorded, even if there was no new information to be added. Exodus 7–12 will not be like that. We will never have a narrative where, God says “X” to Moses; then Moses repeats “X” to Aaron (as Aaron will act as Moses’ spokesman); and then Aaron says “X” to the Pharaoh. Then, when Aaron lifts up his rod, God does “X”. Do you see how whatever judgment we are talking about, it potentially could be described 4x, thus slowing down this narrative considerably. We could literally spend 2–3 chapters on each judgment. However, this is *not* what will be done. These events in Exodus 7–12 occurred over a fairly short period of time—perhaps a month and certainly less than 2 months. Therefore, the narrative will reflect the rapidity of the events themselves.

This very short period of time, when God places judgment acts upon Egypt is an inflection point in history. What Israel is and does after this point will be considerably different from what Israel has been (a nation enslaved to Egypt). Egypt will also have a change of

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<sup>65</sup> Just in case you are confused by the figure of speech *metonymy*, I just used one right here. I wrote *Egypt* when I meant *the land of Egypt and the people of Egypt*.

<sup>66</sup> And, as an aside, this is a mental attitude love, not an emotional love. You and your neighbor may not get along and may not be speaking. However, you can still demonstrate love toward your neighbor by respecting his rights as a creation of God. This is a mental attitude which you choose to have; not an emotion which you get all worked up over.

direction, where it will go from being a very powerful nation, with all Israel under its thumb, to a nation which has been beaten down by God.

But, back to my original point: whatever is said will generally be said but one time in the narrative itself (whether it is God to Moses or Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh or the act itself<sup>67</sup>). If you read this narrative, there will be no drag to it. The narrative itself will zip right along.

At this point, we introduce the first of ten plagues to come upon Egypt. Quite obviously, this is a natural point of division, and many Bibles which give titles to subsections, divide these next few chapters into 10 subsections.

### The Plagues Leveled by God Against Egypt

1. With this passage, we begin the plagues, which are so well-known even apart from Scripture. That is, many people who know nothing about the Bible still know about the judgments or the plagues against Egypt (they may not believe them to be historic and they may not be able to name more than 3 of them, but they will know something about them).
2. There will be 10 plagues or 10 judgments; and Exodus 7:14 begins the first one.
3. There are 10 of these plagues, and they are also called *judgments, strikes, blows, disasters*.
4. The general process for each plague appears to be:
  - 1) God meets with Moses (and Aaron)<sup>1</sup> and He tells them what the plague/judgment is going to be. God tells them what to do and say.
  - 2) At least once, Scripture records God giving Moses instructions of where to go to meet Pharaoh because there will be times when Pharaoh does not want to meet with Moses and Aaron.
  - 3) After speaking with God, then Moses and Aaron go and speak to Pharaoh. Each time, they repeat God's requirement (for the people of God to go 3 days into the desert to worship Him); and they tell Pharaoh what will happen if this is not allowed. Most of the time, we will be given very few of God's specific demands. This does not mean that these demands were not delivered; it simply means that they are not repeated in the narrative each time Moses and Aaron confront Pharaoh.
  - 4) Each time, Pharaoh refuses to let the children of Israel go and Moses or Aaron engage in whatever theatrics God calls for, and the plague occurs.
    - (1) I use the word *theatrics* not to belittle what God requires Moses or Aaron to do, but to describe how God works. His miracles can be very theatrical.
    - (2) Cecil Blount DeMille had a fairly good idea as to the theatric nature of God's miracles and made a reasonable stab at trying to show them in his movie, *The Ten Commandments*. I would suggest to you that the reality was even more spectacular than the movie.

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<sup>67</sup> I don't believe that any time is given to Moses telling Aaron what he needs to do.

## The Plagues Leveled by God Against Egypt

- 5) Often, Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron to come back and speak with him; often he asks for the specific plague to be removed, and he agrees generally to some sort of a compromise concerning the sons of Israel going out to worship God (when Pharaoh proposes a compromise, it is never agreed to by Moses).
  - 6) After the plague is removed, Pharaoh's heart is hardened (or, *strengthened*) and he refuses to send the children of Israel out to worship their God, even if he promises that he will.
  - 7) This results in God speaking with Moses and beginning the entire process again.
  - 8) Not all of these steps are recorded for each plague. Often God will tell Moses (and Aaron) what to do, and the next thing we know, the plague has begun. Obviously, Moses and Aaron had to get to Pharaoh and speak to him and tell him what God said; but recording each step of the process could have been quite repetitious, so we do not find this sort of repetition (Gen. 24 is an example of a very repetitive narrative<sup>2</sup>).
  - 9) Not all steps occur with each plague.
5. The plagues appear to be quite natural, but, at the same time, taken to a great extreme.
  6. The Bible never distinguishes between signs or miracles which genuinely defy the laws of physics and biology and those which appear to adhere to those laws. Could some of these have been half and half? It is possible. Again, this is never made an issue of (this is true throughout the entire Bible<sup>3</sup>).
  7. These judgments were designed to be felt by every Egyptian; so they were big plagues. God wanted every Israelite and every Egyptian to understand what was going on. Every person in Egypt was given the freedom to consider the God of Israel. The individual choice of every Egyptian (and, of course, every individual Israelite) was important to God.
  8. Some have said that these plagues were intentionally aimed at the gods of Egypt. We will look into that. That appears to be at least a divine consideration. On the other hand, the Egyptians had various deities intimately involved in all of their lives and their farming; so virtually any plague would strike against one or more of their gods.
  9. In the warnings given by Aaron (and later by Moses), these plagues will be treated as plagues which harm the Pharaoh and his family personally. Many times, he is warned, using the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular (in verbs, as a suffix, etc.). Even though the plagues affected all of Egypt; we know that each one also affected Pharaoh directly. And he was warned every time on a very personal level. His negative response following each plague is recorded, even though Pharaoh himself was directly affected (Pharaoh might sound repentant, at first; but, at some point after the plague's removal, he would exercise negative volition).

<sup>1</sup> It is not clear whether Aaron is in on every one of these meetings (generally speaking, these appear to be meetings just between God and Moses). Aaron is a part of all this at the insistence of Moses; and God has allowed for him to be Moses' spokesman. He does not really have a function at each initial meeting with God.

<sup>2</sup> The style of Gen. 24 is quite fascinating; and I view it as a bedtime story (but one that is true).

<sup>3</sup> There are times, in Scripture, where it appears that there might be a natural/scientific explanation, such as, where Jesus rubs mud in a person's eyes and his sight returns. There are also times when a miracle seems to clearly defy the laws of nature—such as, when Jesus turns water into wine.

There are some fairly good charts which briefly give us an overview of the 10 plagues. I love the chart below, because it uses various fonts to convey each of the plagues.

**The Ten Plagues** (a special fonts chart); from [Tough Questions Answered.org](http://Tough Questions Answered.org); accessed August 20, 2019. It is impressive that, in 9 of the 10 plagues, the judgment can be summarized with one word in a single unique font.



V. 13 concludes the initial meeting with Pharaoh; in v. 14, Moses is speaking with God again. Now, my reading of the text is that, all of that stuff about Pharaoh's edict, his increase of the slave workload, and the beating of the Hebrew supervisors—all of that occurs between vv. 13 and 14. It is not necessary to repeat, as this is the plague seen from the human perspective: how does Pharaoh see it and what does he do; how do the Israelite slaves see this turn of events; how do the elders of Israel respond to this series of events? When it comes to God's plan and the fulfillment of God's Word, what these people think, feel or do is irrelevant. God's plan is a locomotive moving ahead; man's attempt to stop it might be like an errant leaf which has been blown onto the tracks. Pharaoh may have thought to himself, *I will nip this problem in the bud*; but he seriously mis-underestimated the gravity of the situation.

I only mention this so that you can take what you remember from reactions of Moses, Pharaoh, the slaves, and the elders, and mentally insert it between vv. 13 & 14.

Exodus 7:13 [Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened \[or, strengthened\], and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.](#)

Moses and Aaron came before Pharaoh, demonstrated some of God's power (Aaron's staff is turned into a serpent), and Pharaoh is unimpressed. Pharaoh was not impressed by what they did and he certainly was not going to give into their demands (God's demands).

As we already studied, the response of Pharaoh was to go hard against his Hebrew slaves and require from them a work output that they could not do. Then he punished them for not meeting the newly established standards.

A few days have passed, and now God speaks to Moses once again:

Exodus 7:14a [So the Lord said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart is hard;...](#)

The word *heart* here refers to the negative volition of Pharaoh towards God and towards the Hebrew people. The heart refers to the inner man, and can refer to the entire human soul or to specific aspects of the soul.

The adjective found here is *kâbêd* (כָּבֵד) [pronounced *kaw<sup>b</sup>-VAYD*], which means, *heavy, overweight, abundant, numerous, dull; hard, difficult, burdensome, grievous; severe; very oppressive, numerous, rich*. Strong's #3515 BDB #458. His heart is impervious; God's grace cannot reach it; God's judgments cannot reach him.

If you have raised a child or two, then you may understand this. If you want to cure a child of a specific type of bad behavior, you apply disciplinary pressure. R. B. Thieme, Jr. called this *enforced humility*. You apply it, you apply it harder or with more frequency, and, at some point, you hope to reach the soul of the child. They may want to continue to commit that bad act, but it just is not worth it any more. The application of your discipline makes continuing on the path untenable for the child. However, a different child, no matter how much of that same pressure that you apply, he resists no matter what (and we could be

talking about brothers in the same family here). One responds to the discipline; and the other, displaying the same exact wrong behavior, does not. The one who does not respond to discipline has a heart which is *kâbêd* (כָּבֵד). It is *dull; hard, difficult, burdensome, grievous; severe*. A child with such a heart is very difficult to raise and to guide in life.

Moses and Aaron are directly interacting with a man with such a heart.

## Lesson 075: Exodus 7:8–15

## God Speaks of the First Plague

### A Review of Exodus 7:8–13 (the First Meeting with Pharaoh):

Exodus 7:8–9 Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Prove yourselves by working a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.'"

When Moses was uncertain about speaking to the elders of Israel and then speaking to Pharaoh, God gave him several signs/miracles which he could do in front of them. When Moses continued to balk about taking center stage, God allowed for his brother Aaron to do the public speaking.

Moses would pick the time for Aaron to cast down his staff before Pharaoh.

Exodus 7:10 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

Moses and Aaron did stand before Pharaoh, and Aaron threw down his staff, as God had commanded Moses, and it turned into a serpent.

Exodus 7:11–12 Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

The magicians of Pharaoh came in and appeared to duplicate what Aaron had done. But at the end, Aaron's serpent did something that theirs could not—it swallowed up the serpents which were there.

Based upon what we read here, the staff of Aaron's which turned into a serpent, first ate the other serpents, and then turned back into a staff (that would be my estimation of what was happening).

Exodus 7:13 Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened [or, *strengthened*], and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. (ESV; capitalized)

Despite witnessing the coup de gras, Pharaoh strengthened himself against the words of God, and would not listen to the demands made by Aaron (which God had promised).

At this point, much of what we read in Exodus 5 takes place. However, we skip all of that and go to the next meeting between God and Moses. Our focus between Exodus 7 and 12 is the perspective of God, Who will put 10 plagues upon Israel.

Exodus 7:14a So the Lord said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart is hard [or, *strong, stubborn*];....

We do not have a time frame here. It would seem logical that this interaction between God and Moses would take place soon after the first meeting with Pharaoh. Now, if the meeting recorded in Exodus 7 is the same as the first meeting we studied in Exodus 5, then a few days must be given over for Pharaoh's decree (which would happen that very day); and for the first application of this decree (for there to be the day that Israel must find straw for the bricks), and for Moses and the elders to respond. So, it is likely that God allows 2–3 days to pass before He speaks to Moses (I am basing this upon the assumption that the meeting with Pharaoh in chapter 5 is the same as the one that we just studied, even though they sound quite different).

It is very possible that Moses did not go to God right away (as appears to be the case in Exodus 7). It is possible that, as we saw in Exodus 5, that Moses and Aaron allowed time for Pharaoh's negative volition to play out. We do not know what exactly he expected, but God made it clear that Pharaoh was not going to immediately succumb to God's demands.

Pharaoh was simply negative towards God; and it is understandable. He believed that these slaves needed to be under his control and that they needed to work. Pharaoh was certainly not going to send them off on a holiday. No serious thought was given to Moses and Aaron by Pharaoh. However, their demands, as silly as they seemed to Pharaoh, apparently also made him angry. He seemed to take these demands as a personal affront.

There are 3 words used so far to indicate the Pharaoh's hardness of heart. This one may be an adjective or a verb; there are disagreements on this (very often, a verb form can end up acting like an adjective and end up taking over the general usage as such).

The New Life Version translates this portion of v. 14: **Pharaoh's heart is not changed.** Pharaoh's heart was *heavy, overweight and difficult*; just the sort of heart that is too slow and ponderous to change. Pharaoh had no desire to change his mind about the God of Moses and Aaron.

Most commentators treat all of these verbs and adjectives as equivalent; each one simply refers to a hardening of the heart (or, scar tissue on the thinking part of the soul). We will,

at some point, explore the different terms and see if this approach seems reasonable or not.

So far, there has been no pressure applied directly to Pharaoh. He may have been given a general warning about his firstborn (see Exodus 4:22–23), but that specific warning is saved for the final plague (Exodus 11:5). So, to this point, nothing has been said by way of setting a time or a specific threat from God (insofar as we know). Moses and Aaron have gone to Pharaoh, given them God's demand that Israel be allowed to worship Him; and Pharaoh has said *no*. They showed Pharaoh the sign of the staff being turned into a serpent and Pharaoh was unfazed (as his magicians could do the same thing). Pharaoh's response was still negative.

Exodus 7:14a **So the Lord said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart is hard [or, *strong, stubborn*];....**

Moses is God's point man and he has God's authority. All of this should have been done by Moses alone, but God knew that Moses would object and He chose Aaron to help guide Moses to his natural position of leadership. Luckily (as if there were any luck in God's plan), Aaron is not the sort of person to try to steal the spotlight or to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. Aaron did as he was told; he was a natural follower, and humble in that respect. But all of the innate and inculcated leadership was with Moses.

Nevertheless, God does have a part for Aaron in this visit to the Pharaoh; and, in general, the line of Aaron will be very important to the people of God (in fact, Aaron's genealogical line will eclipse Moses').

Moses and Aaron had gone to meet with Pharaoh once already, and God's demands were given. There were no threats or ultimatums given by Moses or Aaron. When Moses and Aaron confront Pharaoh again, there will be specific consequences for his negative volition.

Exodus 7:14 **So the Lord said to Moses: "Pharaoh's heart is hard; he refuses to let the people go.**

Pharaoh will not respond to God's pressure, no matter how much pressure God applies. He will clearly become weakened by pressure from God; to the point where even God will have to give him the strength to resist—but as long as Pharaoh has the strength, he will resist God.

Have you ever known a person to be so beaten down by life that they just don't want to get out of bed? However, when they get the strength to get out of bed, they are the same person that they have always been (often they have manufactured the very problems which have got them down). Even when Pharaoh gets to the point where he just cannot get out of bed the next day, God will give him enough strength to get up out of bed. But, each and every time, his attitude towards God will continue to be negative. He does not get out of bed with a new attitude towards God; when given the strength, Pharaoh expresses negative volition towards God.

God gives every man the power to say *no*. God tells Moses what Moses already knows, "Pharaoh refuses to let the people go."

Exodus 7:15a [Go to Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water, and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him;...](#)

Pharaoh is not really interested in meeting Moses and Aaron again. If his servants came to him and said, "Moses and Aaron are here to see you;" he would have said, "Do not let them come in, no matter what." However, Pharaoh would still go out into the world, and God knew exactly where he would be. Whether he bathed in the morning or took his coffee (or whatever) early in the morning; God knew that he would be found by the river's bank. Apparently, this was a place accessible by the public, although it may have appeared to be completely private.

At this point, Pharaoh has no reason to meet with Moses and Aaron. Essentially, he believes that he has solved the Moses and Aaron problem. He assigned work to their compatriots that cannot be done; and blamed this excessive work requirement on the demands made by Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh believes that this approach would separate Moses from the Hebrew people.

Another alternative would have been to kill Moses and Aaron; but Pharaoh realized that he might create two martyrs by doing that and have the entire Hebrew population turned against him. The approach that Pharaoh took managed to maneuver the situation where the elders of Israel (some of whom were foremen or close to the foremen) would turn against Moses and Aaron.

So, Moses and Aaron have been taken care of, insofar as Pharaoh is concerned. A second meeting is unnecessary (to Pharaoh's thinking). Everything got solved in the first meeting.

Therefore, Moses and Aaron cannot simply go to the front door of the palace and ask for an audience with Pharaoh.

This tells us that, if necessary, God was going to make it possible for Moses and Aaron to speak to Pharaoh, whether Pharaoh wanted to meet with them or not. In future meetings, their initial interaction will be made possible because of each plague by God (Pharaoh will want to meet with them to get them to convince their God to stop the plague).

In any case, the initial meeting, when considered from standpoint of human thinking, was a disaster. Pharaoh would not allow the people of God to go and worship Him; instead, Pharaoh made the workload of the Hebrew people unbearably impossible—which move, I believe, was done in order to separate Moses and Aaron from the Hebrew people.

God knows that Moses and Aaron are not going to be able to simply walk in again to speak with Pharaoh, so He made provision for that. Each time, there will be a way for Moses and Aaron to confront Pharaoh.

Here is one of the interesting aspects of Pharaoh's volition and God's will: Pharaoh cannot simply refuse to hear God's will. God is not giving Pharaoh that option. God required that Pharaoh hear clearly what was required of him and what the consequences would be for not acquiescing to God's demands. Then God allowed Pharaoh to respond according to his volition.

Furthermore all the angelic beings (fallen and elect) could view this and see that, each and every time, Pharaoh was given clear demands; and these demands he ultimately refused, each and every time.

Exodus 7:15a *Go to Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water, and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him;...*

Where this reads *you will stand*, this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Niphal perfect of *nâsab* (נָצַב) [pronounced *naw-TSAH<sup>B</sup>V*], which means, *to be stationed, to be left standing, to station oneself, to take one's stand; to stand [at the ready, firm]*. Strong's #5324 BDB #662. The perfect tense focuses upon the action of the verb without a thought to its duration; the Niphal can function as a passive or as a reflexive. "You yourself will stand..."

Exodus 7:15b *...and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand.*

*You will take* is, again, a 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular. God is speaking to Moses about what Moses is to do; but Moses will haul his brother Aaron along with him each and every time.

The staff which was turned into a serpent is identified by whichever man held it (vv. 9–10). When in Aaron's hand, it will be called *Aaron's staff*; in Moses' hand, it will be called *Moses' staff*.

Exodus 7:15 *Go to Pharaoh in the morning, when he goes out to the water, and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand.*

This will be the second time that Moses and Aaron appear before Pharaoh. As far as Pharaoh is concerned, he is certain that he has deftly solved the Moses and Aaron problem. He managed to drive a wedge between Moses and the leaders of the Hebrew people; and he has punished the Hebrew supervisors. He is quite certain that Moses and Aaron have been brought down in the eyes of the Hebrew people. Yet, Pharaoh will again find himself confronted by Moses and Aaron.

## **Lessons 076–077: Exodus 7:14–20 The First Plague/Contrasting Moses & Jesus**

Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh for the first meeting, and, as God warned Moses, he would not be agreeable to allowing the sons of Israel worship Him.

Exodus 7:14–15 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. (ESV)

God knew that requesting an audience with Pharaoh a second time would not be granted, so God tells Moses where Pharaoh might be found.

Exodus 7:16a *And you shall say to him,...*

God tells Moses to go before Pharaoh, using the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular imperative in v. 14. Here, where God says, "You will say to him,..." the verb used is the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect of 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced *aw-MAHR*], which means, *to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think*. Strong's #559 BDB #55. Again, the responsibility falls specifically upon Moses. The perfect tense emphasizes the action of the verb and not its duration.

Exodus 7:16a-b *And you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you,...*

God told Moses where Pharaoh might be found the next morning, when he goes out to the Nile. So Pharaoh is about to go into the Nile or he is actually in the Nile. Moses is to stand on the bank of the Nile and tell him that God sent him to speak to Pharaoh.

*Me* is a 1<sup>st</sup> person singular suffix (God again emphasizing Moses' interaction with Pharaoh). Nevertheless, Moses will bring along his brother Aaron to act as the spokesman.

As we would expect, Pharaoh will not be happy to see them.

Exodus 7:16a-c *And you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness;...*

I have changed some of the formatting found in the NKJV. I have done this: "A quotation followed by a 'Quote within a quote; followed by *a quote, within a quote within a quote.*' " So God is speaking to Moses ("the quote"); He tells Moses what to say ('the quote within a quote'); then God says to Moses, tell Pharaoh that I said this to him (*a quote within a quote*). I will continue this approach throughout, slightly modifying the NKJV formatting when we are *3-deep into a quotation*.

God is speaking to Moses, and telling him what he is to say to Pharaoh. Actually, Aaron will speak for Moses, again. God allows for that, but continually speaks to Moses about Moses doing everything.

God's demand remains the same: "*Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the desert-wilderness.*"

Up until the end, this will be God's demand of Pharaoh. This is a legitimate demand and it allows for the Hebrew people to return to Egypt as willing subjects. However, Pharaoh will not be willing to let this people go, even temporarily.

Exodus 7:16 *And you shall say to him, 'The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness; but indeed, until now you [Pharaoh] would not hear!'*

The demand made by God is the same as before—Pharaoh is to allow God's people to go into the desert-wilderness to worship Him. However, Pharaoh refuses to accept this demand. When it says, "...you would not hear!" this means that Pharaoh will not acquiesce to God's demands.

Moses is to go back to Pharaoh and tell him, "God says, 'Let My people go to serve Me in the desert-wilderness. I have told you what I expect from you; but you have not listened to Me.'"

Exodus 7:17a *Thus says the Lord: By this you shall know that I am the Lord.*

What God is talking about (God is telling Moses to quote Him here) is the stuff which will follow in the text below. By what God does here and subsequently, it will become clear that He is God. Only extremely strong negative volition can resist Him.

There is a marvelous figure of speech in vv. 16 & 17 lost in most English translations. The word *kôh* (כֹּה) [pronounced *ko*] means *thus, here*. Its meaning is slightly modified when it is found twice in the same passage, as it is here. It is found twice in Exodus 2:12 (and translated and he turned *this way and that way*), Num. 11:31 (...*on this side...on that side*), Joshua 17:14 (...*till now and till then*); and in this passage, the pair of *kôh*'s is translated like this: "Look, you have not listened **until now**"; **now** says the Lord, "By this you will know that I [am] the Lord..."

This final phrase does double duty here. By what God promises to do, Moses and Aaron will know that He is the LORD; and Pharaoh will know He is the LORD as well.

In v. 17b, Moses is to speak for himself:

Exodus 7:17b *Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood.*

This is a little tricky because what we are reading is what God is saying to Moses; but God is telling Moses to speak from his own perspective. God wants Moses to strike the waters with the rod in his hand.

Now, with the particular formatting in place, see how v. 17 changes perspective halfway through. First it is Moses quoting what God says specifically to Pharaoh; then it is Moses speaking from his own point of view:

Exodus 7:17 Thus says the Lord: *By this you shall know that I am the Lord.* Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood.

God prefers that Moses say these words; but it will be Aaron who will say these things.

We do not know if the water is turned to actual blood, or if it simply has the appearance of blood. What appears to be blood may in fact be the very small eggs of the frogs which will infect all of Egypt (plague #2). Or it could be a red algae (to be discussed later).

Exodus 7:18 *And the fish that are in the river shall die, the river shall stink, and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river.’ ”*

This is how I think the quotations should have been: Exodus 7:17–18 Thus says the Lord: *By this you shall know that I am the Lord.* Behold, I [either Moses or Aaron] will strike the waters which are in the river with the rod that is in my hand, and they shall be turned to blood. *And the fish that are in the river shall die, the river shall stink, and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river.’ ”*

In the alternative, we might understand the text like this: Exodus 7:17–18 Thus says the Lord: *By this you shall know that I am the Lord. Behold, I will strike the waters which are in the river (with the rod that is in my hand), and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that are in the river shall die, the river shall stink, and the Egyptians will loathe to drink the water of the river.’ ”* What is in parentheses is Moses speaking for himself (again, actually Aaron). Being so careful to parse these two verses might make this harder to understand rather than easier. If I had never gone into the topic, *who exactly is speaking to whom*; the meaning of what God is saying may have been easier to understand.

You may recall that last time, Aaron went off script and said, that if the Hebrew people did not get out into the wilderness to worship God, God might do something bad to them. Perhaps God is being particularly careful in telling Moses what to say.

Let me offer up an alternative translation:

Exodus 7:17–18 *Y<sup>e</sup>howah said, By this, you will know that I [am] Y<sup>e</sup>howah. Watch [and] I will strike the waters of the [Nile] River with the staff that [is] in my hand; and [the waters] will be turned to blood and the fish that [are] in the [Nile] River will die. Furthermore, the River will begin to stink and the Egyptians will become frustrated [lit., wearied] [attempting to] drink water from the River.’ ”*

The people of Egypt would try all kinds of different things to make the water of the Nile drinkable to them. They might strain it; they might search all over the area trying to find clean water—whatever they try, they will grow tired or weary in this pursuit of any clean water from the Nile.

This is to be the first plague, but the second wonder that Moses and Aaron perform before Pharaoh. What God knows will happen is that this showdown between Moses and Pharaoh will be broadcast all over the earth and people from all over the earth will believe in the Revealed God (Jesus Christ) because of this confrontation.

As an aside, salvation is obtained by believing in God as He has chosen to reveal Himself. Here, He is the God of Israel, the God of the plagues of Egypt. Any person who believes in this revelation of God is saved. In the 1<sup>st</sup> advent, God revealed himself in the Person of Jesus. God did not reveal Himself theoretically to mankind, as in, *what would I be like as a man?* God actually became man.

Back to our narrative; God is still speaking to Moses regarding his second confrontation with Pharaoh.

Exodus 7:19a *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron,...*

At this, God includes Aaron in what was to be done. God is going to direct Moses to tell Aaron how to perform this next sign.

Ideally speaking, Moses was to speak all of these words to Pharaoh, and then tell Aaron to use his staff to turn the waters into blood.

Exodus 7:19a-b *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water,...' "*

Aaron is to take this rod—the same one which was turned into a serpent—and he was to stretch out his hand over the waters of Egypt.

The term *pools [collections] of water* is possibly a description of the Egyptian irrigation system. The Egyptians receive precious little rain each year and when even an inch of rain occurs, it can create havoc in Egypt. In fact, it would overflow almost annually during the rainy season. What the Egyptians did was to dig a large number of canals out from the Nile to (1) irrigate their crops and (2) lead to various man-made ponds and low areas to handle the run off when the Nile overflows.

However, God is going to foul their water.

Exodus 7:19c *...that they may become blood.'* "

This does not necessarily mean that there was any hocus pocus here and that God changed the water into blood, as in a miracle which defies physical laws. We do not know exactly what happened. I am certainly not saying that this is beyond what God can do; I am simply saying that, we do not know exactly what took place.

On the other hand, there is no reason to believe that Jesus turning water into wine was anything less than a miracle which defied the laws of science.<sup>68</sup>

Not only are all the bodies of water to be turned to blood (or a liquid resembling blood), but water which is stored anywhere was to be turned to blood. Water is the most necessary ingredient for our survival, besides air. Remove that, and we are in a countdown to death. Water is the rarest form of H<sub>2</sub>O in the universe and yet we have it in terrific abundance on this planet. How any evolutionist could realize what a rarity water is and then think that this all just happened by chance is an act of faith much greater than mine. A slight change in any factor related to temperature on earth—and there is a careful balance of these factors—and we should find our water turning almost instantly to vapor or to ice.

H<sub>2</sub>O is so important to us that we have 3 specific names for it: water, ice and vapor (or steam), which describes its state. Not only is this compound rare in the universe; but its liquid state is even more rare. In a universe of stars and space, there are very few places where water could exist, as there is not a great temperature range between water freezing and boiling. Places in the universe which are typically between 0 and 100°C are very rare. In the coldest portions of the universe, we come close to absolute zero (273°C). The sun's core is 15,000,000°C (and there are no doubt higher temperatures elsewhere<sup>69</sup>). Yet, most of us live in a place where the temperature rarely varies more than 60°C (100°F). Given such extremes in our universe, you can see just how rare water would be in its liquid state. It is particularly amazing to have such an abundance of water as well (which, in turn, helps to preserve this narrow temperature range). It is almost as if someone created it to be this way. :)

Back to our narrative:

Exodus 7:19c [And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone.](#)”

The command of Moses to Aaron to perform this miracle means that Moses is actively involved; just as God's command to Moses means that God is actively involved in this miracle.

At times, in these signs and wonders done by God, there may be natural reasons for what occurs and they may be complete and total miracles. There is no distinguishing one from the other in the Bible. Whether God presides over a convergence of natural events which seem miraculous; or, God does something which defies science, it is all the same to Him. God has the power and authority to direct natural events to result in something which appear miraculous; and He has the power and authority to do things which we would regard as actually being miraculous.

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<sup>68</sup> R. B. Thieme, Jr. always would say that the phrase *scientific laws*, is a misnomer, as science did not initiate these laws nor does science enforce them.

<sup>69</sup> In fact, some [claim](#) that we have created much higher temperatures here on earth.

There have been natural reasons given for what happens in Egypt and it is certainly possible that God set a variety of factors into motion which conform to the laws of nature (or, laws of science) which God set up, in eternity past.

This same cool fresh water, existing in reasonable abundance in Egypt, is going to undergo a radical change.

This water is going to undergo a fundamental change, whether it is part of the Egyptian canal system or whether that water has been stored in various containers (here, called wood buckets and stone pitchers).

Exodus 7:19 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their streams, over their rivers, over their ponds, and over all their pools of water, that they may become blood. And there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in buckets of wood and pitchers of stone.’”

Exodus 7:17–18 appears to be one view of what God wanted Moses to say and v. 19 is what God wanted Aaron to do.

Up to v. 19, this is God speaking to Moses (and possibly to Aaron). Beginning in v. 20, Moses and Aaron will do as God has commanded. So, suddenly, the narrative has jumped from God speaking to Moses (v. 19), to Moses and Aaron doing just what God commanded them to do in front of Pharaoh (vv. 20–23). This abbreviated approach helps to move the narrative forward without getting bogged down with too much detail.

Exodus 7:20a And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the Lord commanded.

Pharaoh is either in the Nile or ready to go into the Nile (I assume to bathe that morning).

From this point forward, the meetings with God, followed by the meetings with Pharaoh, followed by God’s judgment of the land of Egypt will be very clearcut.

God has given directions to Moses and Aaron. You may recall that previously, there was at least one thing said by Aaron that did not square with God’s directions completely. However, from hereon in, Moses and Aaron will appear to do exactly as God commands.

Exodus 7:20b So he [Aaron] lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants.

Pharaoh is out there at the Nile River. Whether he is bathing in it or simply standing beside it, we do not know. But Pharaoh himself will witness what God will do.

Exodus 7:20c And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

The Egyptians, ever dependant upon the Nile river, had great reverence for it and even worshipped and deified it. It was called *the father of life* and *the father of the gods*. The

Egyptians were also a very clean people who likely bathed more often than other groups in the ancient world. Their temple sacrifices were generally bloodless, so that the sight of the river being turned to blood and the various containers throughout the land being filled with blood was a disgusting and unpleasant sight. However, for our God, the God of the Universe, there is no redemption without the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22).

Moses and Aaron must appear before Pharaoh. These miracles, to which Pharaoh is a witness, reveals the wrath of God because he did not agree to allow the people of Israel to go into the desert to worship God for three days.

As an aside, what if Pharaoh agreed to let Israel go out to the desert for a few days and worship God? What if Pharaoh would have let the people do that at the very beginning? This is a *what if* that does not take into account the kind of person Pharaoh is. God raised up Pharaoh to this end (yet, God always allows Pharaoh his free will). What God required from Pharaoh was entirely reasonable; knowing full well that Pharaoh would refuse.

The things which God would do, would be taken to a point where, the Jews become so odious in the sight of the Egyptians and there would be no way that they could leave for a few days and then return to Egypt. God is forcing Pharaoh's hand, so to speak, to achieve God's ultimate purpose: returning the Hebrew people to the land of Canaan. *Wondering what would have happened if* is not really an important discussion here. It would be equally important to discuss, *what if, when Moses and Aaron first met Pharaoh, that a meteor strikes the earth right where they all are?* Such a discussion is a meaningless rabbit hole to go down. The Bible gives us enough of what really happened for us to study to not take too much time being concerned about all of the alternative realities which theoretically could have occurred, but did not.

Exodus 7:20 [And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the Lord commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.](#)

Pharaoh is out either in the river or by the river, and Moses and Aaron show up there. First Aaron speaks to Pharaoh, as God commanded. He said, [“The Lord God of the Hebrews has sent me to you, saying, ‘Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness’; but indeed, until now you \[Pharaoh\] would not hear!”](#) (This is from v. 16.)

Aaron lifts up his rod and strikes the waters, and the waters turn to blood. This is in response to Pharaoh's hardened heart against God's demands. Pharaoh first received grace; and when he rejected that, he received judgment.

Generally speaking, this is what God does—He offers grace before judgment. There are many of us who are enjoying greatly the presidency of Donald Trump; but we should bear in mind, this could be God's grace before judgment. The solution is not getting all evangelicals behind the same candidate; the solution is a spiritual one. Believers in the United States (and elsewhere) need to evangelize and to grow spiritually. It is a spiritual transformation within America that will preserve this nation as the grand experiment in

democracy that it is. There are a variety of factors which could transform the United States virtually overnight.

Transforming the waters of Egypt into blood (or into something which appears to be blood) is a judgment upon Egypt and upon Pharaoh for rejecting God’s demands. Moses is the human vehicle by which this judgment is laid upon Egypt.

Although Moses is a type of Christ; there are times in the New Testament when he is presented in contrast to Jesus. Moses is often used to represent the Law, whereas Jesus is our salvation through grace.

The ESV; capitalized is used below.

| <b>Contrasting Moses and Jesus</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Moses and the Law</b>   | <b>Jesus and Salvation</b>   |
| Judgement; associated with the Law.  | Grace, associated with redemption.   |
| John 7:19a <b>“Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law.”</b>  | John 1:17 <b>For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.</b>   |
| Moses turns the life-giving waters into blood, killing all the life in it. Exodus 7:20–21  | Jesus turns water into wine, turning life into a grand celebration. John 2:1–11  |
| Moses, who brings the Law to the people, brings with it judgement of the people.   | Jesus brings relief to man from the judgment of the Law. We are judged by the Law and found wanting. <b>For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.</b> (Rom. 6:23)  |
| There is no freedom in the Law. Acts 13:38–39 (Paul is speaking) <b>“Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this Man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by Him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.”</b> | Freedom comes by means of Jesus Christ. John 8:36 (Jesus is speaking) <b>“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”</b> Gal. 5:1 <b>For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. (The yoke of slavery is subjection oneself to the Law.)</b> |

## Contrasting Moses and Jesus

| Moses and the Law   | Jesus and Salvation   |
|---|---|
| <p>At best, the Law of Moses brings knowledge of sin. Rom. 3:19–20 <b>Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.</b></p> | <p>The righteousness of God comes not through the Law but through Jesus Christ. Rom. 3:21–22a <b>But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. Gal. 2:21 I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.</b></p> |
| <p>Gal. 3:10 <b>For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." (Deut. 27:26)</b></p>   | <p>Gal. 3:13 <b>Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— (Deut. 21:23)</b></p>  |
| <p>Therefore, we are condemned by the Law, which is associated with Moses.</p> <p>To many believers in the first century, Moses represented the Law and Jesus our freedom from penalty of the Law.</p>  | <p>We are redeemed by the Lord.</p>   |

It is the same God Who will give the Hebrew people the Law through Moses (future to us in this narrative); and Who will also take upon Himself the form of man and walk among us (John 1:14). Both Law and grace proceed from God; and we have been given the free will to determine which of those is central to our lives.

### Lesson 078: Exodus 7:19–22a      The Religious Illusionists Imitate God's Power

We begin this narrative with God speaking to Moses.

Exodus 7:19 **And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.'"**

This is somewhat of a poetic image. In this passage, we have mentions of so many kinds of bodies of water; and we often contrast water with land. However, due to the nature of water and how it is distributed; now there is blood in all the *land* of Egypt.

It appears that all of the open waters will be subject to this transformation into blood (or into something which is red like blood). The blood speaks of God's judgment against Egypt.

Exodus 7:20 [Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood.](#)

Moses and Aaron locate Pharaoh where God said that he would be, at the Nile (v. 15). Aaron strikes the water with the staff, and all the water turned to blood.

These judgments from God must affect all Egyptians. The Egyptians must know, from the very beginning, that they are under God's judgment. Quite obviously, Moses and Aaron do not go around all of Egypt and tell the people what is happening. However, the people all over Egypt will be asking one another what is happening, and I would trust that God makes this information available to them by word of mouth.

Exodus 7:21a [The fish that were in the river died,..](#)

Interestingly enough, the verb *turned* (v. 20) is in the imperfect; but *died* is a perfect tense. So, how can we see the water changing to blood as a process, and this causing the death of the fish, which is viewed as a singular event? Let me suggest that, all of those watching the water turn; and looking off as far as they can look, and the water is changing. Then, suddenly, someone notices a dead fish float to the top of the water; and then they notice that there are dead fish everywhere, floating and washing up along the shore. So, from the viewer's standpoint, they watch the process of the water changing to blood. The imperfect tense back in v. 20 suggests that the waters did not turn red in a few seconds, but over a period of time (perhaps a few minutes). However, when they first notice the fish, that appears to them to be a completed event.

What I am doing is applying the imperfect and perfect tenses to the actual observations of those at the Nile, rather than to the acts themselves. Now, on the one hand, I recognize that these verb tenses are not being applied to verbs of perception but to the actions themselves; but, on the other hand, the Bible often emphasizes the point of view of those at an event caused by God. In fact, many times, those observing an event gives insight to that event itself. And, clearly, the Bible makes a point that Pharaoh and his servants were watching this.

Whatever this was, the transformation of the waters occurred throughout all of Egypt. Over a period of time (a few minutes or a few hours), there was blood or some substance which looked like blood, in the water, which made it undrinkable; and whatever irrigation streams had been set up, that blood could be found in it. This made the water undrinkable and it killed the fish with the river. Logically, this infected water would have been no good for their crops.

Exodus 7:21a [The fish that were in the river died,...](#)

Fish breathe the oxygen in the water and if that oxygen is being consumed by another source—I am thinking that whatever was in the water was possibly organic—then the fish would die. Or, fish take in water to breathe; and this substance had so infested the waters that it simply did not allow the fish the enough oxygen from the water to survive.

Or, whatever it was, it caused the fish to die.

Exodus 7:21b ...the river stank,....

The substance introduced to the water may have had an awful odor; and the dead fish no doubt began to decompose in that environment; so they would have stunk as well. Apparently, even from a distance, the displeasing odor could be discerned.

Exodus 7:21c ...and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river.

The water became undrinkable. It was no good for fish life; and no good for human life either. The water of the Nile was the lifeblood of Egypt, so to speak, and now the Egyptians were judged through the transformation of that water.

Exodus 7:21a-c The fish that were in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river.

This was the first judgment against Egypt. Their most important resource, the water from the Nile, was now fouled. This river water is their life source; all life in Egypt depended upon the water from this river.

The blood—or whatever it was—in the water spoke of judgment; and all of Egypt was now under judgment. No soul in Egypt escaped this judgment.

Exodus 7:21d So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

When God performs a sign miracle, it is always appropriate to His audience. His audience is all of Egypt (which includes the enslaved Hebrew people).

*Blood* is the word used, although we do not know exactly what happened to the river; the water either did turn to blood, or to something which appeared to be blood. We do not know the exact composition of the water after God changed it (and we are not told *how* God changed it). Certainly, "It says *blood* right here" and it does; however, the Jewish language uses several words pertaining to the body which actually stand for other things; the most notably in v. 22 *heart*, which stands for the will and emotions and the thinking of Pharaoh.

Similarly, the blood need not be literal; but its smell and fouling character are certain. Furthermore, because it was found in all the vessels of wood and stone (v. 19), this suggests either it was a miracle or there was possibly an airborne contaminate involved.

It is very possible that whatever is in the water, is related to the next plague, which is the massive number of frogs which will emerge out of the waters. Could these be their eggs or a combination of their eggs and tadpoles? I could not find an example of frogs eggs which looked anything like a blood red (I did see some which were pink). Given what God will introduce to the land, it is not out of the realm of possibility that this is a species that no longer exists today. In any case, I am just speculating here. There is something which is possible explanation: red algae.

**Bloody Beach** (a graphic); from [The Telegraph](#); accessed July 16, 2019. There is an algae which can turn water blood red. This is a photo of a beach in Sydney, Australia which was closed due to the massive infestation of algae.



Similarly, the Yangtze River in China has turned a [blood red](#) (I watched less than a minute of this 10 minute video, which shows graphic evidence of this occurring in China, France, Africa, Texas, etc.). In fact, a preliminary search on google images reveals a great many instances of this all over the world. Let me quickly add, water being infested with red algae is not a sign of the end times.

What was God's warning to the Egyptians? *And the fish that are in the river shall die, and the river shall become foul; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink water from the river.* (Exodus 7:18; CGV).

Algae in general can foul the water, kill fish and make it undrinkable.

*APEC Water: Humans who drink or swim in water that contains high concentrations of cyanobacteria or cyanobacterial toxins may experience gastroenteritis, skin irritation, allergic responses, or liver damage; Harmful marine algae, such as those associated with red tides, occur in the ocean and can produce toxins that may harm or kill fish and marine animals.<sup>70</sup>*

Before I insist that red algae is clearly the culprit, let me add that red algae today is typically found in saltwater and blue-green algae is found in freshwater. *Cyanobacteria* is the scientific name for blue-green algae.

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<sup>70</sup> From [https://www.freedrinkingwater.com/water\\_quality/quality1/1-toxic-aglae.htm](https://www.freedrinkingwater.com/water_quality/quality1/1-toxic-aglae.htm) accessed July 24, 2019.

So, if the blood water was actually algae, then there would have been another factor—somehow an intrusion of saltwater with the red bacteria; or an ancient algae which was red and lives in freshwater, or God, on the spot, created a red algae to infest the freshwater of Egypt. The algae would deplete the oxygen in the water, which would, in turn, kill the fish (along with the toxic properties of algae), which would then stink. The water with or without the dead fish would be undrinkable (this is making the assumption that the blood in the water is actually a red algae).

As an aside, there is no reason why this could not be literal blood; and there is no reason why it could not be a complete miracle. Personally, I lean towards the algae explanation or something similar to that. Whatever it is, this is clearly a sign (for Egypt at that time; red algae is not a divine sign for nations today). It is a sign of the beginning of God's judgment against Egypt.

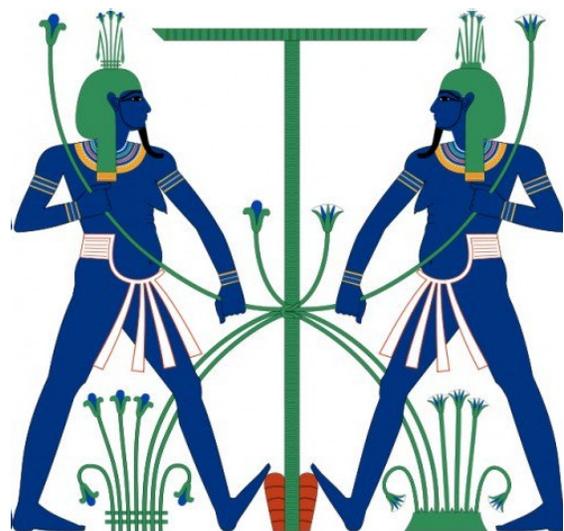
Furthermore, it is important that it happens just as Aaron holds the staff over the waters of the Nile. Whether miraculous or a result of some natural causes (set into motion by God); which things certainly accomplished God's purpose.

Exodus 7:21 [The fish that were in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.](#)

The Nile river was the lifeblood of Egypt; without it, all of Egypt would die; similarly, water to the human race is our lifeblood; not only do we require it, we require it in very large amounts as a species and as individuals. One of the greatest problems that we will face when we attempt to colonize the moon or Mars (if such a thing is ever attempted) will be the lack of water and the human body's absolute need for water). Hopefully, our scientists will realize, before this is attempted, that sending people anywhere else in the universe borders on being a suicide mission which everyone will regret at some point. We have no way, at this point in time, of providing the oxygen and water necessary for human life to exist anywhere in space.

In each of these plagues, there appears to be an attack by the God of Moses and Aaron against one or more of the gods of Egypt. One Egyptian god is Hapi, the god of the Nile.

Wikipedia describes Hapi: *Although male and wearing the false beard, Hapi was pictured with pendulous breasts and a large belly, as representations of the fertility of the Nile. He also was usually given blue or green skin, representing water. Other attributes varied, depending upon the region of Egypt in*



*which the depictions exist. In Lower Egypt, he was adorned with papyrus plants and attended by frogs.*<sup>71</sup>

**Hapi — Egyptian God of the Nile** (a graphic); from [Hub Pages](#); accessed April 25, 2018.

Exodus 7:22a [Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments;...](#)

The word translated *enchantments* (or, *secret arts*) is hard to get a grip on; it appears to come from a verb which means *to wrap, to cover, to muffle*; and from that, we get the idea of *secrecy, surreptitiousness* (other translations for this word).

Now, what this could refer to is simply a trick where there is a container of water, it is hidden for an instant, and then it is revealed to be blood red. The art of magic is, no doubt, very, very ancient.

The magicians had access to some clean water (or clear liquids), and they used their enchantments to make it appear as if it had turned to blood. Pharaoh, in observing that, chooses to treat their magic as equivalent to what Moses and Aaron did, under the power of God. What they did could not have been at all equal to what God did, or even close, as God had fouled all of the open waters in Egypt. In any case, Pharaoh rejected the demands of Moses and Aaron because he rationalized that his gods of his magicians were just as strong.

I do not believe that they did exactly what God did by the hand of Aaron. However, they certainly did something similar to what Moses and Aaron did; similar enough to help convince Pharaoh that he should not listen to these men.

Was there a reasonable thing for Pharaoh to expect of his magicians? Sure, ask them to turn all of the water back into pure water. That is something which they could not do.

## **Lesson 079: Exodus 7:22–25**

## **Pharaoh's Heart is Strong Against God**

Moses and Aaron have appeared before Pharaoh, and God has turned the water of Egypt to blood (or a fouled water with the appearance of blood). The first sign that Pharaoh saw Moses and Aaron perform a sign or miracle, their staff was turned into a serpent. Pharaoh brought in his religious illusionists to duplicate this. Now that Moses and Aaron had turned the water of Egypt to blood (obviously, God did that), Pharaoh calls the magicians back.

Exodus 7:22a [Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments;...](#)

I recall in my chemistry class in high school that the teacher took a several beakers of clear liquids, mixed them, and by the adding of additional liquids, the clear liquids would turn different colors. I specifically recall a mixture of two clear fluids; which began to turn white

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<sup>71</sup> From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hapi\\_\(Nile\\_god\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hapi_(Nile_god)) accessed July 16, 2019.

as they mixed and then immediately returned to clear, during the pouring of one solution into another. It seems like two other clear liquids were combined to end up with one which was very blue. This was a matter of various precipitates forming due to chemical bonding and re-bonding; and these precipitates, which gave color to the water, remained suspended in the liquid. My guess is that these magicians did something in a similar vein to show Pharaoh that this could be done by their own power (this may not have even been water that they worked with). Even though it sounds like they imitated Moses' miracle immediately (since this is the next verse) that is not necessarily the case.

Good magicians are always on the prowl to create new illusions. These magicians appear to be at the beck and call of Pharaoh; and it seems reasonable that they receive some sort of a stipend for what they do. Perhaps mostly, they just entertain Pharaoh. But, they must keep this act fresh. When Pharaoh called for them, perhaps he recalled a similar trick which they had done; or when he called for them, they were told what had been done and they were told to duplicate it. God apparently did things which He knew the magicians could partially duplicate. When they were able to turn water (or some clear liquid) red, God was not shocked and surprised. God knew in eternity past what the magicians were capable of.

To help you see what is going on in the palace of the king. For some of these plagues, the priest-magicians of the court were able to duplicate, to some limited degree, what Moses did. That gave the Pharaoh of Egypt enough reason to doubt the power of the God of Moses (and this is because Pharaoh *chose* to doubt God).

Now, what God did on a large scale, these magicians were able to duplicate on a small scale. Now, I have seen some magic tricks and I can occasionally make some guesses as to how this or that is done; however, most well-done magic baffles me completely. What appears to be the case is, these court magicians were able to score a gig in the palace of the pharaoh by being religious and performing magic tricks. Now, it really did not matter if they were religious or not; this gig got them great living conditions, comparatively speaking, as Pharaoh apparently believed their powers to be from Egyptian gods, even though they were simple parlor tricks (or, maybe they were complex parlor tricks).

This was actually a very clever approach on the part of the court magicians, as they did more than entertain the King of Egypt—they dispensed whatever religious norms and standards fit with their culture or they made up some of their own. The reason this was clever is, they did more than entertain Pharaoh. If they were simply entertainers and nothing else, then they could be booted out of the palace by Pharaoh at any time on a whim. If they presented themselves as men of a god (or gods), that was a whole different story. It is much more difficult for Pharaoh to dismiss them if they are men of a god.

Had the magicians of Egypt been really good at their jobs, they would have made the blood disappear from the water instead. *That* they were unable to do.

Have you ever known people to be convinced by the most threadbare of evidence? If they heard or saw something which agreed with their ideas, they often would hold to this

evidence, no matter how thin it was. I have known people who have seen “X” with their own eyes, and yet, still believed that “not X” was true. This is what is happening here. Pharaoh is predisposed against the Hebrew people and against their God; so, the very least amount of information or evidence will be accepted by Pharaoh, when it supports his predilections.

Pharaoh has seen Moses and Aaron turn the waters of Egypt to blood; and he called in his magicians who did something very similar, but on a much smaller scale. Furthermore, the magicians were unable to undo what God had done. Nevertheless, that they appeared to duplicate Moses’ miracle on a small scale was good enough for Pharaoh. That gave him an excuse to refuse to do what God required from him.

Exodus 7:22b [...and Pharaoh’s heart grew hard,...](#)

The verb often translated *hardened* is the common verb *to strengthen*. Pharaoh saw what Aaron did; he saw an imitation of what Aaron did, and he decided to believe that there was no difference, and further, he decides to reject God’s demand (God has demanded for Pharaoh to let His people worship Him out in the desert-wilderness).

Both Moses and God the Holy Spirit are emphasizing that every time that Pharaoh exhibits negative volition, God has already told us that would happen in advance. God's Word is fulfilled. Moses, either at this time or at least by the time he wrote this down, began to realize that God would perform what he has told us He would do and what He predicts will come to pass. What the court magicians did is not explained completely, except that their "miracle" was similar.

We see this with political liberals all of the time. They may have their values or ideas questioned, and if they begin to give it any thought at all, sometimes, all it takes is some false meme on facebook to bring them back to their liberal beliefs. I recently pointed out the many liberal acts of violence at the beginning of the Trump presidency (I originally wrote this in June of 2017); and someone gives me a list of *conservative acts of violence*, which list contains no perpetrator who would be reasonably considered a conservative. However, that list of faux-conservatives who have committed acts of violence is enough to convince many liberals that there is no difference between the extremes on the left and on the right.

If you watch politics at all, how many times have you heard a political commentator speak of the extremes on the left and on the right as being equivalent things, even though they are not demonstrably equivalent at all. But all they need are some people that they can brand as being right-wing committing acts of violence in order to claim this equivalence, even if every elected conservative disavows this so-called right-wing person (for instance, they will present white supremacists as examples of the far right; just like Hitler is often portrayed as a far, far right-winger).

My point is, you do not need to have equivalency of events (actions, movements, ideas); if the person observing the events must perceive them as being equivalent, and that is good enough.

Back to the narrative:

Exodus 7:22c ...and he [Pharaoh] did not heed them [Moses and Aaron], as the Lord had said.

Pharaoh did not listen to the words of Moses and Aaron; pharaoh did not do according to the commands of God. This is exactly what God said would happen. God warned Moses that Pharaoh's heart would be strengthened against them (and, ultimately, against God).

Exodus 7:22 Then the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments [or, *magic, secret arts*]; and Pharaoh's heart grew hard [lit., *strong*], and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said.

We do not know the exact sequence of events here, but we can guess. It sounds as though the religious illusionists did their illusion soon after Moses and Aaron turned the water to blood. This would have required them to round up some water first (although water did not have to be used; it could have been a clear liquid). My guess is that Pharaoh, his heart still hardened, returned to the palace and soon thereafter, the magicians performed for him a similar trick which poorly imitated the power of God. This was good enough for Pharaoh.

Exodus 7:23a And Pharaoh turned....

What we have here is universally illustrative of men who reject God. They get the flimsiest of evidence to support what they believe and then they turn away from the truth (Moses and Aaron, in this case), and they go and isolate themselves from the truth.

There is a point in the life of many believers when they make a choice: do they believe to Bible? Do they accept the Bible as the Word of God? Or, do they stand by all the stuff that they have learned over the years? Which is first and foremost? Which is correct? Whose authority do *you* accept?

Exodus 7:23b ...and went into his house.

Again, note the mindset. Pharaoh sees enough to convince him of what he already believes, and so he walks away from Moses and Aaron, bearers of the truth. He chooses to believe what is false, and he walks away and isolates himself in his own house, to avoid facing the truth.

Pharaoh represents man universal, at any point in time, on negative signals toward God. He is a real person and these are real historic events; but Pharaoh is, nevertheless, an everyman.

Pharaoh, despite seeing the most amazing thing in his life, turns around and goes back into his own palace, where things are familiar. He is not going to stand outside and look at foul, blood-colored water. He does not know it yet, but the judgments of God will follow him into the palace.

Exodus 7:23c **Neither was his heart moved by this.**

Literally, this reads, *not setting his heart to even this*; we have the negative plus the Qal perfect of shîyth (שׂיִת) [pronounced *sheeth*], which means *to set, to place, to put*. It can also mean, *to fix, to set [one's] mind to*. Strong's #7896 BDB #1011. This use is an idiom, as are all the places in the Hebrew where some type of action involves one's interior body parts. Pharaoh is not going to think about or consider what he has seen done by Moses and Aaron. He has strengthened his heart and he is not going to listen to them (v. 22).

*So even to this [great miracle], he did not place his heart.* Most Bibles translate this idiomatically. NASB: **Then Pharaoh turned and went into his house with no concern even for this.** *The Emphasized Bible* is close with **Neither applied he his heart even to this.** The Amplified Bible reads: **neither did he take even this to heart.** One of the very best translations which is partially idiomatic and translates it into a modern idiom is the NRSV: **and he did not even take this to heart.** Although we find this verb used in a number of different ways, this particular idiom is only found a couple of times in the Bible: 1Sam. 4:20 2Sam. 13:20 Psalm 48:13 62:10 Prov. 22:17 27:23. Only the first reference is in the Qal perfect; the first Psalm and second Proverb references are in the Qal imperative, and all the others are in the Qal imperfect.

Exodus 7:23 **And Pharaoh turned and went into his house. Neither was his heart moved by this** [judgment of blood].

Pharaoh observes what has happened. He has heard the warning from God made by Aaron. He is not moved by it. His magicians were able to replicate this miracle, but, no doubt, on a much smaller scale. His magicians clearly could not reverse what God had done. Nevertheless, their small scale replication was good enough for him.

God striking the water with blood—a clear act of judgment against Egypt—did not move Pharaoh. He would not acknowledge his sin; and he would not acknowledge the God of the Hebrews.

Pharaoh faces the first plague and does not even slightly give in.

All this time, the Egyptian people are trying to figure out what to do about their fouled water. This would have been a sudden thing to occur, and likely, it took some time before the Egyptians found out the reason behind their *bloody water*.

Exodus 7:24a **So all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink,...**

Water was found by digging wells near the river. Some people, when a situation occurs, think and over-think the situation; Pharaoh was just the opposite. He did not give this situation the thought that it deserved. Furthermore, his servants saw to it that water was provided for him from these wells; so he did not need to become introspective. Pharaoh did not seem to wonder if this was really God speaking to him; he did not consider that he perhaps had made a mistake in this judgement.

So, the water appears to be filtered by the ground, and that which seeps through the ground appears to be okay for normal use. Or, perhaps the people are finding water which was not in the open air; and this water is not contaminated.

This fact strongly suggests that this plague was, at least in part, a natural phenomenon. Something got into the water and polluted it (possibly as a result of an the airborne pollutant); and that turns the water a blood red and kills the fish; and this organic substance and the dead fish together foul the water and make it undrinkable. If this was how these events played out, then they would have little or no effect upon water underground which is not exposed to the elements, and has been filtered through the earth.

Exodus 7:24 [So all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink, because they could not drink the water of the river.](#)

This suggests that water could be found near the surface of the ground, which sustained the Egyptians for the week that their waters were fouled. This suggests to me that what happened was a semi-natural phenomenon, but on a very large scale.

The people of Egypt were able to find water, but it could not be taken from the river. Digging around the river suggests that there was a natural filtration system for water that was underground. Whatever was fouling the water could be filtered out out as the water travels through the ground.

There is an obvious historical implication here—the river (probably the Nile or one of its tributaries) being is a freshwater river. In the reading which I have done, the Nile River used to split into 7 different tributaries and lesser channels; and today, there are only two.

Exodus 7:25 [And seven days passed after the Lord had struck the river.](#)

God allows for this to sink in, into the consciousness of the people and Pharaoh. I would assume that, during this time, the blood—or whatever red there was in the water—dissipated with the flowing in of new water.

The English (Greek) Bible ends chapter 7 right here. In the Hebrew, the chapter continues for several more verses. Whoever split the chapters up in the Hebrew had even a poorer concept of chapter division than did those who did that in the English.

Very few translations follow the Hebrew division here. I have at least 50 translations on my e-sword which include the Old Testament, and only the Targum of Onkelos and the [Wiki-Bible](#) follow the Hebrew chapter division.

To remind you, there is nothing inspired about the verse or chapter divisions in any Bible; these were done long after the material was written.

From [Got Questions](#): *The chapter divisions commonly used today were developed by Stephen Langton, an Archbishop of Canterbury. Langton put the modern chapter divisions into place in around A.D. 1227. The Wycliffe English Bible of 1382 was the first Bible to use this chapter pattern. Since the Wycliffe Bible, nearly all Bible translations have followed Langton's chapter divisions.*

*The Hebrew Old Testament was divided into verses by a Jewish rabbi by the name of Nathan in A.D. 1448. Robert Estienne, who was also known as Stephanus, was the first to divide the New Testament into standard numbered verses, in 1555. Stephanus essentially used Nathan's verse divisions for the Old Testament. Since that time, beginning with the Geneva Bible, the chapter and verse divisions employed by Stephanus have been accepted into nearly all the Bible versions.<sup>72</sup>*

In the English, this is the same as the first few verses of Exodus 8. So, Exodus 7:26–29 (in some Hebrew versions) = Exodus 8:1–4 (in most English Bibles<sup>73</sup>).

## Lesson 080: Exodus 4–7

## A Possible Chronology

Now that we have completed Exodus 7, it might be interesting to take chapters 4–7 and integrate them into a single narrative. I previously tried putting them down side-by-side, but there were no clear parallels, apart from a single verse.

Below, I will take chapters 4–7 and attempt to organize them chronologically. Most of the text will concern itself with the first meeting; but the second meeting will be found at the very end of this organization.

I have organized these chapters with the assumption that the meeting with Pharaoh in Exodus 5 is identical to the meeting with Pharaoh in Exodus 7:1–13.

I used the ESV; capitalized below. I have added in subheadings and commentary.

### Organizing Exodus 4, 5, 6 and 7 Chronologically

<sup>72</sup> From <https://www.gotquestions.org/divided-Bible-chapters-verses.html> accessed September 17, 2019.

<sup>73</sup> Interestingly enough, most Catholic Bibles (with the imprimatur) follow the Jewish tradition.

Prior to this, we have the genealogies of Moses and Aaron, followed by God speaking to Moses in the desert-wilderness, followed by the circumcision incident, followed by the meeting up with Aaron.

When Moses and Aaron arrive in Egypt and they go speak with the elders of Egypt first.

God spoke with Moses in the desert-wilderness of Midian and to Aaron in Egypt:

Exodus 6:26 These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said: "Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts."

Exodus 6:27 It was they who spoke [perhaps, *would speak*] to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, this Moses and this Aaron.

(These two verses immediately follow the genealogy presented in Exodus 6.)

Moses and Aaron speak to the elders of Israel before speaking to Pharaoh.

Exodus 4:29–31 Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.

God gives final instructions to Moses (and Aaron); Moses again balks at being the front man (Moses first voices his objection in Midian in Exodus 4:10–17).

Exodus 6:28–29 On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, the LORD said to Moses, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you."

Exodus 6:30 But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?"

God reiterates what He had told Moses in the desert-wilderness of Midian, and how Aaron would be utilized:

Exodus 7:1–5 And the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden [or, *strengthen*] Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring My hosts, My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them."

Exodus 7:8–9 Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Prove yourselves by working a miracle,' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.'"

Exodus 7:6 Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the LORD commanded them.

V. 6 sums up what Moses and Aaron would do; the verses which follow give all of the details of their obedience to God's directions:

Moses and Aaron's first meeting with Pharaoh, where they deliver the demands made by God:

Exodus 7:7 Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

The words of v. 7 are appropriate to the initial meeting between Moses and Aaron and Pharaoh. The final phrase is, literally, *in their speaking unto Pharaoh*.

When combined with a bêyth preposition, the infinitive construct often takes on a temporal meaning and may be rendered *when [such and such happens]*. With the bêyth preposition, the Qal infinitive construct serve as a temporal marker. (This is where the word *when* comes from.)

Exodus 7:10a So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh...

Exodus 5:1 Afterward [after meeting with the elders of Israel and after speaking with God once again] Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'"

Exodus 5:2 But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go."

Exodus 5:3 Then they said, "The 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, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."

Exodus 7:10b [Then Moses and Aaron] did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron cast down his staff before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a serpent.

Exodus 7:11–12 Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers, and they, the magicians of Egypt, also did the same by their secret arts. For each man cast down his staff, and they became serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.

Pharaoh's hard-hearted response to the demands of God.

Exodus 7:13 Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said [or, *promised*].

Exodus 5:4–5 But the king of Egypt said to them, "Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people away from their work? Get back to your burdens." And Pharaoh said, "Behold, the people of the land are now many, and you make them rest from their burdens!"

Exodus 5:6–9 The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, 'Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.' Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words."

Exodus 5:10–11 So the taskmasters and the foremen of the people went out and said to the people, "Thus says Pharaoh, 'I will not give you straw. Go and get your straw yourselves wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced in the least.'"

Exodus 5:12–13 So the people were scattered throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw. The taskmasters were urgent, saying, "Complete your work, your daily task each day, as when there was straw."

Exodus 5:14 And the foremen of the people of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, "Why have you not done all your task of making bricks today and yesterday, as in the past?"

Exodus 5:15–16 Then the foremen of the people of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, "Why do you treat your servants like this? No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, 'Make bricks!' And behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people."

Exodus 5:17–18 But he said, "You are idle, you are idle; that is why you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.' Go now and work. No straw will be given you, but you must still deliver the same number of bricks."

The people are unable to do what Pharaoh demands and the elders are upset with Moses and Aaron.

Exodus 5:19 The foremen of the people of Israel saw that they were in trouble when they said, "You shall by no means reduce your number of bricks, your daily task each day."

Exodus 5:20–21 They met Moses and Aaron, who were waiting for them, as they came out from Pharaoh; and they said to them, "The LORD look on you and judge, because you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us."

This negative response from the elders might help to explain why God allowed the first 3 plagues to affect Israel in the same way that they affected Egypt.

Moses expresses his own misgivings to God over what has taken place.

Exodus 5:22 Then Moses turned to the LORD and said, "O Lord, why have you done evil to this people? Why did you ever send me?"

Exodus 5:23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all."

God encourages Moses and explains what to expect. They are to speak with the people of Israel.

Exodus 6:1–8 But the LORD said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand he will send them out, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land." God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name the LORD I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold as slaves,

and I have remembered My covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, Who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.'

Exodus 6:9 Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.

God speaks to Moses about the next meeting with Pharaoh, encouraging him. God again tells Moses what to expect.

Exodus 6:10–11 So the LORD said to Moses, "Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land."

Exodus 6:12 But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me [a second time], for I am of uncircumcised lips?"

Exodus 6:13 But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

God prepares Moses and Aaron to meet with Pharaoh a second time.

Exodus 7:14–18 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is going out to the water. Stand on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that turned into a serpent. And you shall say to him, 'The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, *Let My people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness. But so far, you have not obeyed. Thus says the LORD, "By this you shall know that I am the LORD: behold, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood. The fish in the Nile shall die, and the Nile will stink, and the Egyptians will grow weary of drinking water from the Nile.*' "

Exodus 7:19 And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, their canals, and their ponds, and all their pools of water, so that they may become blood, and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.'

Moses and Aaron meet with Pharaoh a second time.

Exodus 7:20–21 Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the Nile, and all the water in the Nile turned into blood. And the fish in the Nile died, and the Nile stank, so that the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. There was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

Exodus 7:22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

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Exodus 7:23–25 Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he did not take even this to heart. And all the Egyptians dug along the Nile for water to drink, for they could not drink the water of the Nile. Seven full days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile.

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There may be a verse here or there which is misplaced, but this would be a sequence of events which would view the first meeting with Pharaoh to occur in Exodus 5 and in Exodus 7 (the two narratives present the same meeting, but from a different perspective). The latter half of Exodus 7 has the narrative of the second meeting.

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If these are two separate meetings, then Moses and Aaron went to the first meeting and forgot to do the signs which God instructed them to do. They would be walking out of the first meeting, which did not go very well, and then Aaron looks over to Moses and says, “You know what? We forgot to do that whole staff-turns-into-a-serpent thing. What were we thinking?” And Moses answers, “Okay, let’s not forget to do that next time we chat with Pharaoh.” Hopefully, you can see how ridiculous that seems.

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The idea, again, is to show this meeting once from the human viewpoint approach; and then we see the same meeting again, but from God’s perspective (divine viewpoint). This is fundamental to the Christian way of life; do we see life from God’s perspective or our own?

**Application:** When we view life from God’s perspective, there are a lot fewer things to worry about. You do not have to worry about being offended, cheated, lied to, or being the recipient of injustice. God’s got everything under control; and His guiding hand is over all. So, here, Moses and Aaron, and the elders of Israel, got all upset over Pharaoh’s decrees which put extra work onto Israel. This is barely a blip on God’s radar. You will notice that, after Exodus 7, we do not hear about Pharaoh’s decree or about the extra work or anything else. That is because those things are irrelevant to God’s plan.

**Application:** Do not worry about whatever is irrelevant to God’s plan. Don’t be confused by this. For instance, you cannot say, “I am not paying my taxes because that is irrelevant to God’s plan.” You do not get to arbitrarily consider things you don’t like to do irrelevant to God’s plan. There are things in your life which you may not like to do, but they are a part of your life and your situation. So, you pay your taxes; you set money aside to pay them (depending upon your situation). What you don’t do is, you don’t worry about them.

The Hebrew people did have additional work put upon them; and it was incumbent upon them to attempt to do that work. However, that judgment from Pharaoh was unjust, and God, therefore, dealt with Pharaoh. So, even though the events that we have been studying took place 3600 years ago, they are still relevant to us today, despite time, cultural and dispensational differences. God is still God and man is still man.

Exodus 8 is the narrative of the next 3 plagues: (1) the plague of the frogs; (2) the plague of the gnats; and (3) the plague of the swarming insects (often called, *the plague of the flies*).

In the first plague, we have each of the three meetings which we would expect to have: (1) God speaks with Moses (and Aaron<sup>74</sup>). God gives Moses the ultimatum to give to Pharaoh, which can be boiled down to, “Let My people go to serve Me or I will bring a plague upon you and your land.” At times, God might tell Moses where to find Pharaoh (who may not really want to talk to Moses). (2) Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh and lay out the alternatives. Then the plague is initiated (often by Aaron, using his staff). (3) The plague is described and then Pharaoh reaches out to Moses and Aaron, often making promises that he later will not keep, in order to have the plague removed. This set of 3 meetings is the norm for most of the plagues (or judgments).

The miracles of God are always people and situationally appropriate. These plagues are designed to reach all of the people of Egypt. These are signs not only for Pharaoh and the ruling class, but they are for all the Egyptians. Furthermore, the Hebrew people would be aware of these things, experiencing some of them firsthand. Everyone in Egypt would become aware of God’s power against the Egyptian rulers, army and people.

In Egypt, at this time, every person is touched by these plagues. Everyone knows that something powerful is happening.

In bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt, there are many moving parts. All Israel must choose to follow Moses. All Egyptians must be given the chance to follow Moses. All of those associated with Pharaoh were to be given the free will to choose between Pharaoh and Moses (and Moses’ God). In the beginning, Pharaoh depended upon his magicians to help him choose against God, but his negative volition will continue, even though his magicians will prove to be powerless at some point against the judgments of God.

## **The Second Plague: Frogs**

God begins to prepare Moses for the second plague.

The first was the waters being turned into blood (or to something which appeared to be blood). That continued for a period of 7 days, and it is best to include the final verse of Exodus 7 as the beginning of this chapter. **Seven days after** [Lit. days were filled after] **the Lord had struck the Nile, He told Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and tell him, ‘This is what the Lord says: “Let My people go so they may serve** [Or worship] **Me.** (Exodus 7:25–8:1; ISV capitalized) Do you see how the final verse of Exodus 7 just flows into the first verse of Exodus 8?

It seems to be better to include the final verse of Exodus 7 at the beginning of Exodus 8.

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<sup>74</sup> It is not clear if Aaron is in on every meeting that Moses has with God. Sometimes he is mentioned; most of the time he is not.

Now let's dissect Exodus 8:1:

Moses spoke to God often; and God carefully guided him through the process of His judgments against Egypt.

Exodus 8:1a *And the Lord spoke to Moses,...*

God has already struck Egypt with the first plague. Moses is about to return to speak to Pharaoh to reiterate God's demands.

Exodus 8:1b *...“Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord:...*

Moses has gone in to speak to Pharaoh at least twice before. (1) He went to him to tell him what God wanted; and afterwards, Pharaoh upped the work requirements for the Hebrew slaves, since they obviously had too much free time (the idea being, to separate the slaves from Moses and Aaron). (2) God sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh to warn about the water of the Nile being turned to blood. Now, there may have been another meeting in between there, but I believe that the first meeting was covered twice in Exodus, but from different perspectives.

Exodus 8:1c *...‘Thus says the Lord: Let My people go, that they may serve Me.* (I have altered the formatting of the NKJV)

God gives Pharaoh an unconditional demand. He used the Piel imperative of *shâlach* (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAHK*] and it means *to send, to send forth, to drive [out], etc.* Here, it means *to release*. God has not yet required Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go permanently, which we see in Exodus 8:27. At present, God is only requiring that Pharaoh allow the Hebrew people to worship outside of Egypt for a time. It would seem reasonable that the specifics were given to Pharaoh, but we do not have many of them recorded in this section of Exodus because Pharaoh rejected those options.

The request to *send My people out* is repeated many times (most people are familiar with the phrasing, “*Let My people go!*”). I counted 17 times between Exodus 4:21 and 13:7.

Exodus 8:1 *And the Lord spoke to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: Let My people go, that they may serve Me.* (I have altered the formatting of the NKJV)

Moses and Aaron are being sent back to Pharaoh to call for God's people to be released in order to go to the desert to worship their God.

At some point, it will be clear that all of the people must be allowed to leave to worship their God; and that they be allowed to take their livestock with them. It is not clear whether all these requirements were made known to Pharaoh from the beginning (I would think that Moses made this clear in the first meeting). However, the way that things proceed, it will

become apparent that these original demands will go by the wayside, as Pharaoh rejects them.

With this verse, we have a quote within a quote within a quote. I prefer to use 2 sets of quotation marks and italics rather than 3 sets of quotation marks.

Exodus 8:2 *But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all your territory with frogs.*

The word often translated *smite* is the Hebrew word *nâgaph* (נָגַף) [pronounced *naw-GAF*] and it means *to strike, to hit, to smite, to gore, to defeat*. Strong's #5062 BDB #619. This verb is in the Qal active participle, meaning that God is, or will be, striking their country.

The plagues which were to come upon Egypt were a direct attack upon the country and religion of Egypt. Each plague would pit the God of the Israelites against the gods of Egypt. This would be a battle which would increase in intensity and all the surrounding countries would know that the gods of Egypt were being attacked by the God of the Jews. This battle would be so one-sided and devastating, that news about it would travel throughout the entire world. The second plague is that of the frogs.

Whereas, I personally believe that all miracles have their origins in the power of God, I do not believe that all miracles are necessarily miraculous—that is, in the sense of necessarily defying the laws of nature (although some clearly are, like the turning of water into wine by Jesus).

God is not subject to the laws of His creation, but His creation are subject to His laws. If He chooses to change or modify something in His universe, that is something that God is clearly able to do. Now, I believe that all of God's plagues on Egypt are a combination of natural phenomenon and God's power (and many of them are so described). There is no indication that any of these plagues are a mass hallucination. I believe that, however these plagues were executed, that everything was a real, physical manifestation.

I also think that many of these miracles might be a natural progression. We do not know exactly what the blood was that the waters were turned to (remember, that act was not spontaneous); but I think that it is related to all of these frogs here.

The plagues may or may not have been complete miracles. I tend to think that most of these plagues were natural occurrences, but on a very grand scale. Just as God prepared a fish to swallow Jonah, so God prepared these frogs to descend upon Egypt.

Now, was the water previously fouled the ideal breeding grounds for these frogs? Had the water been fouled with their eggs? Or was a red algae followed by a mass of frog eggs? We have no idea. Some sort of naturalistic explanation is certainly not out of the question.

Exodus 8:3a *So the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly,...*

When God restored the earth, he chose for the waters to swarm with fish; the same verb is used here when it comes to frogs. The proper subject of this sentence is the Nile, as it is in the masculine singular, as is the verb (*frogs* is in the feminine plural). The verb, also in the Qal perfect, indicates a completed action. Here, although it has not yet occurred, it is something which is so certain of fulfillment that it is expressed in the perfect (completed) tense.

Exodus 8:3a-b *So the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into your house,...*

This is what God is telling Moses to say to Pharaoh—as a direct quote from God.

Throughout most of this passage, the warning to Pharaoh is very personal. All of these things, he will experience personally. This is very different from the United States politician today who often insulates himself from the effects of his legislation (many laws exempt members of the government from those laws<sup>75</sup>). Pharaoh is warned that for, all of his negative volition, those decisions will affect him personally (as well as the rest of the nation).

Throughout many of these meetings between Moses and Pharaoh, the warnings will be made to Pharaoh and to his life specifically. We are told that these signs or plagues will affect most Egyptians; but the initial warnings to Pharaoh are always quite personal, where Moses over and over speaks to him by continuously using the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular (in verb forms or suffixes). Rarely is anything phrased as a 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural—Moses does not initially warn Pharaoh about what God will do to the people of Egypt in general; but the warnings are directed toward Pharaoh himself.

Exodus 8:3a-c *So the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into your house, into your bedroom, on your bed,...*

When Pharaoh wanted to shut out the previous plague, he just turned around and walked back into his palace. The people would see to it that he had fresh water to drink. God will bring a plague upon Pharaoh that he cannot simply walk away from.

Some translations go further to say that these frogs will be found in their couches; however, the word is *mittâh* (מִטָּה) [pronounced *mit-TAW*] and this is a place of reclining, meaning it can be translated *bed* or *couch*. Contextually speaking, it should be *bed*. Notice there is a parallelism here: the frogs come into their houses, into their bedrooms, into their beds; the frogs also go into the houses of their servants, and swarm among the servants and into their ovens and kneading bowls (in the Hebrew, *your* is used because all of this belongs to the aristocracy—to Pharaoh—who is being addressed here).

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<sup>75</sup> One-time presidential hopeful George McGovern later [complained](#) about government regulations which were passed by people who had no understanding of the businesses that they regulated.

It may seem unfair to you that a king makes these decisions and all of the people suffer for them, but (1) that is how the function of a leader works—he makes decisions which affect his people. Any time a country is ruled by a leader with complete power, then every decision he makes affects his nation, in some way or another. This is true even in our own government. (2) Throughout these plagues, the people appear to be on the side of



Pharaoh, for the most part. There has been no movement to free the Jewish slaves among the Egyptian people; there appears to be no movement among the Egyptian people to obey the God of the Jews. What will happen is, a number of Egyptians (and others) will join the Jews in the exit from Egypt (they are called *the mixed multitude*). However, the majority of Egyptians will oppose the people of God throughout all of these plagues.

**Frogs on a hand** (a picture); from [Flickr](#), accessed July 16, 2019.

Perhaps you would reach out your hand, and suddenly, there would be this many frogs on you. Perhaps they would be larger; but, nevertheless, they would be everywhere. There is no place that Pharaoh could go to escape this myriad of frogs.

## Lesson 082: Exodus 7:25–8:6

## The Invasion of Frogs Part II

Exodus 7:25–8:2 Seven full days passed after the LORD had struck the Nile. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, *Let my people go, that they may serve me. But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague [= smite] all your country with frogs.*' (ESV; capitalized; format slightly changed)

By this time, the blood in the water appears to be subsiding (I would assume); the waters may be completely back to normal. God again sends Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, but some details about the meeting (for instance, "And this is where you will find Pharaoh tomorrow morning...") are not given here.

The second meeting where Moses knew where to go to find Pharaoh was given for our benefit. We would not expect Pharaoh to have opened up the palace to welcome Moses and Aaron back in after the first meeting. So we are given enough information so that we understand how meeting #2 actually came about. However, for the most part, in subsequent confrontations, that particular detail will be left out.

This is meeting #3, and we will go from God telling Moses what to do (vv. 1–5) to Moses and Aaron actually doing those things (v. 6). A lot of intermediate information (Moses going to Aaron and telling what they needed to do; Moses and Aaron going to Pharaoh and confronting him) is simply left out, as it is unnecessary.

Exodus 8:3 *So the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into your house, into your bedroom, on your bed, into the houses of your servants, on your people, into your ovens, and into your kneading bowls.*

God warns that there would be frogs everywhere. They would be in the homes of everyone in Egypt. There would be no escaping them. You could not prepare food without these frogs being a part of the process.

Exodus 8:4 *And the frogs shall come up on you, on your people, and on all your servants.’ ”*

The frogs would not simply come into the houses; there was no way to keep them out. They would climb up on all of the people of Egypt, including Pharaoh. Direct contact with a plethora of frogs would be inevitable. All of the people of Egypt would be in contact with a myriad of frogs at all times. They would be everywhere; there was no way to eradicate them; there was no way to escape from them. There is not a single room in the palace that would be a safe room; no one in the land of Egypt had a safe house or even a safe room (meaning a home or room without frogs).

God’s judgments have to be experienced by all of Egypt and, in the first few plagues, by Israel as well. Everyone had to be aware of what was going on. God was judging the entire nation of Egypt, as they all accepted and approved of the slavery of God’s people.

The Egyptians worshipped many kinds of deities, which are found in the heavens, on the earth and in the earth. Almost any judgement at all can be connected with an attack on one or more of these deities. Among these gods is a frog-headed goddess named Heka. It was offensive to her to kill frogs, putting the Egyptians in a bad spot here. They cannot even walk without killing frogs; almost any movement resulted in the crushing a dozen of these frogs, only to be replaced by two dozen more. They would certainly want to be rid of these frogs in any way possible.

This invasion of frogs is going to be not unlike a horrible invasion of cockroaches. I owned a two-bedroom, one bath apartment which was occupied by six males (I purchased this apartment intact with these tenants). After they moved out, I went over to clean up the place and to assess the damage. In the kitchen was probably the most horrible sight that I had ever seen. Not only was it filthy beyond belief, but it was covered in cockroaches. I could bring my hand down in any one area and kill 5-20 cockroaches. In any direction that I looked, I saw hundreds upon hundreds of cockroaches, in the oven and in the mixing bowls. Put anything down that appeared to be food, and cockroaches would swarm it by the hundreds. It was one of the most grotesque things which I have ever seen in my life.

This is what the Egyptians would be faced with, except this would be with frogs. A few is not so bad; and frogs are not quite as gruesome as cockroaches. However, these frogs will be everywhere they look, swarming, to where the inhabitants will not be able to so much as move without killing many frogs with each step.

It is not impossible that this is all a natural phenomenon. Some have suggested that the frogs were unable to live in the Nile anymore, so they invaded the land. I also have postulated that there is a connection between the blood in the waters of Egypt and the frogs—it is even possible that the blood might be frog eggs and larva.

So, there is some merit in the idea that all of this was natural—sort of nature gone grotesquely awry. It is possible that God prepared the frogs prior to the plague of the water being turned to blood; the narrative makes it clear that there were a greater preponderance of frogs than a natural occurrence would precipitate. The population of frogs that the Egyptians will face will be beyond imagination.

Notice that God is very clear in speaking with Pharaoh to explain what He wants and what the consequences are if Pharaoh does not comply. Moses and Aaron have made God's will abundantly clear; and, with the first two plagues, God's power cannot be denied—even if this is very much a natural phenomenon. We face the same thing in our life all the time. I have mentioned divine guidance; it is very clear in the Bible what is right and wrong and what the consequences are. We often conveniently ignore these directives and pay the price; then ask why did God let this happen to me.

To orient you to the narrative, remember that God is still speaking to Moses. These things have not taken place yet; Moses and Aaron have not even spoken to Pharaoh yet. However, I present this material as if the plague is occurring because there is very little by way of duplication in this section of Exodus.

Exodus 8:5a [Then the Lord spoke to Moses,...](#)

In these first 5 verses, God has been speaking to Moses, telling him what to say to Pharaoh. We will transition to the actual action of this narrative in v. 6.

Exodus 8:5a-b [Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron,...](#)

God prefers that Moses do all of the talking; but He does not leave Aaron out of the picture. God will have things for Aaron to do. In this particular plague, we actually won't know who spoke before Pharaoh—I would guess that it is still Aaron, with Moses telling him what to say.

Exodus 8:5 [Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up on the land of Egypt.' "](#)

Moses is still acting through Aaron; where Aaron appears to be the spokesman.

God does have a place for Aaron, and it is described in this verse. Aaron is to stretch out his hand, holding his rod in the air, making a great theatric show before these frogs come out of every body of water and onto the land.

One thing which most people do not understand is, when God causes a great thing to happen, it is more amazing when that great thing happens to conform to the laws of nature. It is possible that most of all of these early signs and wonders all fall within the scope of natural phenomenon.

God, since He created the universe, can do miracles all day long. He could make it so that we might observe great miracles, miracles which oppose natural law, thousands of times each day. This is easy for God to do; He simply snaps His fingers and it is done (that is, God merely wills it and it is done).

Here, God coordinates an extraordinary set of events to all coincide with Aaron raising up his staff over the waters of Egypt. If you don't think that is amazing, then take a piece of wood, find the nearest body of water, and then lift up that piece of wood when you believe frogs will begin coming onto the shore. Aaron does this and millions of frogs come onto the shore. There will be so many, it will be like an infestation of fleas.

With v. 6, we jump right into the action. We don't pause for God to ask Moses, "You understand what you need to do?" We do not pause for Moses to return to Aaron (from wherever Moses is when he meets with God). We do not pause for Moses and Aaron to make their way to see Pharaoh, by whatever means. All of these are inconsequential details.

Exodus 8:6a [So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt,...](#)

There is an interesting literary device employed here: we will go directly from God speaking to Moses and God telling Moses what to tell Aaron to do, to Aaron actually doing that before the Pharaoh. Many movies are edited in this way in order to avoid repetition of dialogue. This means that Moses did exactly as God told him.

In every plague, we will notice that there are portions of the narrative missing (narrative which would have been quite repetitive). We go directly from God's order to Moses to give to Aaron, to Aaron actually raising up his hand, followed by an invasion of this myriad of frogs.

My assumption would be that this is a reference to all of the waters throughout Egypt and not just to the Nile River (as there is a more specific word used for that). Logically, all of the places where the water turned blood red, these are the same waters from which the frogs came. Again, it is possible that there was an organic and natural connection between them.

Exodus 8:6b [...and the frogs came up ...](#)

Once Aaron raises up his hand, frogs begin to emerge from the waters of Egypt—everywhere.

As I suggested earlier, this might be a very natural thing which has occurred. It is possible that the blood in the water was simply frog larva which hatched and became frogs after 7 days. Or that the eggs were laid in massive amounts, the tadpoles exiting to a nutritious diet of red algae (I have no idea if there is this sort of connection or not; but I suspect, since the frog rise up out of the waters, that there was).

The frogs kept coming out of the water at an amazing rate. Given the words of God, they would have been everywhere; this would be an invasion unlike any invasion that Egypt had ever witnessed before. There was no way to keep the frogs out of one's home or out of anything that a person owned.

Exodus 8:6c ...and covered the land of Egypt.

The word for covered is the Piel imperfect of *kâçâh* (כָּסָה) [pronounced *kaw-SAW*] and it properly means *to plump, to fill up* as well as *to cover*. It is used in one passage to mean *conceal* (Psalm 12:16) or *to cover or to clothe* in Judges 4:19 and Ezek. 16:10. The Piel stem is intensive and the imperfect tense means that they kept coming up and coming up. The sense here is *to cover, to overwhelm, to inundate*.



**Many Frogs** (a graphic); from [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com), accessed July 16, 2019. A massive number of frogs is not an event unheard of in modern society. This particular picture is from a frog farm in Thailand. Large numbers of frogs can occur [naturally](#). Frogs in small numbers are kind of cute. When there is a [mass of them](#), all cuteness disappears.

Exodus 8:6 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt.

The amount of frogage was beyond our imagination. Every person of Egypt encountered frogs; they were everywhere in vast amounts.

Throughout Scripture, there is always an appropriateness of miracles. For these miracles to be effective in Egypt, they must affect all of the people in Egypt. These things cannot simply be some parlor tricks which take place in the palace of Pharaoh in a small group.

What God does through Moses and Aaron could not be duplicated even by the greatest of magicians.

## Lesson 083: Exodus 8:1–9a

## Invasion of the Frogs Part III

Exodus 8:1–4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, *Let my people go, that they may serve Me. But if you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your country with frogs. The Nile shall swarm with frogs that shall come up into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed and into the houses of your servants and your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls. The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your servants.*’ ”

Moses and Aaron were to go in to speak to Pharaoh and tell him about the next plague, the plague of the frogs.

Exodus 8:5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your staff over the rivers, over the canals and over the pools, and make frogs come up on the land of Egypt!'"

Aaron receives specific instructions (God tells Moses who will then tell Aaron).

Exodus 8:6 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. (ESV; capitalized; slight formatting change)

And suddenly, our narrative jumps to Moses and Aaron, standing before Pharaoh, and Aaron stretches out his hand over the waters of Egypt.

**Hemet — Egyptian Goddess of Fertility, Water, Renewal** (a graphic); from [Hub Pages](#); accessed April 25, 2018. You will notice that this goddess has a head like a frog.

Even before Pharaoh appears to have time to fully appreciate the invasion of frogs, he calls out his magicians and they duplicate what God did (but on a very small scale).

Exodus 8:7a And the magicians did so with their enchantments,...

Again, God the Holy Spirit has left it to our speculations as to the means by which the religious magicians accomplished this miracle. They certainly had the frogs at their disposal to work with. They could make it appear as if they were producing frogs out of nowhere. In fact,



what would have been the most difficult would be to produce an environment without frogs to begin with. Populating it with frogs would not have been that difficult.

Exodus 8:7b [...and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt.](#)

Although their abilities here are never disparaged, explained or pontificated on, my guess is, the magicians merely imitated Moses and Aaron on a very small scale; and, quite obviously, were unable to undo what Moses and Aaron did.

However, as with the water being turned into blood; Pharaoh was less interested in seeing the miracles of Moses and Aaron being duplicated than he was with the removal of the effects of that miracle. In other words, Pharaoh would have been a damn sight happier had these religious magicians magically caused the frogs to disappear as opposed to causing more frogs to appear.

Exodus 8:7 [And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt.](#)

The art of magic has, apparently, been with people of the earth for a very long time. The magicians of Pharaoh were able to, on a fairly small scale, bring out a number of frogs, seemingly out of nowhere, to reassure Pharaoh that, whatever Moses has done, they can do. Goodness knows, they have enough raw material to work with.

Now, interestingly enough, no doubt these magicians made use of the many frogs which are everywhere, and they produced them from what seemed out of nowhere, perhaps similar to what Penn and Teller did on Dave Letterman's [show](#). The magicians may have even done this on a larger scale—but even they knew that what they were doing was a trick, and that this did not really duplicate what Moses and Aaron had done. Had Pharaoh thought about it, he would have realized this as well. Pharaoh is negative toward the God of Moses and Aaron; so when he gets even the slightest thing that allows him to rationalize his own point of view, he simply accepts it.

What the magicians did was simply not good enough. They could produce many frogs that appeared to come out of nowhere, but what Pharaoh really wanted was to be rid of this millions of frogs that were everywhere. Pharaoh realized that, but he will apparently not let that affect his negative volition.

I can even imagine, at the end of the palace magician trick, Pharaoh sarcastically saying, “Do you think what I want is more frogs?” His magicians coming up with more frogs was not really the answer that he needed. Interestingly enough, despite the magicians performing a trick similar to what Moses and Aaron did, Pharaoh eventually calls for Moses and Aaron to remove all of the frogs.

Exodus 8:8a [Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, “Entreat the Lord...”](#)

Some time has passed. I would estimate a few days—enough time for Pharaoh to fully appreciate what God has done.

For the second plague, Pharaoh is beginning to give in somewhat. He calls for Moses and Aaron to come to him and he asks that they speak to God. Pharaoh does not know that God's chosen man is Moses and that Aaron is there on Moses' insistence. So, when Pharaoh says, "Entreat the Lord," he uses the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Hiphil imperative of 'âthar (אָתַר) [pronounced *gaw-THAR*], which means, *to make supplication, to plead, to entreat; to be entreated for anyone*. Strong's #6279 BDB #801. What is key is Pharaoh uses the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, because he sees Moses and Aaron as team which represents God.

The verb at the end means *to pray, to intercede, to entreat*. It is the Hiphil, or causative stem; they are to be caused to speak to Yahweh because they have been ordered to by Pharaoh (imperative mood).

There are a couple of things to notice here. First, this time Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron. Therefore, they do not have to go out to find him. Pharaoh knows that, even though his court magicians/scribes can do a similar feat, that they cannot make the frogs go away and what they actually did was in no way along the same magnitude as what Moses and Aaron did.

Exodus 8:8a [Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Entreat the Lord...."](#)

There is one more thing that Pharaoh did: he also refers to the Lord as Yahweh—God's name is glorified here by the Pharaoh.

There has to be some kind of conflict occurring in Pharaoh's soul. He has been partially justified in his hard-heartedness because his magicians did what Moses and Aaron had done (albeit, on a very small scale). But, he cannot call on his magicians to remove the frogs be they are unable to do that. Pharaoh must specifically call for Moses and Aaron, in order to appeal to their God.

Furthermore, he has not sought to kill Moses or Aaron yet. The Pharaoh seems to recognize that they are spokesmen for our Lord and not the true cause of these plagues. Or, Pharaoh might not want to make them martyrs.

Exodus 8:8b [...that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people;...."](#)

This is the first time the Pharaoh gives in to Moses and Aaron. It is important to remind ourselves that Pharaoh does not want to let the Jews go nor does he respect Y<sup>e</sup>howah. He is a beaten man. He has no further inner resources and he has been backed into a corner. He wants to say "no" and defy the living God, but he no longer has the strength to do so. He is at his wit's end. Bear in mind that, Pharaoh could not sleep or eat without being disturbed by these frogs.

Exodus 8:8a-b Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, “Entreat the Lord that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people;....”

Despite Pharaoh building his confidence upon this plague of God being duplicated by his magicians, Pharaoh still must go to Moses and Aaron to halt the plague.

There was no doubt some intense drama occurring in the palace. Pharaoh called in his magicians and said, “See what Moses and Aaron have done?” The magicians respond by producing (or, *appearing to produce*) more frogs. Can you not see in your own mind’s eye Pharaoh fuming and screaming at them, “I don’t want more frogs, you idiots! I want these frogs to disappear!!”

At that point, Pharaoh could see that he was out of options.

Pharaoh understood that, if he spoke to Moses and Aaron, that the frogs could be made to disappear. Pharaoh promises to give in to the Lord’s demands.

Exodus 8:8c ...and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord.”

So Pharaoh caves to the judgment of God. I assume that this was sincere (although, given all that happens, Pharaoh’s offer does not have to be). Pharaoh, in general, agrees to do what God requires. He will not agree to all that God requires.

Exodus 8:8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, “Entreat the Lord that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord.”

Pharaoh calls in Moses and Aaron and he makes a deal with them. “You go to your God and get Him to remove all of the frogs, and I will allow you to go out into the desert to worship Him.” It sounds like a reasonable capitulation to the power of God.

For many years, this has struck me as odd that, in the end, God would take the Hebrew people out of Egypt entirely, never to return again. However, originally, Moses and Aaron, as per God’s specific instructions, simply ask Pharaoh to take his people out to the desert to sacrifice to God. Was this dishonest? Was God telling this to Moses, with the idea that, once the people get out in the desert, they are to make a run for it?

What we have here is a legitimate option given to Pharaoh. At this point in time, God was only asking for His people to be able to go out into the desert in order to sacrifice to Him. There was not a sneaky request that God would take advantage of, had Pharaoh fully given in to God’s demands.

If Pharaoh allowed this, it is certainly possible that, at some point in the future, Moses would have come to him to say, “Now it is time for all of us to leave Egypt forever.” But, at this point in time, judgment of Egypt was fairly light, and God’s requirements of Pharaoh were fairly reasonable.

This is what we have been studying:

Exodus 8:6–7 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. But the magicians did the same by their secret arts and made frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

Having received their instructions, Moses and Aaron went into Pharaoh, declared, “God said, ‘Let My people go.’ But you have disobeyed Him! Therefore, He will bring frogs into your land as never before.”

Time passes; perhaps a few days. Pharaoh recognizes that there is no relief from these frogs. He has no other choice but to capitulate to God’s demands. Therefore, he calls for Moses and Aaron and come to the palace and negotiate a settlement.

Exodus 8:8 Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, "Plead with the LORD to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the LORD."

The only person who was not completely trustworthy in all of this is Pharaoh. He calls Moses and Aaron back in to remove or destroy the frogs and then he promises to allow the children of Israel to go out to the desert to sacrifice to God. But he will not follow through.

We will see a repeat of this 7 more times. The plague will push Pharaoh to a point where he can no longer resist what is happening. The pressure is too great. So, he will give in; he will call Moses and Aaron in to remove the plague. And then, his heart will be strengthened—after the plague is gone—and he will resist the demands of their God.

Exodus 8:9a And Moses said to Pharaoh, “Accept the honor of saying when I shall intercede for you, for your servants, and for your people,…”

I use the NKJV in this study, which is usually an excellent translation. However, that is not always true. Here, it is not quite clear what Moses is saying.

Exodus 8:9a (ESV) Moses said to Pharaoh, "Be pleased to command me when I am to plead for you..."

Exodus 8:9a (WEB) Moses said to Pharaoh, "I give you the honor of setting the time that I should pray for you,..."

Essentially, Moses speaks to Pharaoh directly here, and he says, “Just tell me when, and I will speak to God to remove the frogs. The timing is to be your choice.” By this, Moses will show the power of God, to start this plague and end it at His will.

Moses is telling Pharaoh, “Look, you make the choice—tell me exactly when I should make supplication to God on behalf of you, your servants and your people.” Whatever time specified by Pharaoh, by that time, the frogs would be removed from them. Although the Hebrew here is quite difficult and possibly corrupt, we know by the answer that Pharaoh gives, that Moses is asking for Pharaoh to set the time that the frogs will die.

Incidentally, all of the *you*'s here are 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular *you*'s. So Moses is appealing to Pharaoh and Pharaoh alone. He is not saying, “You must think about your people and the difficulties which they face.” Instead, Moses seems to be implying, “Listen, it is all about you; when you want the frogs gone, they will be gone. You just say *when*. This is your call.”

Notice what else has happened here. Moses is no longer speaking through Aaron; he has begun to negotiate things directly with Pharaoh. It is easy to read through this narrative and not to realize when Moses began to assume the role which God had for him.

Moses has had direct contact with God. God has told him what to tell Aaron to do before the Pharaoh; and now Moses is speaking directly to the Pharaoh giving him directives. Moses is the dynamic speaker and he thinks that he is in final negotiations with Pharaoh. Therefore, he can no longer bear to speak through Aaron. Aaron still has a part to play in God's plan; and it is a place of leadership, it just is not as a spokesman for God to Pharaoh. We will later see the weakness of Aaron in the desert when Moses is on Mount Sinai. God has chosen certain people to do certain things. It would have been best for Moses just to go along with it from the beginning, but he balked at being God's spokesman. God foreknew what would occur and made provision for it, as He does in all of our lives.

If I were to speculate, Moses, thinking that this is the final plague and that Pharaoh is going to give in to Y<sup>e</sup>howah right here, is excited and just starts speaking (we are not given a reason why Moses begins to speak directly to Pharaoh).

Exodus 8:9b ...to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, that they may remain in the river only.”

What Pharaoh obviously wanted was the removal of all of the frogs from his immediate periphery. Whether he was concerned about the frogs plaguing everyone else, I don't know.

Exodus 8:9 And Moses said to Pharaoh, “Accept the honor of saying when I shall intercede for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, that they may remain in the river only.”

Moses to Pharaoh, “You tell me when, and I will speak to God and the frogs will be destroyed from all around you at the time that you designate. They will remain in the river only.”

We do not know how Moses knew that the frog situation would continue in the rivers. Whether God told him this or whether Moses spoke as inspired by the Holy Spirit, we do not know. We do know that, whatever Moses says is a correct assessment of the situation.

Exodus 8:10a **So he [Pharaoh] said, “Tomorrow.”**

Pharaoh sets a specific time for the frogs to be removed.

There is some discussion as to why Pharaoh chose the next day—was it random? Did he doubt the power of God, and gave God an extra day? I believe that Pharaoh was a shrewd man. He figured the Moses would expect him to say, “Get rid of these frogs immediately.” This may seem odd to you—there are frogs everywhere—and yet Pharaoh decides, “Okay, get rid of the frogs tomorrow.” Why not, “Right now” or “Awhile ago”? My guess is, Pharaoh is testing Moses and Aaron. *They claim to have the authority of God; let’s see them act at a particular time, just as I have said*, Pharaoh may think. Another possible option is, Pharaoh might assign his magicians the task of removing all of the frogs before then. They were able to make the frogs suddenly appear; let them have first crack at removing them.

We do not know how convinced Pharaoh is about his own magicians. Does he accept what they do as being equivalent to what Moses and Aaron do? When people operate on negative volition toward truth, they often accept anything at all to support when they want to believe.

### **Application: Judgement Coming to the United States**

I am of the opinion that the United States faces great judgment in this century (the 21<sup>st</sup> century). This is not because I am some sort of a prophet and God has revealed this to me; but I am simply observing the national trends. The United States is greatly blessed by God; blessed like no other nation on this earth. We are so blessed in the United States, that many citizens have no clue as to how different life is in other nations or in other eras. We have no idea how oppressive that most governments are; we haven’t a clue as to how awful true poverty is; nor do most Americans realize that life for some is nothing but constant war, and it is war which cannot be escaped.

As we turn away from God, God will turn from us (at one time a huge majority of people in the United States believed in God; and a similarly huge percentage believed in Jesus). The prosperity of the United States is not based upon having great leaders, or upon Hollywood, or upon having great businessmen guide this nation’s economy—our blessing comes directly from God, and God can withdraw this blessing at any time. God may give us blessing through national leaders, through a successful business environment, through the easy availability of Bible doctrine; but this could be withdrawn in numerous ways.

Furthermore, this change can occur virtually overnight. We have enjoyed in the United States 3 great revivals (the third occurring under the ministry of Billy Graham), but that was

a long time ago. For a nation to go in the right direction, there needs to be continued evangelism and some of those believers must then be advancing towards spiritual maturity.

Don't ever put your hopes or your faith in some political leader—not even in a seemingly great one. It is legitimate for believers to be politically informed and to vote for politicians or parties which line up with divine establishment values. Since God has blessed us with a democratic republic, it is legitimate to be informed and to be spiritually discerning. However, spending time becoming politically informed should always take a back seat to becoming spiritually informed. If you want our nation to continue to be blessed, then you do your part by learning Bible doctrine. You learn God's plan for your life and you execute it. That will do more for this nation (or the nation that you live in) than anything else that you can do (including voting for the right candidates).

Back to Moses, Aaron and Pharaoh (however, I hope that you can see how learning about God and Moses and Pharaoh helps us to better understand God and what He says and does).

Exodus 8:9 [And Moses said to Pharaoh, “Accept the honor of saying when I shall intercede for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, that they may remain in the river only.”](#)

Exodus 8:10a [So he \[Pharaoh\] said, “Tomorrow.”](#)

Exodus 8:10b [And he \[Moses\] said, “Let it be according to your word,...](#)

Now, based upon what we have already read, God did not tell Moses, “And when Pharaoh says, remove these frogs, you ask him *what day?*” I am positive that Moses just came up with this on his own. Moses was confident in God's sovereignty; Moses knew that God could begin or end a plague at any given time. When Aaron waved the staff over the waters of the Nile, it was then the waters turned to blood; or it was then that the frogs suddenly came forth. Moses understands that this is within God's ability to deliver according to His will *at the time that He wills*.

After just two miracles, Moses understands the sovereignty and the power of God. Moses considers what he has seen; he considers what God has said to him; and he draws some logical conclusions about God's essence. These conclusions may or may not find support in Moses' previous understanding of God (it is my opinion that Moses did have some training in his past about God—both when in the palace from Hebrew teachers who were brought in and from his father-in-law). My point is, Moses understands what God is able to do, and he understands just how much freedom that he has in this situation.

Understand here that Moses is *not* testing God; Moses is acting according to what he knows about God.

**Application:** Does this mean, that we as believers, ought to concentrate and believe that God will move this mountain from here to there and, therefore, direct all of our efforts to

make that happen? Of course not! God does not provide a surfeit of signs and miracles in every generation. This is the beginning of nation Israel, which is a very big deal; and God shows all of those surrounding nations His power and authority. There was similar power and authority given to Elijah and to the Apostles; and, quite obviously, when Jesus was walking this earth, He could perform a plethora of signs and miracles. God allows for some very dramatic events to occur when He wants the world to focus its attention on something in particular: the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, the gift of His Son, the beginning of the Church Age.

However, this is not the time that we are living in. Jesus has been born, crucified and He has ascended into heaven. We have His authoritative message—the Bible—and we have the power of the Word. For even the believer, he may not realize the power that is in the Word of God. Just as many people in the United States do not realize that they live in blessing far beyond what mankind has ever enjoyed, similarly, many believers do not appreciate the power and importance of the Word of God. So many think that, if their pastor speaks in tongues or appears to heal someone, that is the power—but it is not. The great power of the Church Age is the Word of God. The transformative power of our age is the Word of God.

## Lesson 085: Exodus 8:9–12

## Moses and Pharaoh React to the Same Stimuli

Because there are multiple miracles found in the Bible, some people believe that God is performing miracles throughout all human history; and if you go to the local charismatic church, you can see for yourself the pastor healing people and speaking in tongues.

### God's power and the utility belt of a policeman:

Let me try to explain God's power and His use of His power in another way. I saw a policewoman the other day, and she had a utility belt with quite a number of things attached to it. She had a baton, a spray device, a gun, a taser, and several other items. Now, 99% of the time that this woman interacts with people, she does not use anything from her utility belt. In a rare event, she may reach for the baton, or for the taser. She has the option of using anything in her belt, and her training is all about what to use when. She does not reach for her gun in every instance of a problem. In fact, if she did, she would lose her job. It is not unusual for a cop to go for years—even decades—without ever unholstering their gun (unless they are a cop on a tv show, and then they pull out their weapon



every 5 minutes). For myself, and for most people, a cop has the authority in any given situation, and I am going to respond with “Yes, sir” or “No, ma’am” throughout our entire interaction. I give the policeman deference *not* because I think they are going to pull a gun on me, but because they have the governmental authority when we interact (and because, I am not an idiot).

Policeman Utility Belt; from [WeaselZippers](#); accessed September 25, 2019.

Think of God as that policeman, and He has a utility belt that He can go to at any time to suddenly unleash a plethora of frogs on any given nation. Just like the policeman, God shows normal restraint. God uses different options at different times. One thing that we will learn from the Pharaoh of Egypt, unleashing a plethora of miracles does not change everyone’s mind. Even though Pharaoh will give in from time to time, he does not ever worship the God of the Hebrews, despite seeing incredibly powerful signs. To the very end, Pharaoh will continue to be negative towards the Hebrew people and towards their God. Bear in mind, he saw the exact same miracles that Moses did.

In the same way, I don’t need to see a policeman reach for his gun in order for me to give them deference and respect. People not brought up with the same sense and respect, might find out to their own detriment that they do not want to give a cop any reason to reach for anything in his or her utility belt. Even the slightest amount of parental guidance in this area can go so far as to save a life.

When I interact with a cop, it is unnecessary for them to reach for anything in their utility belt. When God interacts with man, He does not bring out the frogs every time that man is problematic. Now, if you understand that, apply it to the use of miracles in general—we know by recorded history that miracles are not enough. If a person has negative volition, all of the miracles in the world is not going to change them.

We will find out in our study of Exodus that God can certainly wear a negative person down with judgment but, if that person is given enough strength to resist, then they will resist. This is what the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart is all about—whenever God gave Pharaoh enough strength to resist, then Pharaoh did.

Let’s return to Moses and Pharaoh. There are frogs everywhere and Pharaoh has given in. He sounds as if he is willing to give in to God. Therefore, Moses tells Pharaoh that he can choose the time.

Exodus 8:9 [And Moses said to Pharaoh, “Accept the honor of saying when I shall intercede for you, for your servants, and for your people, to destroy the frogs from you and your houses, that they may remain in the river only.”](#)

This is plague #2 only, and Moses totally gets it. God did *not* say to Moses, “Do this, when Pharaoh gives in, tell him to choose when the frogs will be curtailed.” Moses simply

understands that God will accede to Pharaoh's timing. Moses is confident in God to remove the frogs on the day that Pharaoh chooses.

Exodus 8:10a [So he \[Pharaoh\] said, "Tomorrow."](#)

Let me suggest that Pharaoh is being smart here. He would think that the answer Moses is expecting is, "Right now;" and perhaps that Moses somehow knows that, right at this time, the frogs will return to the waters. So Pharaoh says, "Do it tomorrow," which is him certainly choosing a specific time.

Again, there is nothing in Moses' conversation with God that suggests that God told Moses to say this. I believe that Moses came up with this completely on his own. This is because Moses understands the sovereignty of God.

Exodus 8:10b [And he \[Moses\] said, "Let it be according to your word,..."](#)

Moses agrees to what Pharaoh proposes. "You want tomorrow? Frogs will be gone tomorrow."

Exodus 8:10c [...that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God.](#)

At this point in man's history, every religious nation had a god or, more often than not, a pantheon of gods, that they worshipped. There is only one God of the universe Who is real, and He exists in three persons. God, for His own reasons, chose Israel as the nation through which He would work. Therefore, it was not enough to be sincere and to worship the god that you had been brought up with. There is one true God and that is Y<sup>e</sup>howah, God of Israel. So that Pharaoh could learn to appreciate this exclusivity of power and authority, Moses will have the mess of frogs dealt with precisely on the day that Pharaoh calls. So that the surrounding nations could appreciate the God of Israel, the grand miracles occurring in Egypt revealed the God of Israel to them.

Moses knows this fact. Moses, two plagues into this whole thing, knows that there is no one like Y<sup>e</sup>howah, God of the Hebrews. And Moses knows, he can have Pharaoh call the day and the hour of recovery from the frogs, and God would do it. As God's human representative, Moses can give Pharaoh the option of calling the specific day for this plague to end.

Why did God choose Moses and not Aaron? Moses was able to go off script and still remain in the plan of God. God said nothing to Moses about, "You tell Pharaoh to choose the time the frogs are to die." But Moses knew he had the delegated authority to have Pharaoh choose the time. On the other hand, when Aaron did all of the talking, you may recall that, he incorrectly embellished God's directions (Exodus 5:3).

Exodus 8:10 [So he \[Pharaoh\] said, "Tomorrow." And he \[Moses\] said, "Let it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God.](#)

Moses originally had Aaron speak on his behalf but right here, it appears here that he is speaking himself directly to Pharaoh.

Moses tells Pharaoh, "You have set the time; and my God will act in accordance with your wishes." Without God even telling him to do this, Moses knew that his God is sovereign and that He could act as He wills.

Pharaoh sets the time (tomorrow) and Moses then specifies exactly what would happen. "This is what you can expect," he tells Pharaoh.

Moses believes that Pharaoh ought to understand Who God is and believe that there is no one like Him, because Pharaoh himself set the time for the frogs to be removed.

Can you, as an individual, set the time for a storm to stop? For the sun to set? For the most part, no (although you may pray concerning a storm or any number of things and God may answer your prayer). But you cannot, with any certainty, tell God, "I want this storm to start precisely at 9:05 am, rain less than ½ inch per hour, and stop at 4:45 pm." Moses could, with certainty, have Pharaoh call the day and time for the end of the frog plague. Moses was going to lead Israel out of Egypt; that was a very big deal. If you want a storm to start after you get to work, and stop before you get off work, that is far less important and the spiritual impact is essentially nil. Similarly, God does not do miracles at the local charismatic church to impress the people there. In the Church Age, the power is in His Word; not in miracles (which is essentially true at all times).

As I see it, there are two reasons for God being parsimonious with His miracles: (1) they do not really change a person's mind, if they are locked in negative volition; and (2) if miracles are commonplace, then we would value them less. If there were miracles occurring every Sunday morning at the local charismatic church (and there are *not*), then they would be common, like rocks (or, in the case of my region, lumps of cement left behind by builders).

Returning to our narrative:

Exodus 8:10 [So he \[Pharaoh\] said, "Tomorrow." And he \[Moses\] said, "Let it be according to your word, that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God.](#)

Moses tells Pharaoh to call the day, and without even double-checking with God, Moses says, "God will take care of your frog problem tomorrow."

Exodus 8:11a [And the frogs shall depart from you, from your houses, from your servants, and from your people.](#)

What the frogs will do is the Qal perfect of  $\zeta\acute{u}wr$  (שׁוּר/וֹשׁ) [pronounced *soor*] and it has three basic meanings in the Qal stem: (1) *to turn aside, to revolt, to degenerate*; (2) *to depart, to cease to obstruct, to get out of the way*; (3) *to be removed* (used of lifeless things). Our second definition is the one which applies here. The perfect tense means that

come tomorrow, this will be a completed action and the frogs will no longer be an issue to the Egyptians. Strong's #5493 (and #5494) BDB #693.

All three substantives are prefixed with the preposition *min* (מִן) [pronounced *min*] and this preposition carries with it the concept of separation here and is variously translated as *out of, from, on account of, off* (this is the highly edited version from over 6 pages of explanation in BDB).

This myriad of frogs would depart from their houses, servants and people; and this would take place on the day that Pharaoh calls for it to happen.

Exodus 8:11b **They shall remain in the river only.**"

So that Pharaoh would know exactly what to expect, the frogs would depart from their close association with people; and they will be in the river only. It is not clear if many of them would die off; but they would cease to be an immediate burden on the people of Egypt. No one would be whipping up a cake of Egyptian cornbread, and have to deal with the 18 frogs which have fallen into the uncooked mix.

There would remain a considerable number of frogs (presumably) in the river. Perhaps they remain there, temporarily, as a reminder to Pharaoh, of God's great power.

Exodus 8:11 **And the frogs shall depart from you, from your houses, from your servants, and from your people. They shall remain in the river only.**"

Again, we have no idea if all of this takes place as a natural series of events or if it was miraculous. The fact that the frogs in the water remain alive suggests to me that this continues to be, for the most part, a natural sequence of events, all falling within the parameters of physical and biological laws. Given the number of frogs, this still seems to be an amazing thing.

This is the trick that the court magicians were unable to perform; they could get a few frogs to appear where no frogs had been before, but they could not get them to advance in the great numbers as Moses did. And, more importantly, they could not get the frogs to retreat.

Pharaoh himself had called for Moses and Aaron; and he asked them specifically to remove this plague. Moses then spoke directly to Pharaoh and told him, "You tell me when and my God will do according to your word." Pharaoh set the time as tomorrow.

Exodus 8:12a **Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh.**

There was nothing left for Moses and Aaron to do before Pharaoh, so they exit.

Exodus 8:12b **And Moses cried out to the Lord concerning the frogs which He had brought against Pharaoh.**

Moses did not cry to God; what he did was the Qal imperfect of the verb *tsâ'aq* (צָעַק) [pronounced *tsaw-AK*] and it means, in the King James English, *to cry out, to make an outcry*; however, in modern English, it means *to call out*; and since it means *to be summoned* in the Niphal (Judges 7:23–24 10:17 12:1 2Kings 3:21), this would indicate that it could mean *to summon* in the Qal. The imperfect tense means that Moses prayed for a period of time and then God spoke to him.

The final verb is the Qal perfect of *sûwm* (שׂוּם) [pronounced *soom*] and it has a variety of meanings which include *to set, to place, to appoint*; when God is the subject, it is a part of God's perfect plan, a part of His divine decrees made in eternity past. I prefer the translation *decreed*, particularly when this is in the perfect tense—this is something which God had decided to do in eternity past as a part of His perfect immutable decrees. The NKJV translated that word *brought*.

Therefore, we might translate Exodus 8:12b [And Moses called out to the Lord regarding the frogs that He had decreed against Pharaoh.](#)

Moses calls out to God for the removal of the frogs, based upon the specific timing of Pharaoh.

## Lesson 086: Exodus 8:12–15

## God Removes the Frogs from Egypt

The frogs invaded Egypt and they were found everywhere. Pharaoh, at his wit's end, called for Moses and Aaron, and asked for them to remove the frogs. Moses told him, "You name the day," and Pharaoh did. He said *tomorrow*.

Exodus 8:12 [Then Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh. And Moses called out to the Lord concerning the frogs which He had decreed against Pharaoh.](#) (I have modified the NKJV here)

This is an interesting thing here. Moses and Aaron exit from being with Pharaoh, after having come to that agreement, and they commune with God. More specifically, Moses speaks with God.

Every indication is that Moses does this in private. Obviously, Moses is the one speaking to God. He had complained about being too intimidated to speak in a small group setting before Pharaoh; but Moses seems to have no problem speaking directly to God. Furthermore, just as Moses spoke to God, so God would do as Moses asked.

Notice that both Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, but Moses ends up doing all of the talking. When they leave, it is Moses who calls upon God. This does not mean that Aaron didn't think to do that; it is just that God had called upon Moses and not upon Aaron for this job—Aaron was only there at Moses' request.

God will not, however, simply cast Aaron aside when Moses realizes that he is able to speak before Pharaoh. God will continue to use Aaron and from Aaron, develop the specialized Hebrew priesthood is more properly known as the Aaronic Priesthood rather than the Levitical Priesthood.

Moses and Aaron had gone to Pharaoh and warned him and his staff about the massive numbers of frogs which would invade Egypt. Then God brought the frogs. Pharaoh cannot take it any more, and he calls for Moses and Aaron to bring relief to his country. Moses tells Pharaoh, "You choose the day, and God will remove the frogs on that day." Pharaoh chose the next day, with promises to obey the God of the Hebrews and let the Hebrew people worship their God out in the desert. Moses and Aaron exit and Moses speaks to God, asking Him to remove the frogs the next day (the day specified by Pharaoh).

Exodus 8:13a [So the Lord did according to the word of Moses.](#)

To get a feel for the Hebrew and the nuances in this language, we have the substantive *dâbâr* (דָּבָר) [pronounced *daw-BAWR*] again (it means, *word*), and it reveals that God has answered Moses prayer and He has done what Moses promised to Pharaoh. *Dâbâr* refers both to what Moses said in prayer to God but also what he said to Pharaoh. He told Pharaoh to say when the frogs would cease to infest the land of Egypt and God did according to that word.

Notice very carefully what the Bible says here—God acts according to the word of Moses. What was the word of Moses? Moses told Pharaoh that he could choose the time that the frogs would not be a problem for Egypt. Moses did this on his own; God did not specifically tell him to say this. Moses, in a very short time, is beginning to understand God, and the freedom which God has given Moses. God did not call Moses to be an automaton.

If I were to hypothesize, Moses has received good teaching about the God of Israel possibly from his time in Egypt through Hebrew teachers (employed by the Egyptian palace) and that Moses enjoyed further spiritual growth by means of his priest father-in-law. As Moses interacts directly with God, all of what he has previously learned is falling into place. I do not believe that Moses came to God as a completely empty vessel; or that all of his knowledge about God took place over a period of a few month. This has been speculated about in greater detail in the early chapters of Exodus.

Exodus 8:13b [And the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courtyards, and out of the fields.](#)

What Moses calls for, God does. The frogs which are in the houses, courtyards and fields all die. What Moses says, as a representative of God, can be depended upon.

Whether this massive destruction of the frogs was a miracle of some sort or a natural chain of events, we do not know; the Bible never differentiates between the two. But everything happens according to the word of Moses, who has developed great confidence in God.

Exodus 8:13 [So the Lord did according to the word of Moses. And the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courtyards, and out of the fields.](#)

What happens here does not have to be absolutely supernatural. With so many frogs, they would have lacked water and food to survive. Once, as a very young person, I tried to set up a frog preserve in perhaps a 3'x6' enclosure. As a guess, I may have had 100 or more tiny frogs in this preserve; but those frogs were not preserved. They all died out almost immediately, even though I thought I was providing them with the right environment—which included water.

Did God withdraw their life or did the frogs just die out naturally? I opt for the latter; nevertheless, this occurs according to God's perfect timing—exactly when Pharaoh called for it to happen. Again, there is no real issue with how natural or how supernatural these acts of God are. Ultimately, one is no different from the other.

There is a sequence of events which has helped to give Moses great confidence in God, so much so as, he told Pharaoh, "You tell me when you want the frogs to stop being a nuisance, and God will take care of that—just as you call it."

Moses and Aaron first went before Pharaoh, made the request, and Pharaoh responded, not by going after Moses and Aaron, but by increasing the workload of the people. Recall how everyone—particularly the Hebrew elders—were extremely upset about this. But when Moses goes back to God, God tells him, "You will be able to find Pharaoh tomorrow morning out by the Nile, so I want you to turn all the open Egyptian waters to blood." And that happened just as God said it would. After 7 days, when the blood seemed to be going away, Moses and Aaron go again before Pharaoh and tell him that his land would be covered in frogs. After the invasion of the frogs, when Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron back in and said, "Plead with your God to remove these frogs from Egypt," Moses had the confidence to tell Pharaoh, "You tell me when, and my God will remove them then."

Incidentally, those acts of Pharaoh against the people, increasing their workload? After the first plague of God, nothing is said about the slavery issue again. We do not know when the slavery of the Hebrew people actually ended, but I believe that the plagues made their work impossible to do. There was nothing that Pharaoh could do, because he was dealing with the same difficulties.

Exodus 8:14a [They gathered them together in heaps,...](#)

The frogs did not suddenly disappear or retreat back into the waters; but, on the day that Pharaoh said, the frogs all died. Therefore, they had to be gotten rid of. The Egyptians could not wait to gather them up, although there was certainly the problem of what to do with them next.

Exodus 8:14b [...and the land stank.](#)

Given the massive amounts of frogs and the fact that they have all died, the piles of them which had been gathered gave off a horrendous stench. There is a purpose in this stench—it is to remind Pharaoh of God's power, even though the plague itself has been withdrawn. The frogs are dead, but the memory of them persists.

Exodus 8:14 **They gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank.**

God did not have the frogs retreat nor did they simply return to the river. Those which were underfoot in numbers unimaginable all died. God's purpose here is that all the people of Egypt, including Pharaoh, would have an aromatic reminder of God's power. Pharaoh, as he refuses to stand by his word to Moses, can smell the horrible stench of millions of dead frogs.

Dealing with the frogs would have been a very unpleasant process. They had infested everywhere, so gathering them into piles must have been a rather ugly and time-consuming job. Every Egyptian would be taking part in this. The frogs died; but there are so many of them. They are gathered into heaps and their stink is hard to endure. They could not simply be left where they were, because that would have caused a stench to unbearable to be around. These frogs would have been everywhere in the homes of the Egyptians (and in the homes of the Israelites as well).

What God did affected every person in Egypt. Therefore, there would have been discussions concerning the origin of these frogs. All Egyptians would be aware, after the blood in the water and the frogs, of the God of Moses and what He was doing to Egypt. No doubt, some Egyptians began to think, even at this early hour, that maybe Israel should be separated from Egypt.

Exodus 8:15a **But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief,...**

Pharaoh looks out and surveys what is happening. The frogs have all died out—and this seems natural enough—and the people are left with the work of disposing of them. *Perhaps, he reasons to himself, this is now taken care of; the frogs are dead and things are returning to normal.*

When there were frogs everywhere, Pharaoh was unable to keep his wits about him; he was unable to justify his rejection of Moses' God. However, once the pressure was off, he could return to his old way of thinking.

Exodus 8:15b **...he hardened his heart....**

I would have expected the wording, *and he hardened his heart*, but a Hiphil infinitive absolute was found here instead. Here, when used alone, the infinitive absolute is translated like an English gerund, adding *ing* to the verb. The Hiphil often refers to a causal form of the verb. However, this is not the word that we generally find translated *to harden* (which means, *to strengthen*). The word found here is kâbêd (כָּבַד) [pronounced *kaw<sup>h</sup>-VADE*], which means, *to make heavy, to be oppressive; to make unresponsive; to*

*cause to be honoured, to increase with honors; to acquire honor (glory) for oneself; to make dull, to harden [the heart].* Like the verb which we usually find translated *to harden*, this verb is *only* translated *to harden* in the book of Exodus, and only in this section of Exodus (although found in 1Sam. 6:6, the passage refer back to Pharaoh's heart). There may be a twofold understanding in this passage of *kâbêd*: (1) it is possible that, when the frogs all died that Pharaoh begin to take on some of the honor and glory for himself, as if he had done this thing himself. Recall that Moses asks Pharaoh to choose the time for the removal of the frogs, and they were removed at the time that Pharaoh said. (2) No doubt this means that Pharaoh's heart become *unresponsive* to God.

This is the Hiphil infinitive absolute, which, as Zodhiates puts it, *presents in the active voice, causative action in the form of a verbal noun, usually as a complement of affirmation.*<sup>76</sup> Sometimes, the Hiphil infinitive absolute can simply be used as a finite verb.

Perhaps the idea conveyed here is, this was not exactly a conscious decision on Pharaoh's part. He did not think to himself, "These damn frogs are now all gone, so I can go back to hating/rejecting the God of the Hebrews." My thinking is, this was a more organic process, and less deliberative. Pharaoh reasons within himself, "I told Moses when to remove the frogs." Then he observes the massive frog cleanup occurring all over Egypt. And, despite the incredible stench, they are coming to a point where they can see the frog problem as about to come to an end. Pharaoh, as this problem begins to be solved, becomes less and less responsive to God. In fact, since he himself called the day that the frogs would die out, Pharaoh may even be giving himself some credit at this point.

However, even if this is a fairly organic process where Pharaoh changes his mind, that does not remove his responsibility in the matter of his negative volition.

Moses and Pharaoh are seeing the exact same things. Moses' own faith in God is growing and his understanding of what he himself can say on behalf of God, is expanding. Pharaoh, at first, appeared to be pliable to the will of God; but now that the frogs are gone, his thinking is becoming less responsive to God. Both men are being exposed to the same stimuli. They have seen the exact same thing.

Exodus 8:15c *...and did not heed them,...*

As is found throughout these plagues, the next natural step is for Moses and Aaron to get with Pharaoh to work out the details of taking the people out to worship their God; and for Pharaoh to refuse them (or refuse the meeting). We are not told exactly what happened in this case, apart from the fact of Pharaoh's negative volition towards God. Exactly what Pharaoh did or said to express his negative volition is not always given to us. Fundamentally, it breaks down to this: there are demands that God has made on behalf of His people and Pharaoh refuses to obey those demands.

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<sup>76</sup> See Bullinger, p. 515 and Zodhiates, p. 2275 for more information

God had made specific demands of Pharaoh, which Pharaoh at first seemed amenable to (while the frogs were alive and everywhere); but, now that the frogs are no longer alive and in rotting piles everywhere, Pharaoh turns against the God of Moses.

The exact nature of that narrative is not expounded upon. Perhaps Moses and Aaron returned to Pharaoh, said, “About our worship...” and Pharaoh said, “The frogs are gone; now you may leave as well.”

This is how Scripture describes it:

Exodus 8:15 [But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the Lord had said.](#)

God's word (or guarantee) is good and God stands by His word. Even though God knew in eternity past that Pharaoh would go back on his word, God did not go back on His, nor did He leave Moses there holding the bag, as it were, having given Pharaoh a promise. Moses promised Pharaoh that the frogs would no longer harass them and God fulfilled that promise. Even if we do not believe, God still is found to be faithful.

We learn about character here. Someone who can give you his word and then will stand by his word is a man of honor; he is a man whose character imitates the character of God. Too often, a man will give his word concerning a business deal, but then something more advantageous to him comes along and he goes back on his word and he does *the smart thing* insofar as his own interests are concerned. One of the reasons that we have contracts and lawyers is because man is not as good as his word.

This is like the woman who agrees to go out on a date, but then when someone better comes along, she stands up the first guy to go out with the second. Or this is like the man or the woman who profess love one day, but then, when someone better comes along, that love they professed no longer means anything. This is Pharaoh—he promised to let the people go, but then he reneged. The southern expression I learned is *he never said nothing he couldn't take back*. It does not matter that these things occurred over three millennia ago a half a world away; the Bible is applicable to today. People are people.

However, you do not get this out of reading your Bible in a read-through-the-Bible schedule. You understand these things from a pastor-teacher who might spend one hour or two just translating a verse, and working out its nuances and implications, and then explaining that to you in ten minutes. This is God's plan for this dispensation.

Pharaoh makes his own heart unresponsive to God, once the plague was removed, and now, he is unwilling to let the people of God go and worship their God.

**Lessons 087–088: Exodus 7:13–18**

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Plague: Lice**

This is what we last studied:

Exodus 8:13–15 So the Lord did according to the word of Moses. And the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courtyards, and out of the fields. They gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them, as the Lord had said.

The way that this is recalled is very much how we would expect human memory to work. There will be a total of 10 plagues, and even though each one may have followed the same pattern as the one before, a man like Moses may not recall every single detail simply because there were 10 plagues. It was easy to differentiate what is different in each plague, as each plague had its own defining factors; but the similarities of these plagues would have been blurred. For any given plague, just exactly how many times did Moses and Aaron meet with Pharaoh? What was said at each meeting? That would have been difficult to remember, as there would have been so many similarities. Furthermore, an exact written record of each and every meeting, and each and every conversation would have been unnecessarily repetitive and boring. For a narrative like this, which is, quite frankly, amazing, the last thing it needs to do is, focus upon each and every detail, so that the progression of the story seems to drag. When reading these plague narratives straight through, they narrative does not drag.

The actual period of time for each plague appears to be less than a week—so these 10 plagues probably played out over a period of perhaps two months or less. This very short period of time changes the future of Israel forever; and virtually destroys nation Egypt (it will take them a long time to rebuild from this).

We do not know exactly how it was communicated that Pharaoh would not do what God had required of him; this detail is left out of the narrative. All we know is, Pharaoh *made his heart unresponsive and he did not listen to them*. Therefore, at this time, a third plague is brought upon Egypt.

So far, there have been two plagues: water was turned to blood (or it appeared to be blood); and the plague of the frogs. In this second plague, Moses told Pharaoh to call the shots, to tell when the plague should end. However, rather than being impressed by Moses' God, once the frogs were gone, Pharaoh renews his negative attitude towards the request made by Moses.

This leads us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> plague (there are 3 plagues recorded in the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Exodus):

### **The Third Plague: Lice**

Exodus 8:16a So the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land,...’”

Even though Moses stepped forward, to speak directly to Pharaoh regarding the frogs, Aaron resumes his post of acting as an intermediary for God's intermediary. Therefore Moses is to give Aaron instructions; and he is to lift up his own rod and then to bring it down and strike the land, so that there would be lice in all the land of Egypt.

Interestingly enough, no matter what sort of confidence Moses may have gained, Aaron would continue to play an important part when confronting Pharaoh and then later, in Israel's history.

The wording of v. 16a is actually somewhat humorous. Moses begged God in every way that he knew how to be dismissed from this project; and then he asked, if he couldn't get out of it, could he just stand behind Aaron. However, with the last plague and with Pharaoh's temporary capitulation, Moses was so excited, he went right to Pharaoh and spoke to him directly; he probably got Aaron to go with him as almost an afterthought. God tells Moses what he is to have Aaron do. Moses appears to be ready to take over; he is beginning to believe and to appreciate the power of God. God still has Moses work in conjunction with Aaron. Moses made Aaron a part of the process, and God will keep Aaron as an important figure in these plagues and in the subsequent history of Israel.

At this point, even if Moses came out and said, "Okay, God, I am ready to be point man," Aaron would still play a very active role. He will not be set aside. Moses appears to be the one who will speak to Pharaoh directly, but that is not completely clear in this 3<sup>rd</sup> plague. We will not read the words *and Moses said* in this 3<sup>rd</sup> plague, but we will read them in the 4<sup>th</sup> (Exodus 8:26).

Interestingly enough, Moses' sons, insofar as we know, will play no part in the future of Israel; but Aaron's line (Aaron and Moses are both Levites) will be one of the most important genealogical lines for Israel, second only to the Judæan line through David. The priesthood of Israel would come down through Aaron. Even though this priesthood is nearly always referred to as the *Levitical priesthood*, it is actually the *Aaronic priesthood* (Aaron's line being a branch of the Levite line).

Back to our narrative. Aaron is supposed to take the staff and bring it down against the ground, striking the dust of the ground...

Exodus 8:16b [...so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.](#)"

Aaron is to bring down the rod and slam it against the ground, and the dust will appear to become lice.

On the one hand, God could have changed dust particles into living gnats; on the other hand, God knowing all that would happen, could have engineered natural events so that, when Aaron struck the ground, it would appear as if there were gnats suddenly coming out of nowhere. The more natural explanation—the one which is in line with the physical laws of the universe (which are God's laws)—is actually the explanation which requires more from God. God can overrule His Own laws for our universe at any point. Can God create 100 billion gnats at the snap of a finger? Of course He can. It is far more amazing when He acts according with the laws of the universe. The timing of such events has to be perfect. It has to appear as if there are no lice (or gnats) at one point in time, and then, a moment later, as if the land is filled with them.

We are not certain whether these are lice or gnats—and it could be two stages of the same insect. These were very small, irritating insects in huge numbers. Could they have been the natural result of millions of rotting dead frogs? Certainly. In my own mind, that is how I see this as happening. Somehow, I believe that these three plagues are related: the blood (or whatever) in the water, the frogs, and now the lice (or gnats). I believe that one naturally followed the one before. However, that is just speculation on my part. There is nothing in the text to tell us whether these lice (or gnats) came about naturally or supernaturally. But, in either case, in one moment, these small insects are not apparent; and in the next moment, suddenly they are everywhere and all over.

Exodus 8:16 [So the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.’”](#)

Even though it is not clearly stated, it makes sense that Moses and Aaron go before Pharaoh and perform this. It is possible that, Moses and Aaron do what God tells them to do before Pharaoh in a very public place.

On many occasions, when God acts publically like this, He is very demonstrative. So Moses and Aaron would not have been in some deserted place in Egypt hitting the ground with Aaron’s staff; this would have been done in a public place, and, very likely with Pharaoh and his minions looking on.

The people of Egypt cannot be made to see these as simply a set of unfortunate events; each plague must be tied to Moses and Aaron; and therefore, to their God. This must be the general understanding among the people of Israel and Egypt. Therefore, by this point in time, no doubt everyone in Egypt has been told what is happening simply by word of mouth. When all the water appears to be blood on one day; a few days later, there are frogs everywhere; and after that, there are these tiny irritating insects. How could Egypt be talking about anything else? These discussions which are occurring all over Egypt would be more than, “Look at all of these lice. I wish they would disappear.” How Moses and Aaron; and their God figured into it would also be a part of the conversation.

I have these assumptions based upon the justice of God. If a nation is under extraordinary judgment as Egypt is at this time, then God would reveal to them what the issues are (and this information would spread about naturally, organically).

**Application:** What about today? Nations are experiencing the justice of God all of the time; how much do the people know? In this dispensation, God is not doing an abundance of miracles in any particular nation; nor does God have front men like Moses and Aaron in every nation. Yet, there is clearly judgment coming down in virtually every nation, that judgment coming down in various amounts. The knowledge of what is happening in any given nation comes primarily from the Word of God. Not everyone is interested in God’s Word; in fact, not all Christians have a hunger for God’s Word. But that is where the answers are. One can study this plagues of God against Egypt; one can study the stages (or cycles) of national discipline as outlined in Lev. 26. One can even google *cycles of*

*national discipline* and the first 8 hits (at least today) all appear to come from reputable sources.

**Application:** In the United States, for many years, the wonderful evangelist Billy Graham had the ear of every president for decades; but we must bear in mind that the real changes that move a nation occur in the population—specifically in your soul and mine. Even though there are some political solutions which are better than others (some line up with the laws of divine establishment, and most do not); the true solution for any nation is individual. How many believers are able to recognize what is happening before their own eyes in their own nation? How many believers can correctly interpret contemporary history? The blessing of a nation depends entirely upon God; and that blessing always is a result of the bottom up (believers in the nation becoming mature), rather than from the top down (that is, good political policy).

Back to our narrative:

Exodus 8:17a [And they did so.](#)

Moses spoke to Aaron, then Aaron took up his rod and struck the ground with it (at the proper time and place).

Again, we do not know if, somewhere in this narrative, Aaron and Moses met with Pharaoh, were told *no* by him; and then launched right into this plague. The details of Pharaoh's negative volition are unimportant; all we need to know is, his heart has become unresponsive to God. Therefore, Moses and Aaron act as directed by God before Pharaoh and before his cabinet (I would assume this, because these acts of God must be known throughout Egypt).

The plagues are presented in such a way that they are clearly differentiated. Plague #1 goes from this verse to this verse; then plague #2 picks up in the next verse. However, this is what probably happened. Moses went to God and asked Him to remove the frogs; and God did. But, at this same meeting, God may have told Moses, "Pharaoh is going to continue to resist, and when he expresses his negative volition, have Aaron strike the ground with his staff." So, Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh, and they say, "The frogs are gone. Now God wants His people to leave and to worship Him." Pharaoh then says, "I made the frogs die. I chose the time for them to die and now they are all dead. You will not take your people into the desert-wilderness." Then Moses may have said, "Okay, look over at Aaron." Then Aaron brings the staff down on the ground, and suddenly, billions of gnats or lice seem to rise up from the ground. So, even though the Bible presents these plagues as completely disjoint events, there is probably some overlap as I have described (the overlap here is probably the Moses went to God and asked him to remove the frogs and God said that he would, but that Pharaoh would still be negative, and therefore, this is what Moses was to do).

My point is, even though each plague seems to have its own completely disjoint narrative, the end of one plague and the beginning of the next—with all the attendant events—may

not have been as disjoint as the narrative makes them seem. That is, Moses is speaking to God about removing the frogs, and God begins to inform Moses about the next plague at this same meeting. Pharaoh expresses negative volition after the frogs have died out, when meeting with Moses and Aaron; and then, right at the same meeting, Moses points to Aaron and says, “Watch what happens due to you negative volition.” (I am simply saying that this is how many of the plagues may have played out.)

Let me try to explain this in a different way. It is less likely, in my opinion, that Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh after the frogs died out, and said, “God says, ‘Let My people go.’” To which, Pharaoh says *no*, and Moses and Aaron leave and go have another meeting with God to figure out what to do next. Moses and Aaron probably come before Pharaoh, after the removal of the frogs, to make God’s demand; but also locked and loaded to begin the next plague (they likely knew in advance how Pharaoh would respond).

The way that this event is recalled is very human. Considerable details are left out, simply due to the repetition of so many details in each plague. Specific details which are left out certainly would have had to occur (first the meeting with God; then a meeting with Pharaoh when the words of God are repeated; then the plague itself).

Somehow, in all of this, Moses and Aaron have to find out that Pharaoh is refusing to allow the people to go and worship God. That conversation has to take place (for the most part, this conversation is left out of many of the various plague narratives). Their response to Pharaoh’s negative volition would be a striking of the ground with Aaron’s staff, and a sudden explosion of lice or gnats.

Why have I even bothered to say, *this might be the way that it happened?* I think that there are two things at play here: (1) these plagues are easier to digest if we see them as playing out individually, as separate narratives. However (2) when Pharaoh expresses his negative volition, do Moses and Aaron immediately say, “Okay, we’re leaving right now, but we will talk to God and come back later”? I believe that, when Pharaoh balked and said, “No, you are not taking the Hebrew people anywhere,” that Moses and Aaron were ready to go with the next plague right then and there. That is, they have already talked to God, God already told them, “Pharaoh is going to refuse to let My people go, therefore, you will do this...”

So, what I believed happened is, as soon as Pharaoh indicated that he would not allow the people of Israel to leave, Moses and Aaron then acted to pronounce judgment against Egypt and begin the next plague—right then and there. We don’t read it exactly like that, as that would make the plagues seem less distinct.

Exodus 8:17b [For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod...](#)

Note that there is a certain amount of drama here. Aaron stretches out his hand with the staff in it, and all eyes are on him. This staff has been used in the previous two plagues. For the first plague, his staff was waved over the waters of the Nile and then struck the waters. For the second, his staff was stretched out over all the waters, as if Aaron was

summoning the frogs from the waters. This third time, Aaron has his arm stretched out, the staff being in his hand.

Aaron assumes this pose so that everyone there knows that what he does with this staff is going to be significant. Everyone knows that something dramatic is going to happen. God actually instructs Moses and Aaron to be very theatrical, very demonstrative—and so they are throughout the plague narratives.

Exodus 8:17c [and struck the dust of the earth,...](#)

Aaron struck the ground with his staff (this appears to be the same staff throughout, the possessive pronoun applying to whomever is holding it).

All of this is very theatrical, which indicates to me that an audience would have been present (this audience would tell everyone they know about what happened; and the people that they tell would tell everyone that they know).

By the way, I do not invoke the use of the word *theater* here in any sort of a demeaning way. Much of what God does, throughout the ages, is very theatrical (have you ever seen the sun rise?). God expects that Pharaoh and his servants view what is happening and then respond to it with thought and some contemplation. Similar conversations would be taking place all over Egypt, among the people, who are also subject to these great plagues.

There is, no doubt, some theater in all of this, and we can reasonably be certain that there was an audience—and, in my opinion, that would have been Pharaoh and his servants; the recent stench of dead frogs still in their nostrils. There was undoubtedly an audience; but how they interacted with this audience (presumably Pharaoh and company), is not recorded.

Furthermore, let me suggest that there is a great angelic host audience as well. The world is a great theater stage for all angels, and God would call their attention, from time to time, to certain sets of events taking place in certain localities.

At one of these great meetings in heaven (see Job 1–2 for an example of this), God speaks to the angels, and tells them, “I would like you to observe what I will do in Egypt today. Find and follow Moses and Aaron and see what they do.”

Angels, both fallen and elect, learn from us and learn from watching God interact in our lives. Somehow, because they are light and occupy space differently than we do, I believe nearly all of angelic creation is able to observe any given event.

Aaron has stretched out his staff over the ground, and then he slammed it down against the dust of the earth...

Exodus 8:17d [...and it became lice on man and beast.](#)

Aaron brings his staff down on the ground, and as he raises it back up, so also comes up a great infestation of gnats (or lice). They infest both man and beast. As the frogs were invasive; these lice are even more so.

There is some confusion as to exactly what this particular plague was. Some translators use the term *lice*, and others *gnats*. The *New American Standard Bible* uses both. BDB mentions that this could likely include maggots. *The Amplified Bible* uses *biting gnats or mosquitos*, which I like because it conveys the horrible intrusion of these insects upon the lives of the Egyptians.

Can you imagine not being able to even lay down to sleep without being swarmed by hundreds of small, crawling, flying, biting insects? The gnats were so thick that it was as if the dust itself had turned into gnats.

This seems to be a natural phenomena. With the polluted water and the huge piles of dead frogs, it is very possible that we have an incredible invasion of very small insects which feed off these dead frogs. However, the numbers of insects implied by this passage and the short amount of time that it takes for them to make their appearance in the land of Egypt still indicates that this takes on the appearance of a miracle, happening as suddenly as Aaron strikes the ground with his staff. There is nothing of a gradual infestation suggested, but of one which is sudden and massive.

Exodus 8:17e [All the dust of the land became lice...](#)

The end of v. 17 reads [and all the dust of the land became gnats](#); although the Septuagint gives it a slightly different slant with the rendering *and in all the dust of the land there came to be gnats*.

The wording here seems to point toward a completely miraculous event, where the dust becomes a flurry of gnats. I think that it is also possible that it simply seemed to happen in that way.

The Hebrew used here is likely hyperbole (or exaggeration). The number of gnats was so unbelievable that they are compared to the dust in Egypt. This does not mean there is a one-to-one relationship between each particle of dust and each gnat. We have studied similar hyperboles in Gen. 2:24 41:47 and will find several more to come (Judges 20:16 is a good example). Nor does this mean that many particles of dust changed into these irritating insects. This can be understood to mean that, the dust *appeared* to turn into a massive amount of lice.

We have a president who speaks in hyperbole all of the time—everything is the greatest or the best or the most (I write this is 2019). We have an obstinate (and often hysterical) press which continually takes such hyperbolic quotes and calls them lies. The opposition to our president is equally hyperbolic. So, in the United States, if you ever want a lesson in hyperbole, all you need do is turn on the news.

We do not know if the dust actually turned into gnats or if it simply appeared that way. The text clearly states that the dust became gnats, but I think that it would allow for it to appear as if the dust became a mass of gnats (much like when the water was turned to blood, it may have simply appeared as if it were blood).

So far, this is what we have studied.

Exodus 8:16 [So the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.’”](#)

**“I strike at the dust, which turned into a mass of lice/gnats”** (a photo); from [Moses’ Twitter account](#);<sup>77</sup> accessed December 4, 2019. I kept the picture small, so as not to give anyone the heebie-jeebies.



Exodus 8:17 [And they did so. For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast. All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.](#)

We are not given any details as to where this takes place or who the actual audience is. Did they find Pharaoh, and do this before him? I believe that Moses and Aaron came into their post-frog meeting ready to begin this plague, if Pharaoh refused God’s demand.

It would be natural that Moses and Aaron go to speak to Pharaoh after the death of the millions of frogs, as they would be firming up the details from Israel’s temporary exit from Egypt to worship their God. However, when Moses and Aaron walk into the palace,<sup>78</sup> that appears to no longer be on the agenda.

Was there an audience for this as before? I would think so. In fact, given the series of historical events so far, the number of people who come to the palace probably increases with each plague. They may be mostly outside of Pharaoh’s palace; but it would be logical for more and more people to wonder just what is going on. They might want to see Moses and Aaron with their own eyes. However, we don’t know many of these details for certain. The increase of people is speculation on my part. In any case, all of Egypt would soon know what had taken place.

Given what we have studied, it would make sense for Moses and Aaron to do this before Pharaoh. This is because Pharaoh is the one who would make the decision for the people of Egypt.

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<sup>77</sup> I did not know that he had one either.

<sup>78</sup> I am assuming that this meeting takes place in the palace.

I have suggested that much of this could be a set of natural circumstances which all take place on cue. Somehow, the frogs were hosts to the lice (which I think would be unusual?); but once the frogs died, the lice had to find new hosts, which ended up being man and animals. Or perhaps this came about in a different way; or perhaps God created them suddenly, right there on the spot. However these gnats or lice came about, the description suggests that it was sudden and as if a massive invasion.

Recently I have been working out in a very rural area on a house, where there was a recent flood (the house itself did not flood, but all the ground all around it was underwater). As a result, there are mosquitoes everywhere, morning, midday, late afternoon, evening—there is no respite from these blood-sucking creatures. No matter what activity I am involved with, every 2 or 3 seconds, I am slapping a mosquito which has landed on my arm, or back or head. Multiple mosquitoes landing at any give moment is the norm. However, in Egypt, during the plague of the lice, there are very likely dozens, if not hundreds, of these little creatures landing on any one person's body at any given time. There are so many that it is impossible to swat them off. There was no escaping them.

Sometimes when I am working, I might take a rest and lay out on the lawn; but this is an impossibility where it recently flooded. I cannot even be moving about outside without becoming a host to dozens of mosquitoes. This is even more true if I stood or laid in one place for any amount of time. For the people in Egypt—there is no place they can go. They cannot lay down and sleep, because these lice or gnats are everywhere, all over them. And this affects every person in Egypt.

**Nut, the sky goddess; and Geb, god of the earth**  
(a graphic); from [Wikipedia](#); accessed April 25, 2018. Note the snake head on Geb.

This next verse tells us that it was known in the palace that Moses and Aaron had done this through their God.

Exodus 8:18a [Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not.](#)



What the religious illusionists attempted to do was to strike the ground with their rods and staffs to make the dust rise as gnats, but this particular plague was one that they could not imitate (the word *duplicate* would not be apropos because they never *duplicated* a miracle of God; they only *imitated* God's power for a less than discerning audience).

The active voice of the Hebrew reads that *the religious illusionists did in like manner*, but this is an idiom where an agent's attempt or design to do something is what is meant, although the thing was not actually done. This is not a common idiom, found only here, Deut. 28:68 and Ezek. 24:13 in the Old Testament. It is possible here that Pharaoh did not want them to put too much effort into this endeavor.

Exodus 8:18b **So there were lice on man and beast.**

As pointed out on several occasions, note how appropriate these signs and wonders are for the intended audience. God needs for this plague to permeate all of Egypt. God wants all Egyptians to know that He is at work here. Every person in Egypt recognizes this and recognizes the power of the Hebrew God. It would have taken very little time for neighbors to inform one another as to what is going on (they would all be aware of the gnats; and it would be spread about that Moses and Aaron—or their God—were the cause).

## Lesson 089: Exodus 8:16–19

## The 3<sup>rd</sup> Plague (Lice) Concludes

The narrative of the lice (gnats) is actually quite short in the Bible. It is only 4 verses long. We will complete it in this lesson.

Exodus 8:16 **So the Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the land, so that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.’”**

At some point in time, Moses spoke to God, and God was preparing him for the next plague. It appears that Moses would be the one who spoke directly to Pharaoh.

Exodus 8:17 **And they did so. For Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and struck the dust of the earth, and it became lice on man and beast. All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.**

We are not told where and when this took place. It is reasonable that this took place in public (most likely, outside of the palace), and that many people witnessed what Moses and Aaron did. It has to be reported throughout the land that Moses and Aaron, representatives of the Hebrew’s God, set this plague into motion. Things have to go from normal to under a plague, with an act of Moses and/or Aaron taking place in between.



**Aaron strikes the ground** (a graphic); from [WordPress](#); accessed December 4, 2019.

Aaron strikes the ground with his rod, and it appears as if the dust turns into lice (or gnats). The very fact that Aaron strikes *the ground* and that the dust of that ground appears to turn into lice (or gnats) would suggest that this does not take place in the palace of Pharaoh. Although we are never given a description of the inside of

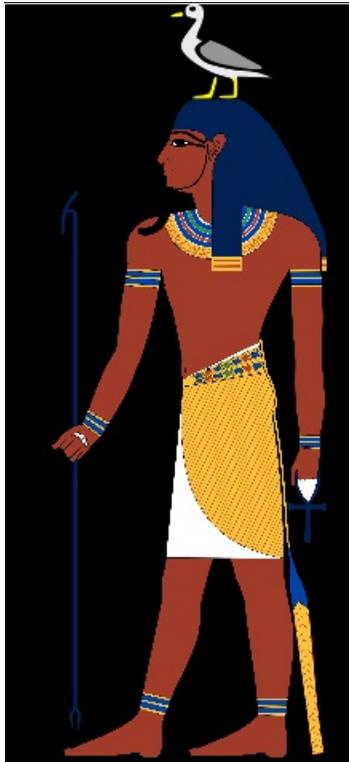
Pharaoh's palace, it only seems reasonable that the floors were not dirt (this was not the case with all buildings and homes, but surely Pharaoh's palace had flooring that was more impressive (I would assume some sort of stone—perhaps marble or granite<sup>79</sup>).

Exodus 8:18 [Now the magicians so worked with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not. So there were lice on man and beast.](#)

The palace magicians—the religious illusionists—they tried to imitate this work of God, but they could not. They will fully acknowledge this to Pharaoh.

There appears to be a full understanding that Moses and Aaron had done this and the magicians attempted to do the same thing. Interestingly enough, the magicians were unable to duplicate this particular miracle. Equally interesting is, the magicians never seem to want to counter the miracles/signs done by the hand of Moses or Aaron (something that would have been far more helpful to the palace and the people). Undoing the work of God would have been far beyond what these magicians could do, as these works of God affected all of Egypt; and the works of the magicians, at best, took place within the main room of the palace.

I do not know whether each plague targeted a specific Egyptian god or not, as many suggest. It appears that they might have. One of these gods is Geb, who rules over the earth.



**Geb — Egyptian God of the Earth** (a graphic); from [Wikipedia](#); accessed April 25, 2018. I like his pet duck.

Exodus 8:19a [Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.”](#)

The *finger* of God is obviously an anthropopathism standing for God's formidable power and that what they are seeing is an immediate and direct act of God (specifically of Moses and Aaron's God). God Himself is acknowledged by the scribes to have directly intervened with human history at this point. Here they have judged rightly.

The religious illusionists finally could not imitate one of the miracles and they realized that this was God's work. They realized before that what Moses did was superior to their "magic." They could do miracles similar to what Moses did, but they could never match the scope and intensity of what Moses did.

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<sup>79</sup> I do not know what was available in that era in Egypt; but when the Temple is built, it will have a cornerstone which is massive and a floor of stone.

We will hear about these religious illusionists one more time, in Exodus 9:11, but only enough to state that they cannot stand before Pharaoh. Their attempts to duplicate the miracles of God ends here with the 3<sup>rd</sup> plague. Because we come across them once again in Exodus 9, it is reasonable to assume that they remain very much a part of Pharaoh's inner circle or palace group. But, from this point on, they are impotent and unhelpful to Pharaoh.

When they told Pharaoh that this was truly of God, this was not what the Pharaoh wanted to hear. He was negative against this entire situation and very negative toward Israel's God. Most people can be beaten down when facing these kinds of pressures; but not Pharaoh. He fought against God's will with every bit of human strength that he had. And when he came to the end of his own human strength, God provided him with more. God did not give him the negative volition; he already had that; God simply gave him the strength to exercise it.

Several leaders who have come to the end of their rope and abilities have committed suicide, have gone insane, have left office, etc. Pharaoh of Egypt was in that situation. He was fully negative towards God but he was running out of his own human resources and strength to resist Him. When it says that God strengthened Pharaoh's heart; God simply gave Pharaoh the will, the persistence and the fortitude to go on. This is not a doctrine to worry about. Pharaoh did not believe in Moses' God, but then God took that away from him. I do not believe that God did anything to change Pharaoh's volition.

In a similar fashion, when we as Christians are at the end of our rope and beaten down, God often gives us strength to go on (not unlike the function of adrenalin in the human body). God, by giving Pharaoh the will and strength to go on, used Pharaoh's continued to express his negative volition, which helped to evangelize the world. However, God did not implant that negative volition in his soul.

Exodus 8:19b [But Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, just as the Lord had said.](#)

Whether it is of Pharaoh or God, Pharaoh's heart is strengthened. Now, I believe the idea is, the actual negative volition is within Pharaoh—he continues to resist what God has done. However, he is devastated and diminished by the things which God has done. He no longer saw the magicians as being able to duplicate God's power. Nevertheless, God gives him the strength to express his negative volition, which is his and his alone.

This illustrates just how negative, negative volition can be. Pharaoh must understand that this is God's power; and that nothing else could explain what is happening; yet he continues to resist it. In the life of our Lord, the same thing occurred—Jesus would cure a person of a lifelong illness, and it would be recognized by everyone in the immediate vicinity to be a miracle, to be a work that no one else could duplicate—yet some in His audience would still reject Him. So many times, they would then search for some minute detail in the Law which He violated (or, more accurately, a distortion which has been placed over the Law of Moses).

When you interact enough with people, it is easy to spot those who are on negative signals (either towards God or toward the laws of divine establishment). A person might be faced with a news story that appears to contradict all that he believes; and many people find this disconcerting. So they turn on MSNBC or they do a web search; and, guaranteed, there are articles available out there, places where this story is parsed, and divided up, and explained with a spin, to a point where, it very nearly means the exact opposite of what it appears to say. A person who does that is looking to strengthen his own resolve against things he does not believe; and in favor of things which they do believe. If you have ever gotten in an argument on the internet with someone (some stranger), you know that, in between comments, if a few minutes go by, they are googling until they find a story or article or meme which fits their viewpoint, and they use this in order to strengthen their own hearts; or to strengthen their resolve so that they might continue to be able to argue with you.

**Application:** Today, in United States politics, the Democrat party has adopted policies which go against their own party standards of 20 or 30 years ago. In fact, these policies are so far left and socialist, that it seems impossible to many people—including myself—that they are taken seriously. But, when a person is on negative volition towards the laws of divine establishment, they may follow a party whose ideas seem like they are from another planet. A person who rejects divine establishment (God's laws and principles which are applicable to all mankind) will adhere to crazy ideas like socialism. Such people, on negative volition, will actually justify these policy ideals, even if, 10 years ago, they would have vehemently denied them as being among their beliefs. (Do you recall the fierce denials issued when some accused Barack Obama of being a socialist?)

How exactly does Pharaoh strengthen his own heart? We do not know exactly; but he apparently gets to a point where he can deny what he has seen with his own eyes; or to a point where he can deny the implications of what he has seen. Perhaps he tells himself, "Of course there are lice all over; millions upon millions of frogs have just died. What else would we expect to happen?" However, Pharaoh's negative volition can only enjoy its full strength once a plague has been removed (even if there are remnants of that plague which remain).

Once Pharaoh has this renewed strength, he can stand in complete opposition to God again.

Exodus 8:19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." Nevertheless, Pharaoh's heart grew strong, and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had said. (I made some slight changes to the NKJV.)

This plague of the lice was covered in a very short amount of space (vv. 16–19). We do not know when Moses wrote this down or exactly what the circumstances were. It is even possible that the plague of the gnats (or lice) did not stand out in his mind.

What was most significant in this plague was, the magicians relented and admitted that what had occurred was the finger of God. Nevertheless, even with the testimony of his own magicians, Pharaoh strengthened his heart against God.

You will note that the entirety of this third plague is covered in a scant 4 verses. There are a great many details which we are not privy to; but we know what is important: Aaron did what was necessary for the plague to begin, the magicians could not duplicate the miracle (even attributing it to God), and Pharaoh is still negative towards the God of Israel.

There is no discussion as to Moses and Aaron giving Pharaoh a warning; or Pharaoh asking for the lice to be gotten rid of, etc. The plague ends and we move on to the next one. We will just move on from the testimony of Pharaoh's magicians and Pharaoh's negative volition to the next plague.

## Lesson 090: Exodus 8:20–21

## The 4<sup>th</sup> Plague: Flies (Part I)

The 3<sup>rd</sup> plague actually had very little information provided, apart from it occurring, the magicians being unable to duplicate it, and the end result being, Pharaoh still exhibiting negative volition. It was only 4 verses long and it ended abruptly.

### The Fourth Plague: Flies

We are now at the 4<sup>th</sup> plague; and some of these plagues have relatively little information. For instance, God will tell Moses and Aaron what to do in this next plague, but we will not actually observe them doing it (that is, God may tell Moses and Aaron what to do; but then their actual actions sometimes are not a part of the narrative). We simply assume, at the end of God's speaking to them, that they simply went out and did what they were told to do. Sometimes the narrative includes a warning to Pharaoh and sometimes it does not. We assume that, when these things take place, that there was a clear warning made to Pharaoh each and every time, along with a clear opportunity to submit to God's requirements—which Pharaoh never does until the final plague.

Exodus 8:20a [And the Lord said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water.](#)

Notice that God's order to Moses is for him to get up and do this. Aaron is not mentioned. The two imperative verbs are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular.

There is another detail here which is interesting. If Pharaoh felt like it, he could say, “Listen, I don't want to talk to Moses and Aaron today. Keep them out of the palace.” That might even be a standing order. However, coming to the palace formally was not the only way the Moses and Aaron could come before Pharaoh. Apparently, he took a morning swim or a morning bath; and Moses comes to him there. Even if Pharaoh varies his schedule in time or location, God knows where he will be and when Moses can go there to confront him.

Based upon this, I am assuming that, by this time, the frogs have been cleared out of the river, and the blood, or whatever, is long gone. Pharaoh is possibly cleaning whatever remains of the lice on him. So Pharaoh has seen three plagues that have now passed; and their effects are over and mostly done with. Therefore, in his own mind, he need not relent to the demands of Moses and Aaron (which are the demands of God). *That* would be the strengthening of his heart. He surveys his current circumstance—the 3 plagues are over and done with—so that he has said *no* to Moses and Aaron.

It does occur to me, *why doesn't God simply appear to Pharaoh and speak to Pharaoh and all of the people of Egypt and make these demands?* Or, God could simply kill all of the people of Egypt. However, God does not do either of those things, and for several reasons. Fundamentally, God chooses to work through man, even though we are imperfect and fallen. In generation after generation, there are men of God who God raises up and He allows for them to act on His behalf.

I have told the story before of when I was playing football in PE in 7<sup>th</sup> grade (and I was a pretty lousy player; and this was just a PE class). Ed Nagle, the team captain, who was an athlete (comparatively speaking), suddenly made me a part of the play. He told me to step over the line and he'd throw the football to me. We both knew that I would be completely open here, I was literally the last person anyone would have suspected of being a part of a play. So, I stepped over the line, Nagle put the pass dead center right on me, and I caught it for the touchdown. Furthermore, I still remember this incident to this day, some 50+ years later. This was very cool to have this experience of being a key part of a team. Now, if this is true for an ephemeral event which took place 50 years ago when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, how much more so for what God lets us accomplish in the spiritual life. God allows us parts to play in this great history of God and man. In fact, in the Church Age, this being a part of the game is available to every single believer on earth. If we are alive, then we are *in the game*. And God makes it possible for *every believer* to take part. In fact, we don't just take part; God will allow any mature believer to be a crucial part of man's history. We may not appreciate what God does through us now; but in eternity, we will each see all that God has allowed us to do in this life (for those with positive volition and for those who grow to spiritual maturity).

So many people would like to make a difference in this world. The whole global warming ruse allows people *to think* that they are somehow making a difference by somehow monitoring their CO<sub>2</sub> output. And they think that they can even be more important if they can protest someone else's CO<sub>2</sub> output. But, none of what they will do will have any real impact on this world. How many liberals are there in the United States who believe in global warming? 80 million? That entire population of dedicated ideologues will not decrease the earth's temperature a single degree.

On the other hand, we, as believers in Jesus Christ, not only have an impact, but our impact is eternal. But there is only one way to get to the point of making an impact on this world, and that is learning to think how God thinks. That comes by learning the various fundamentals of the Christian life and then doing them.

God allows to see His great grace, and we choose to do with it what we choose. I have said on many occasions that the United States is the greatest nation in the world, in human history. It is so obvious to me that God has poured out His grace and blessing on me and on this nation. Yet, many times when I have expressed this, some anti-God person will find an article on the internet which will rank nations in terms of greatness or in terms of good places to live, and, invariably, the United States will rank 9<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup>. Articles like this are absolutely absurd. Interestingly enough, this same person will not move to any of the countries in the top 5—everyone wants to move to the United States; virtually no one wants to leave. But these fake surveys will provide enough justification to such people to think, “There is no God and God has not blessed the United States. That is a myth.” This is despite the fact that there has never been a greater nation on this earth; or a more blessed nation.

God gives us this free will. Even though we have overwhelming evidence for this or that, we still choose what we want to believe. Our free will is very real and it can overcome all arguments, all logic, and all visual evidence.

Let me give the simplest of examples. Virtually everyone knows that the United States government does few things well. At this point in our history, we have gone 10 years without a proper budget (I write this in 2019). One healthcare reform was written, filled with politically correct mandates (which have, therefore, driven the price of healthcare insurance sky high). Yet, given the fact that the government always overspends on its projects, politicizes everything they do, and works out ways to somehow move taxpayer money into their own pockets—there is still a significant number of people who want our federal government to run the healthcare industry. An honest and objective person can see that, even if healthcare for all would be a worthy goal, our government is simply not the vehicle to deliver on such a goal. We have example after example of government incompetence, corruption, and overspending. At the same time, we have examples of medical procedures untouched by government which are inexpensive and continually advance (laser eye surgery for one example). Or, to take this out of the emotional realm of medicine and look at, for instance, big screen tv’s. The government has little or no fingerprints on this entertainment medium; and every year, the screens get larger and better and cheaper. Can you imagine the cost and quality if government decided to provide every household with an entertainment center?

My original point, lest it be lost, is that, it does not matter if there is abundant evidence for this or that thing; a person who does not want to believe it is not going to believe it. So, no matter what Pharaoh sees and lives, he will remain negative towards the God of Moses and Aaron.

Exodus 8:20b *Then say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: **Let My people go, that they may serve Me.***

God tells Moses, *You [specifically] will say to him...* God uses the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect. Moses is going to continue to meet up with Pharaoh, and it appears that he will be doing all of the speaking.

What God requires is what Moses is to say to Pharaoh. This has been said twice so far: “Send My people out of Egypt so that they may serve Me”; and these words have probably said each and every time Moses and Aaron stand before Pharaoh. Moses is to speak as if God is speaking to Pharaoh.

In this verse, as often has been the case, God has told Moses what to say. Both he and Aaron are now stationing themselves as Pharaoh goes out presumably to bathe.

Exodus 8:20 *And the Lord said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water. Then say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: Let My people go, that they may serve Me.’* (The NKJV format has been slightly altered.)

As a result of all that happens, every person in Egypt—every Egyptian, every Hebrew, rich or poor, no matter what their life—will be allowed to make a series of decisions, for or against God; for or against God’s plan. I believe that what they all saw was overwhelming evidence of God’s power; and yet, many, to the very end, continue to resist God and His power. The same will be true during Jesus’ public ministry. Jesus did things that no man had ever done before; along with healings numbering far more than had ever happened in human history. People saw healings of the sick and disabled who had suffered for all or most of their lives. Nevertheless, a considerable number of eyewitnesses chose not to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah of God.

Exodus 8:21a *Or else, if you will not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants, on your people and into your houses.* I have used italics to indicate that we are in 3 levels of quotation. God is speaking to Moses; God is telling Moses what to say; and God has Moses quote Him.

We do not know the exact nature of this insect. R. B. Thieme, Jr. interprets these as golden scarabs; beetles which are often found in the tombs of the Egyptians. They would go through several disgusting stages, as most insects do. Wilson pictures these insects as the dog-fly, which penetrates the skin and draws blood. I personally would not be surprised if this turned out to be a generic term and Egypt was invaded by several types of flying insects. The term gnat itself is a very imprecise term, which takes under its wing, so to speak, several species of insects. It could have been a hoard of insects. Some apparently are capable of flying and it may be that some of them dwell on the ground (meaning either a different species or the same species at a different stage of growth).

Exodus 8:21b *The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand.*

The 4<sup>th</sup> plague would also affect all of Egypt. There would be massive swarms of flies (or gnats or some kind of flying insect) throughout Egypt, all over the people and filling up their houses. There is nowhere that these people can go, step, or move to be away from these flying insects. There is no place a person might go to escape them.

Exodus 8:21 *Or else, if you will not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand.*

The people of Egypt will be inundated with some sort of flying insect. Just like the previous plagues, there was virtually no way to avoid this plague—it would infect every home and farm in Egypt.

For the 4<sup>th</sup> time, Pharaoh and every Egyptian is seeing objective proof of the power of the God of Israel. In fact, all 4 times, they cannot escape God's power. And yet, Pharaoh will continue to be negative (after a plague has been removed), and the people do not storm Pharaoh's palace, demanded that he give into the God of the Hebrews.

Interestingly enough, this time, God does something which is a twist. This marks a dramatic change from the previous 3 plagues.

## Lesson 091: Exodus 8:20–23

## The 4<sup>th</sup> Plague: Flies (Part II)

We have begun the 4<sup>th</sup> plague:

Exodus 8:20 *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve Me.*

Although we are not told each and every time how Moses and Aaron found Pharaoh; we are told a few times that he could be found early in the morning in the Nile (or wherever he would swim/bathe). We may reasonably assume that on many occasions, Pharaoh did not really want a confrontation with Moses.

Exodus 8:21 *Or else, if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants and your people, and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand.* (ESV; capitalized and italicized)

As God often did with each plague, Pharaoh was given a clear warning first (these warnings are not always recorded).

Exodus 8:22a *And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell,...*

This time, there is a change. In the previous three plague, both Israel and Egypt were subject to the same discomfort—which was terrific. However, this time, the flies of the 4<sup>th</sup> plague would not swarm Goshen, where the Hebrew people lived. God was setting His people apart from all the Egyptians.

The verb found here is *pâlâh* (פָּלַח) [pronounced *paw-LAW*], which means, *to make separate, to make distinct, to cause to be distinguished; to set apart*. Strong's #6395 BDB #811. This is one of the most important words in the Old Testament. God is all about separating people into groups. The people of Israel would be made completely distinct from the people of Egypt.

In the first, sentence, the final verb is not the verb for *live* or *dwell* as we find in most translations, but it is the Qal active participle of 'amad (עָמַד) [pronounced *gaw-MAD*], which means *to stand, to take a stand*. In the Qal active participle, it can act as a verbal noun, modifying *people* with the word *standing*. More literally, this reads: *I have made a distinction this day in the land of Goshen, where My people are standing...* Or, this could be understood to mean, *where My people are taking a stand*. There is an implication here that these people were not long for this land. They are not dwelling in the land; they are standing upon the land. Before moving on, a person must stand up first.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> plague, we have a break in routine. This time, the Jews are not subjected to the plague. God, in showing His power and control, did not inflict the land of Goshen with this insect. Whereas one could think that the advent of this insect is a purely natural consequence of having a great many great stinking piles of dead frogs, it is unquestionably miraculous that the Hebrews, living almost side-by-side with the Egyptians, were not subject to this same plague of flying insects. They enjoyed a wall of fire; an invisible wall of protection which all Christians have. We have no clue as to the number of ills that God protects us from. Also, such speculations must take into consideration our spiritual worth and spiritual growth—Satan desired to sift Peter like wheat and he would have, had God allowed it. However, God provided Peter with protection that, apart from that particular quote of our Lord's, he (and we) may not have been cognizant. We are God's children as believers and God, when He is not forced by our actions and deeds to discipline us, does what every loving parent would do—He protects us; He isolates us from those who would do us harm. Of, if you want a technical Bible term, God *sets us apart* from others. This is why a believer can exist in the midst of an economic depression and be rich; he can live during severe oppression, and be spiritually provided for; he can exist during severe natural disasters and receive God's personal protection. We saw this kind of protection for Noah and his family in the ark and we see it here with God's people, the sons of Abraham.

So there is no misunderstanding, this does not mean that each and every mature believer is exempted from all problems and all crises. But, no matter what the situation, God looks out for His Own.

One of the most important aspects of a believer's day-to-day life is taking in Bible doctrine. Where I was living at the time I was saved, there were many churches, but good and accurate teaching was quite sparse. I recall hearing the teaching of R. B. Thieme, Jr. (and also, a taper's church had just recently been formed where I lived), so I church-shopped for a month or so, dropping in on a new church each Sunday morning, hoping to find a pastor as dedicated to teaching as Bob was. At that time, quite frankly, I did not know any better. I just assumed that such a church existed. Well, the taper's church did exist, which I attended regularly, having given up on the idea of finding a doctrinal church; and about

six years after I was saved, I found myself in Houston and attending Berachah Church (more specifically, an FX group—where a small number of us would be able to hear the service as it was taking place). My point in this personal story is, God knew that I was positive towards Bible doctrine; and God worked out things where I would end up in the promised land (aka, Houston, TX), attending Berachah in person. Interestingly enough, God worked things out to where my only reasonable option, at that time in my life, was moving to Houston (not something that I really wanted to do). God recognizes positive volition and He makes accommodation for it.

What has happened here is, we have come to a point where the Hebrew people did not need to see any more plagues in order to believe. You might say, *they got it, they understood and believed*. Even though the text does not tell us this specifically, we may reasonably assume that they did not need to experience more of these plagues first-hand in order to follow Moses. We may surmise this from the fact that, in the end, all Israel followed Moses out of Egypt (also, it appears that, when Moses and Aaron gave the people instructions for the first Passover, they followed those instructions).

Exodus 8:22a *And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell,...*

No doubt, this would make us ask, *why did God subject His people to these previous plagues?* Let me suggest that God is showing all of Egypt His power; and that the sons of Israel needed to see these things as much as the Egyptians did. You may recall that the first time that Moses and Aaron spoke to Pharaoh, Pharaoh subjected the people of Israel to a little pressure, and they could not disown Moses fast enough.

Later, we will find out that these sons of Israel are quite difficult to guide, and that they will rebel against Moses and against God for the next 40 years. Making them subject to the first 3 plagues (along with the many other signs that God will do) is enough to convince them to leave Egypt and to trust God for limited periods of time. However, the Exodus generation does not always trust God and, in general, they will rebel time and time again against Moses.

In any case, to this point, these 3 plagues are enough to cause them to have faith in their God. God does not need to expose them directly to the subsequent plagues (that is, not until we come to the final plague).

It is quite fascinating that, with this plague, we have the most mobile of all plagues—insects which can fly. So, there is not really a logical reason for the insects to not cross over the border from Egyptian Egypt into Hebrew Egypt (that is, Goshen). These very mobile flies remain within the confines of Egypt, not going over into Goshen (which was the region where the Hebrew people had been separated).

Exodus 8:22a-b *And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there,...*

I don't believe that this change is arbitrary. I don't think that God just decided, "Maybe I am being too hard on Israel." I suspect that, with this change there was also a change in the thinking of the people of Israel. Do you recall the first time that Moses and Aaron spoke to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh then put heavy burdens upon the Hebrew slaves? They were not very happy about this and they were mad at Moses and Aaron. Let me suggest at this point, the Hebrew people have come around. They recognized that this was from their God; and that many of them (or all of them) believed in their God as a result. Furthermore, they had trust in God's point men, who are Moses and Aaron.

One of the things which is clear is, Christians—even those with a modicum of doctrine—tend to be more stable and more happy than their unbelieving counterparts. It is hard for me to think of a better life than the one that God has given me. And I fully understand that my life is undeserved and that I am quite imperfect.

Such a thing could be studied and reported, but, for the most part, it is not. Further, there is a lifestyle which can be found in the Bible—even apart from being a believer—and that lifestyle (adhering to the laws of divine establishment) can be shown statistically to make the person adhering to these laws far more healthy and happy. But such things are generally ignored in our society.

There is great unhappiness, depression and suicide, for instance, in the LGBTQ community. It is quite pronounced with homosexuals and transgenders. It is an unpleasant lifestyle, and the promise that *it gets better* is a lie. Drug use is far more prevalent among this group, as is suicide and alcoholism—all strong indicators that a person is very unhappy with life as it is.

The people of Goshen would have been far happier had they simply *gotten with the program*. That is, fully trusted in God and in God's representatives. The application to today is quite simple: God's people (believers) will be much happier if they trust in God—which means, trust His Word—and trust His representatives (which would be well-qualified pastor-teachers). Now, this cannot be just any pastor-teacher. The key is, a pastor-teacher who is well-trained and who focuses on the Word of God. A pastor teaching a 20 minute sermon twice a week is not doing his job. A church where the focus is not upon the Word of God can be passed by. Just as in marriage, believers get to *choose* where they go to church and therefore choose to whom they subject themselves (and far too many Christians choose a pastor whose authority they reject).

Exodus 8:22 *And in that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there, in order that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the land.*

Here, in the context of this next plague, God separates out His people. The Egyptians will be subject to the judgment of the flies; the Hebrews would not. I would speculate that all of the Egyptians and all of the Hebrews knew this—they could see with their own eyes what was happening. Remember, these are the words that Moses was to say, quoting

God. So, this information would have gotten around and, no doubt, people would have checked to see if this were true.

This would have been announced to Pharaoh and his staff; and there may have developed an information outlet from members of Pharaoh's staff to the people of Egypt. All of their friends and family would be aware of what was going on and they would gather up as much information as possible and broadcast it themselves.

Exodus 8:23a *I will make a difference between My people and your people.*

*My people* refers to the Hebrews (God's people) and *your people* refers to the Egyptians (Pharaoh's people). God differentiates between His people Israel and the people of Egypt. We understand the meaning here more by context than by the words used. First of all, the verb is, *sîym* (שׂיַם) [pronounced *seem*], which means, *to put, to place, to set; to make; to appoint*. Strong's #7760 BDB #962. This is a very common word. So God is placing something between the two peoples.

What God places between the two peoples is a fairly rare word (it only occurs 4x in the Old Testament), and it is usually translated *redemption* rather than *difference, distinction*. However, this is not the common word for *redemption* nor is it found in enough places to fix its meaning. There is a verb which may be related to the noun here, and that verb is found quite a number of times in the OT (nearly 60 times). That verb is *pâdâh* (פָּדָה) [pronounced *paw-DAWH*], which means, *to ransom, to purchase, to redeem; to let go [set free]; to preserve, to deliver [from danger]; to sever*. Strong's #6299 BDB #804. So we will accept this particular meaning of *distinction* here, as the root meaning of the verbal cognate is *to sever*. The relationship between the meanings, *redeem, purchase* and *sever* being, when something is redeemed (or, *purchased*), it is, by that act of redemption, separated (severed) from the things which were not redeemed. This separation or division is based upon redemption; God has redeemed His people; and by this purchase, God has separated His people.

Exodus 8:23b *Tomorrow this sign shall be.' "*

Although, in context, God is speaking to Moses (at this moment in the narrative); these are the exact words which Moses would use in order to communicate to Pharaoh about what would happen. Moses and Aaron would show up on one day to make this announcement; and, on the next day, there would be this invasion of a massive number of flies.

This suggests that the proliferation of swarming insects took some time. It did not just happen instantly. For that reason, I lean toward this being more of a natural process rather than a miracle (where the flies are created out of nothing and suddenly appear). The circumstances of a miracle would mean right then, the moment that Aaron pounded the ground with his staff, that the swarming insects would have infiltrated everything and everywhere (except for Goshen) in a matter of minutes or a few hours. Instead, Moses told Pharaoh what was going to happen. Therefore, they would all go to sleep that night and, the next morning, all Egypt will be subjected to a thick invasion of these flies.

In this 4<sup>th</sup> plague, God warned that Egypt would be invaded with a massive number of flies (we really do not know what kind). At this point in the narration, God is speaking to Moses.

Exodus 8:23 *I will make a difference between My people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall be.’ ”*

There are actually three major changes with this plague: (1) this is the first time that the notion of separation is mentioned. (2) The first three plagues were extreme inconveniences and quite offensive to all the senses; however, this 4<sup>th</sup> plague begins a series of plagues which are painful as well (I am making the assumption that these were insects with a bite). (3) The plague was not instantaneous, occurring at the moment that Moses announced. Moses would announce the plague, when it would happen, and then he will leave. I am assuming that this allowed Moses to go into Goshen to stay, where he would not be pestered by these flies.

In vv. 20–23, God is speaking directly to Moses and Aaron. However, as is the case in each of these plagues, we don’t have, *and Moses and Aaron left the presence of God; and the next morning, Moses and Aaron tracked down Pharaoh while taking his morning bath and say to him*, etc. We go directly from God telling Moses and Aaron about the plague; the meeting with Pharaoh being understood to have already happened. Throughout a recounting of these plagues, many literary shortcuts are taken to move the action along.

Moses did go and speak to Pharaoh, when he came out from his swim (or bath) in the Nile (I am assuming that is where he was). Moses, quoting God, told Pharaoh what he was in for next. Moses told Pharaoh what was going to happen, and, apparently, he and Aaron then walked away.

Exodus 8:24a *And the Lord did so.*

Moses and Aaron did what God instructed them to do; then God did what He had promised that He would do.

Exodus 8:24b *Thick swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh, into his servants’ houses, and into all the land of Egypt.*

This was different from the previous plagues because both Israel and Egypt were similarly affected by the plague. However, this time—and for all subsequent plagues—God distinguishes between Egypt and Israel (save for the final plague). This would be a phenomenon viewed from both inside Goshen (where the Hebrews lived) and outside Goshen.

Each plague would have shut Egypt down. First the blood in the water—Pharaoh and the people would have done everything possible to solve that problem. Then the frogs which

covered the land—no one was able to function normally with these frogs. They could not eat or sleep for the number of frogs. Then there were the gnats—again, Egypt would have been shut down—there was nothing of normal life—even just eating and sleeping—which could be accomplished in that nation during any of those 3 plagues.

You will recall the first time that Moses and Aaron spoke to Pharaoh, and there was no judgment pronounced by God—God allowed Pharaoh to respond to His demands without any pressure. However, Pharaoh himself pronounced a judgment over the people of Israel, his slaves. Pharaoh made life impossible for the Hebrew people. However, once God began these plagues/judgments, that brought everything to a halt. There was no slavery; there was no building, no construction, no more normal life. Until Pharaoh capitulated to the demands of God, normal life was over for Egypt.

This 4<sup>th</sup> plague is very similar to the first 3, inasmuch as, these flies made normal life impossible. The Egyptians cannot eat, they cannot store food, they cannot have drinks, without flies being everywhere. They would be unable to sleep or function in any normal way, because they are surrounded by flies. Egyptians had no safe spaces anywhere. However, all of Goshen was safe. They did not suffer this same invasion of flies.

Exodus 8:24c [The land was corrupted because of the swarms of flies.](#)

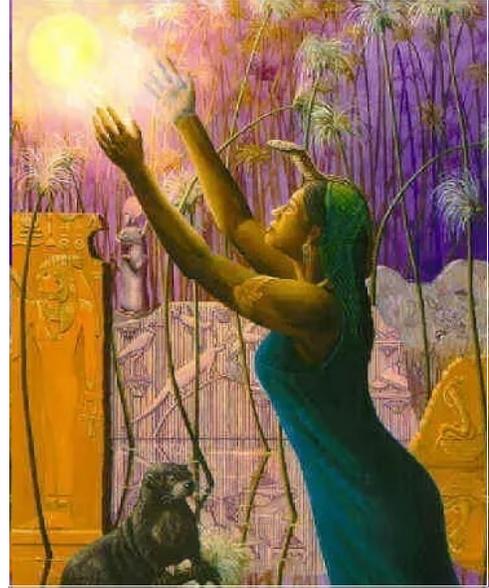
This was far more than an inconvenience. Shâchath (שָׁחַת) [pronounced *shaw-KHATH*] means *to go to ruin, to destroy, to corrupt*. We saw this verb used in Gen. 6 when it spoke of all flesh becoming corrupted. This verb is in the Niphil imperfect, 3<sup>rd</sup> feminine singular; meaning the subject is the word *land* and the Niphal stem is the passive stem, meaning that this corruption was done to the land. The imperfect tense means that this destruction is viewed as an ongoing process. When it says that the land was laid waste by this fly, it means that this judgment again disrupted completely all production of any kind. They could not farm, build, sell, or buy. Egypt was shut down as a thriving nation in one day due to the vicious attack of this blood sucking insect (I am assuming that it was a blood-sucking insect).

Therefore, in this narrative, we are in the midst of the flying, (possibly stinging) insect proliferation throughout the land of Egypt. And yet, this plague does not touch the Hebrew people living in Goshen. We are dealing with a very mobile pest—these are flying insects—yet they do not fly into Goshen.

Exodus 8:24 [And the Lord did so. Thick swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh, into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt. The land was corrupted because of the swarms of flies.](#)

There was no place within Egypt that was safe from these flies.

**The Goddess Uatchit** (a graphic); from [Quora](#); accessed April 25, 2018. *She is the Lady of the marshes where papyrus grows and many insects live. The Goddess Uatchit is depicted with wings and she wears a cobra symbol on her head like the Pharaohs did.*<sup>80</sup> Whatever her powers and authority were, the Egyptians found that she was no help to them regarding these flies.



Although, no country has hosted such an invasion since the time of Moses and Pharaoh, we have had some relatively small and concentrated incidents which help us to understand what Egypt went through.

**Fish flies descend on Windsor, Ontario** (a photograph); from [CTV News](#); accessed December 11, 2019. This may give us a rough idea of what the Egyptians faced.

From the news article: *Like scenes from a biblical plague, lakeside communities in some parts of Canada are being swarmed by insects.*

*They might not be the locusts of the Book of Exodus, but the fish flies blanketing one city had baseball players fleeing. Young athletes in Windsor, Ont., were mid-play Monday night when the game was called off. The bright lights of the diamond attracted a swarm of fish flies, also called may flies, interfering with play.*



*The insects are an annual occurrence in communities near the water, carpeting streets and covering beaches from Winnipeg to Ontario. The popular Pelee Island ferry in Ontario was docked over the weekend after an infestation.*<sup>81</sup>

## Why don't Egyptians simply flock to Goshen?

<sup>80</sup> From [Quora](#); accessed April 25, 2018.

<sup>81</sup> From [CTV News](#); accessed December 11, 2019.

Let me offer up a simple question: if there are flies among the Egyptians and no flies among the Hebrew people, why didn't the Egyptians simply step over the dividing line into Goshen and stay there? The Egyptians would not because they were functioning under negative volition. They were negative towards God and His judgments and His people. To try to take up temporary residence in Goshen would be to admit that their God is real, that He is powerful and that He does what He says He will do. They cannot admit that; they cannot believe that. It is not just Pharaoh who is negative to the Hebrew people and resistant to their God.

Similarly, how can an angry unbeliever who is unhappy with his life not know to step into a church or listen to an evangelist to see if maybe there is a better way? They are on negative signals towards God and to the plan of God. The unbeliever who goes on positive signals—when he is finally completely unhappy with his life—may approach you, may come to your church, or may listen to the gospel message in some other way. This would be analogous to the Egyptian walking into the land of Goshen, finding a familiar Hebrew face and asking, “Can I bunk here with you guys for awhile?”

As an aside, many of us came from a life of unhappiness and frustration and we turned to God for that reason. There are believers who were saved at a very young age, and they did not have this experience. But there are believers like myself, saved in our teens or 20's or later; and part of our motivation was that, we could see just how much we had screwed up our own lives.

Furthermore, the believer with doctrine, who has a modicum of introspection, can see just how much of the current negative energy in our own lives (that is, unhappiness, disappointments, frustration) is clearly attributable to our own bad decisions as believers (yes, believers—even believers with doctrine—still make plenty of bad decisions).

My point in all of this is, there are people today who are very aware of the message of Jesus and have heard it many times; and also, they recognize that they have messed up their own lives. Do they take the next logical step and go into a church, speak with a Christian friend or read the Bible? That all depends upon whether they are on positive or negative signals. If they are negative towards God, they may even be able to see that dividing line between Goshen and Egypt, between God's blessing and God's cursing, and yet, they will not step over that line.

Back to our narrative. The flies—who represent God's 4<sup>th</sup> judgment against Egypt—have made life unbearable for the people of Egypt.

At this point in the narrative, we suddenly go from the plague itself to Pharaoh calling Moses and Aaron in to make a deal. Pharaoh, at least temporarily, gives in to God's demands.

Exodus 8:25a [Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron,...](#)

These flies made life in Egypt impossible. Furthermore, given the previous plagues, Pharaoh probably has very little resistance left. These plagues have made eating and sleeping pretty much impossible. How do you prepare a meal, if you are surrounded by thousands of flies, who are coming at you from every direction? How do you sleep if there are flies everywhere, and there is no way to keep them away?

This time, Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh is ready to make a deal; he is ready to give in to their God. He cannot eat or sleep; he is living the most abnormal lifestyle imaginable, along with everyone else in Egypt.

Pharaoh's life is so unbearable, that he finds that he must call Moses and Aaron in, to take away these flies. And there is only one way for that to happen, and that is for Pharaoh to acquiesce to the demands of their God.

Exodus 8:25b ...and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God in the land."

Pharaoh, for a moment, seemingly surrenders to this 4<sup>th</sup> plague; he tells Moses and Aaron to sacrifice to their God in the land (meaning, not away from the Egyptians, but in the land where they lived). This was the wrong thing to say. God has no plans for Israel to make sacrifices to Him in the corrupt land of Egypt. Remember one of the most important words in the age of Israel is, *separation, being set apart*. In order to properly worship their God, the Hebrew people must be completely separated from Egypt.

Pharaoh relents and tells Moses that the people can go and sacrifice to God, but he adds these words, *in the land*, referring to the land of Egypt (obviously, within Goshen). Pharaoh is going to allow them to worship, but they are not going out into the desert-wilderness.

When Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and submitted to God, this does not mean that Pharaoh has recognized their God as the God of the universe; as he still calls Y<sup>e</sup>howah "your God." He does not realize that Y<sup>e</sup>howah is his God also; the God who could damn him to an eternal, living hell.

Furthermore, what Pharaoh is not offering total capitulation. He will allow the Hebrew people to make sacrifices to God in the land of Egypt. God is expecting the Hebrews to completely separate themselves from Egypt and the Pharaoh will not allow that. This is a position of compromise. Pharaoh is refusing to allow the Israelites to completely separate from Egypt. God has told them to break this bond with Egypt and Pharaoh is maintaining this bond. God has told Moses to lead the Israelites out of the land and Pharaoh is trying to modify this command. The two basic problems are compromise and separation. The first is illustrated in 1Sam. 15:3,9,13-15,19-23, the second by 2Cor. 6:14-18.

Exodus 8:25 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God in the land."

The three days' journey into the desert-wilderness has always been a part of God's demand (Exodus 3:18) and repeated to Pharaoh is Exodus 5:3. This demand was likely repeated each and every time that Moses stood before Pharaoh; but there is no reason to repeat it every time within the recorded narrative.

Exodus 8:26a **And Moses said, "It is not right to do so,...**

You will note that Moses continues speaking directly to Pharaoh, without speaking to Aaron to tell him what to say to Pharaoh.

Moses immediately understood what Pharaoh was saying.

I have interpreted this to mean that, *this is not what God told us to do*. Even without looking at other translations, I know that other translators will have completely different ways of interpreting this.

### **Lesson 093: Exodus 8:24–28**

### **The 4<sup>th</sup> Plague: Flies Part IV**

During the 4<sup>th</sup> plague, the plague of the flies, the interruption to normal living was far greater than Pharaoh or the people could endure.

Exodus 8:24 **And the Lord did so [He sent the flies to Egypt as He had promised]. Thick swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh, into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt. The land was corrupted because of the swarms of flies.**

The flies were found in all of Egypt, but they did not disturb the people of Israel, who lived in Goshen (Exodus 8:22–23).

Pharaoh gave in, but not completely.

Exodus 8:25 **Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God in the land."**

The problem with Pharaoh giving in is the final phrase, *in the land*. Pharaoh had relented, willing to allow the people of Israel to worship their God. But, he is not allowing them to leave the land that they are in.

Moses then explains why the people of Israel must not sacrifice their animals to Y<sup>e</sup>howah within the boundaries of Egypt.

Exodus 8:26a-b **And Moses said, "It is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God.**

Moses sees clearly that the issue is one of separation. The Jews must be completely separated away from the Egyptians. The Egyptians see the sacrificial system demanded

by God—the blood sacrifices—as pagan and an abomination. If the Hebrew people communed with God and offered animal sacrifices, it would totally offend the sensibilities of the Egyptians.

*The NET Bible: U. Cassuto (Exodus, 109) says there are two ways to understand “the abomination of the Egyptians.” One is that the sacrifice of the sacred animals would appear an abominable thing in the eyes of the Egyptians, and the other is that the word “abomination” could be a derogatory term for idols – we sacrifice what is an Egyptian idol. So that is why he says if they did this the Egyptians would stone them.<sup>82</sup>*

Since there is a standing request to allow the Jewish people to make sacrifices to their God, and this claim that Jewish worship would be abominable to the Egyptians, this suggests to me that they have not been making these sacrifices for awhile. Whether they simply allowed their worship to lapse under pressure or if Egypt outlawed such worship, we do not know. Having allowed Y<sup>e</sup>howah worship to lapse would be keeping with the character of this generation of Israelites. Outlawing their worship would be in keeping with the sensibilities of the Egyptians and the autocratic nature of the pharaohs.

An interesting aspect of the initial chapters of Exodus is, if you read them carefully, God heard the cries of His people, but it is not clear that the Hebrew people were crying out to God. My point being, the people of Israel at this point in time did not necessarily enjoy a close relationship with their God. However, with the beginning of this 4<sup>th</sup> judgment, the Hebrew people are not under judgment. This would suggest that, after 3 plagues, the sons of Israel, at minimum, believed in their God. They did not require any additional pressure.

Exodus 8:26a-b *And Moses said, “It is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God.*

There was actually a reason why the Israelites were separated from the Egyptians which appears to have been initiated by the Pharaoh of Egypt who brought them into the country. These men were shepherds, and Joseph, when speaking to his brothers, made it very clear to them that they were not to lie or exaggerate what their professions were. “You are all shepherds; make certain that Pharaoh knows you are shepherds,” he told them.

Although there is no discussion as to what this was about, the sons of Jacob were given their own territory in Egypt, but placed in a region separate from the Egyptians. I believe that the problem was, the Egyptians were not very keen on flocks of sheep and lambs; so they allowed Israel to live in its own land, separate from the Egyptians. It is clear by some of the plagues that the Egyptians ate meat and they did have their own livestock. We do not know if their problem with the Hebrews was the kind of livestock or the numbers. We do not know if their sacrifices to God were problematic to the Egyptians (that seems very likely). However, back in the book of Genesis, the issue appeared to be that they were

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<sup>82</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?exo8.htm> (footnote); accessed June 25, 2017.

shepherds (remember that this is 400 years later, so there may have been changes in Egyptian culture).

Moses attempts to reason with Pharaoh about offering up animal sacrifices in the land.

Exodus 8:26c *If we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us?*

This suggests that, at some point in time, when the Israelites offered up sacrificial animals, that this so appalled the Egyptians that they executed the people of Israel for doing that. Furthermore, Egypt likely outlawed animal sacrifice. These are logical but speculative assertions.

Exodus 8:26 *And Moses said, "It is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. If we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us?"*

What Moses is doing is trying to explain to Pharaoh, from a shared understanding, just why this would not work. This is not an explanation given to Moses from God. The Egyptians had a lot of deities and there were a lot of animals that they would not sacrifice. Seeing the Hebrews making all these animal sacrifices presumably would have disturbed them. This should not be difficult for us to understand. If you went to your local church and the pastor, at the front of the church, sliced open a lamb's throat and let it bleed into the baptismal, you might walk out right then and there. Probably half of the congregation, including the meat eaters, would lodge complaints with several different organizations or governmental agencies. If you understand it from that point of view, then you can understand why a different culture would not want to view such a thing.

There was certainly no religious freedom in Egypt; and Moses is not stating worse case scenario here or exaggerating; as he has been a part of the Egyptian culture. Logically, what he describes here to Pharaoh is an accurate assessment—there would be no reason for him to make an illogical or overstated argument to Pharaoh.

Did the Egyptians find the animal sacrifices to be offensive? That seems likely. Since Moses knows the Egyptian culture, we may reasonably assume that Moses' assessment here is correct. Pharaoh appears to offer no counter argument.

Moses then tells Pharaoh what is acceptable to his God:

Exodus 8:27 *We will go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as He will command us."*

Moses reiterates the demand—God requires a 3-day journey into the desert-wilderness; and there the people will sacrifice to their God, as He has commanded them. This is what God required before; and this continues to be what He requires.

Pharaoh has already told Moses, “You can sacrifice your animals, but you must remain within the land of Egypt.” Moses responds by saying, “You know that a 3-day journey away from the land was *always* a requirement from God. Our God does not compromise; He does not make deals with you.”

All that Moses has told Pharaoh was required by God; it was not up for negotiation or modification.

Moses has learned from the short experience in the desert with the failure to circumcise his son, that there can be no compromise. It is either God's way or it is not done. Moses does not see Pharaoh's compromise offer as being a step in the right direction. It is not what God commanded him.

Unfortunately, in his interaction with Moses, Pharaoh mistakenly thinks that there may be some room here to arbitrate. He thinks that he and Moses are now negotiating the terms. He seems unaware that there is no give and take here. The Hebrew people have been mandated by God to go into the desert and worship and there is no half-way ground whereupon Moses can settle. Moses cannot say, “Let me go speak to my Supervisor,” and then leave the room for awhile.

In our lives and our world, we find many places to compromise—and sometimes, that is even a good thing—but God has a specific plan, and any deviation from that is problematic. This is particularly true of God's relationship with Israel in that dispensation.

Exodus 8:28a [So Pharaoh said, “I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness;...”](#)

At first, it appears that Pharaoh is giving in to what Moses has demanded. It appears that he understands what the conditions are. But then, he begins to place his own limitations on what Moses and his people might do:

Exodus 8:28b [...only you shall not go very far away.](#)

Pharaoh continues to attempt to strike a bargain with Moses. The Israelites may leave and go into the desert-wilderness, but not 3-days into it.

Pharaoh is looking for some kind of compromise here. Although he is not specific, what he means here is, *not a full 3-day journey; that's too far!*

One of the problems is, Moses has been sent by God to Pharaoh to speak to Pharaoh, but only to specify what God requires. Moses has not been given any bargaining power, God has *never* told Moses, “Listen, if he offers this, come back with this counteroffer.”

My guess is, Pharaoh was not really sure how to take Moses and Aaron; and how he should accept them. Did they really speak for their God? I think, at times, Pharaoh is

leaning in that direction. But, bear in mind, Pharaoh strengthens his heart, over and over again, against their God. This is despite the miracles/signs/judgments which he has seen.

It is like the person who hears a point of view, different from his own, and he seriously considers it—maybe only for a few seconds, but he thinks about it. I believe that is where Pharaoh is right now. But he will snap back to full-blown negative volition.

Pharaoh also makes this request:

Exodus 8:28d [Intercede for me.](#)”

Pharaoh asks for Moses to intercede for him. “You talk to God; He must be reasonable; so you tell Him what I am willing to agree to.” Pharaoh wants Moses to act as an intermediary between God and Pharaoh. I will take this at face value, that Pharaoh seems to recognize that Moses is speaking to a god, at minimum. The other approach is for Pharaoh to be humoring Moses, by asking for him to intercede, when Pharaoh simply wants him to make a deal with himself (I am suggesting that Pharaoh may not have believed Moses interacting with God, despite all of the accompanying signs).

Although we can theorize as to Pharaoh’s motivation, despite what he says here, his motivation is not quite clear. Pharaoh appears to believe that Moses has the power, regarding these judgments. Whether he fully buys into Moses as representing God (or a god), it appears that he does.

Pharaoh uses the Hiphil imperative of ‘âthar (אָתַר) [pronounced *gaw-THAR*]. The Hiphil is the causative stem. The Hiphil imperative meanings for this verb are, *make supplication, plead, entreat; be entreated for anyone*. Strong’s #6279 BDB #801. Pharaoh uses the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural here, because he is not certain who is in charge at this point, Moses or Aaron (or the two of them together). What Pharaoh appears to want right now is the removal of the insects.

Interestingly enough, Pharaoh asks for personal relief; he does not ask for relief for his entire country. Although the entire country would receive relief, Pharaoh simply appears to be focused upon himself. Again, we try to ascertain as much as we can of Pharaoh’s motivations, based upon the words that he uses and their morphology.

It occurs to me, if Pharaoh, despite all of his negative volition, is asking Moses (and Aaron) to intercede on his behalf and to pray to his God to remove the bothersome insects, is that not, in itself, a form of faith in the Revealed God? Let me quickly add to this that, a person can exercise saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and then lead a really lousy life after exercising the initial faith.

There are times when Pharaoh appears to recognize God's power and Moses and Aaron's ties to the living God. Here, Pharaoh asks, at the end of this conversation, for Moses and Aaron to make entreaty on his behalf. That is, he is requesting Moses to ask God to

remove these flies. Obviously, he does not want these sons of Jacob to go into the desert and leave him there in Egypt with the plague of the flies still raging.

Exodus 8:28 So Pharaoh said, “I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Intercede for me.”

Based upon my read of the material, and since this is the 4<sup>th</sup> plague, I believe that Pharaoh is taking this situation seriously. I don't think that he looks upon Moses and Aaron as charlatans or fakes; but as men with great powers or with a connection with a powerful god—I would think this describes Pharaoh's thoughts at minimum.

Does Pharaoh recognize Moses as having a relationship with the God? I don't believe that Pharaoh is yet conceding the Moses is connected to *the God*. Pharaoh, like many religions today, may not even recognize that such a God exists. However Pharaoh perceives the God of Moses to be, Moses' God is certainly more powerful than the gods of Egypt (and, obviously, way more powerful than his own magicians). I do believe that Pharaoh is recognizing this. Again, let me emphasize that we do not really know what is in the mind of Pharaoh; we only know that he appears to be giving in at this point.

#### **Lesson 094: Exodus 8:25–32**

#### **God Removes the Flies from Egypt**

A Review of Exodus 8:25–28:

Exodus 8:25 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God in the land.”

Faced with the plague of the flies, Pharaoh gives in. He says that the people of Israel may sacrifice to their God (which is apparently an abomination to the Egyptians), but that they are to remain within the land of Egypt.

Exodus 8:26–27 And Moses said, “It is not right to do so, for we would be sacrificing the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. If we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, then will they not stone us? We will go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as He will command us.”

Moses presses the fact that God has required the Hebrew people to go a 3-day journey outside of the land of Egypt.

Exodus 8:28 So Pharaoh said, “I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness; only you shall not go very far away. Intercede for me.”

Pharaoh sort of agrees here, but asks them not to go very far away. He also asks for Moses and Aaron to intercede for him. I believe that all Pharaoh is asking for is for the flies to be removed.

By this, Moses is a type of Christ, standing between sinful man (Pharaoh) and God, interceding for sinful man.

Exodus 8:29a [Then Moses said, “Indeed I am going out from you, and I will entreat the Lord,...](#)

Moses corrects Pharaoh at this point. Pharaoh used the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Hiphil imperative of *intercede, entreat*; but Moses uses the primitive, 1<sup>st</sup> person singular pronoun; and the verb *entreat* is the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, Hiphil perfect. The perfect tense sees the verb as a completed action, even though it is future from this time. By this emphasis, Moses solidifies the concept of *him* standing between God and Pharaoh, as an intercessor or mediator. Moses may not realize this himself, but he is making his actions as a type of Christ more specific and appropriate (there are dozens of men from the Old Testament who are typical of the Lord).

Moses says that, he is going to go out and immediately entreat God to remove the flies from Pharaoh and the residences of his slaves and officials. Unless given that specific authority, Moses by himself cannot remove these flies.

Undoubtedly, Pharaoh wants to be rid of the insects and Moses acknowledges that. Moses does not fully address the compromise suggested by Pharaoh (that Israel go not very far from Egypt). Nevertheless, Moses will go to God and request the removal of the flies.

There is another application that we can receive out of all this. I have seen parents and adults throw up their hands when dealing with kids. They give up on showing them the right direction because they say that kids are going to do what they are going to do anyway. Moses doesn't treat Pharaoh this way. He already knows that Pharaoh will go back on his word. Still, he warns Pharaoh not to.

When dealing with children in matters of right and wrong, regardless of how negative they might be; if their guidance is your responsibility, then they must be continually pointed in the right direction, even if we are certain that they will turn around and go the other way time after time. Children learn by repetition and sometimes by having their hands burned every time that they touch the hot stove. Even if we know they will touch the stove anyway, we still tell them that it's hot and not to do it. Even though Moses knows that Pharaoh will go back on his word; he still warns Pharaoh not to.

Exodus 8:29a-b [Then Moses said, “Indeed I am going out from you, and I will entreat the Lord, that the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people.](#)

Moses promises to fulfill his part of the bargain. Moses agrees to speak to God. “Okay, I will ask God on your behalf.” He will intercede for Pharaoh. He will speak to God and ask that the swarms of flies be removed. Interestingly enough, Moses, prior to speaking with God, sets up a time table for this to happen. Tomorrow, the flies will depart from Pharaoh,

his servants and his people. Moses is exuding confidence which suggests that Moses is spiritually mature. The fact that Moses can actually set a time suggests that he has some leeway from God in his interactions with Pharaoh. Whether this is stated or not, we don't know; but Moses is acting on behalf of God.

You may be involved in a legal action, and your lawyer is working out details with another lawyer. The lawyers both speak for their respective parties, even if they have not cleared every detail from those that they represent. So one lawyer might say, "I believe I can get my client to agree to 1, 2 and 3." He knows from interacting with his client about what the boundaries are. So, this is also true of Moses speaking for God. He knows about where the boundaries lie because he knows God.

However, Moses does not say, "I believe that your terms are acceptable;" he simply tells Pharaoh that he will speak to God about the flies, and he already tells Pharaoh when they will be gone. However, even though Pharaoh does not want the people of Israel to go very far from Egypt, Moses has already laid down the requirements for worship—likely on every occasion of meeting. Whether Moses presses this any further or not, is not known to us.

As we will find out, Pharaoh will renege even on his compromise offer anyway.

Exodus 8:29c [But let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord.](#)"

Moses warns Pharaoh that his offer better be on the level. Based upon the text that we have, Pharaoh has not agreed to all that Moses has asked for. Pharaoh agrees that they may go out into the wilderness, but not very far.

Nevertheless, Moses here warns Pharaoh not to change his mind again as he did with the frogs (Exodus 8:8-15). It is likely that Moses knows, because of what God has told him, that the Pharaoh will resist God once the plague has been withdrawn. After all, God has told Moses this time and time again. Moses is a genius and a believer in the Revealed God, so he certainly understands and believes what God has told him.

No doubt, you have talked to someone who is supposed to complete some task or to do something, and you have told them, "And don't you go lollygagging about and forget what I told you to do." (you might not use the word *lollygagging*). Moses is attempting to confirm with Pharaoh that they are on the same page and that they are agreeing to the same thing here. Whereas, there is nothing wrong with affirming an agreement (particularly with your own children), this does not guarantee that Pharaoh will act as he promises. In fact, God has already told Moses otherwise.

Is there further discussion? Does Moses bargain further with Pharaoh? Or does he simply accept what Pharaoh has said—not necessarily agreeing with it, but with the intention of returning to God. My best guess is, Moses figured that he has taken this discussion just as far as he could. It is very possible that there was nothing more substantive in their conversation and that Moses just left it there.

Exodus 8:30 [So Moses went out from Pharaoh and entreated the Lord.](#)

We do not know where this meeting is occurring, or how far away Moses and Aaron are from Pharaoh when speaking to God. We do not know how this is taking place or in what way God is manifesting Himself to Moses. My very educated guess is, Moses has set up a tent, and he communicates with God within that tent. In later chapters of Exodus, there is a tent that Moses goes to—not the Tabernacle, but a *tent of meeting* where he went prior to the building of the Tabernacle (Exodus 33:7–11). It is very possible that Moses has the same tent or a similar tent at this time—however, this is a detail left out of this section of Exodus. Throughout the plagues, we are never told that there is a tent; and we can only come to that conclusion from Exodus 33.

We don't know if Moses says to God, "Now, this is how far Pharaoh is willing to concede..." We will find out there, no matter what Pharaoh said before, he will change his mind anyway and back off even from that position. Nevertheless, God will be faithful to Moses' word:

Exodus 8:31a [And the Lord did according to the word of Moses;...](#)

Pharaoh made a weak counteroffer; and Moses promised him that the flies would be removed. So, regardless of what Pharaoh had promised—even though it was not good enough—God still did what Moses had promised.

Man is imperfect; God is faithful.

Exodus 8:31b [...He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people.](#)

Being omniscient, God knows what Pharaoh offered; yet, God allows for that and removes the flies, as this is what Moses, as His representative, promised. God removed all of the flies—from Pharaoh, from his officials and from his citizens.

How much greater is Jesus as our Intercessor? If God has agreed to remove the flies from Egypt for a man he knows is faithless—from a man God knows will go back on his word; how much more can we trust what He has said to us? We are clearly imperfect, but God is still God.

Exodus 8:31c [Not one remained.](#)

God removed all of the flies from the people in Egypt; they did not see any flies remaining.

This particular plague seems to have more supernatural elements than the others. These insects did not swarm Goshen (there may be reasons for that). And, God rids the area completely of these insects, but we do not have the people sweeping them up into massive, stinking piles (insofar as we know). On the other hand, there certainly could be some naturalistic explanations for these things (which does not, in any way, deny or denigrate the power of God). I lean towards the more natural explanations.

Let me see if I can provide a relatable illustration. We have all watched science fiction movies and the problem with building up any suspense is, nearly anything can happen at anytime. Any character might have a power, an ability introduced early on in a movie or book that, is suddenly called upon to save the day. For me, that is one of the negative aspects of science fiction. A romantic moment might actually develop more suspense than an sci fi action sequence because (1) you (ideally speaking) care about the characters and their relationship (s); (2) and they cannot just do anything at anytime. That is, with respect to #2, the characters ought reasonably to act within their defined character type. But when it comes to the sci fi aspect, virtually anything can occur at any time. Realizing that often removes suspense from a sci fi film (for me, anyway).

This is why Superman was boring to me, as a kid, because he could basically do just about anything, as he was about 1000x superior to the average man. The creators had to develop weaknesses for Superman to make him slightly more interesting.

So God's plan is far more impressive if it all takes place within the confines of God's laws for our universe. God is not confined by these laws, as He made them; but life and God's place in our lives is far more relatable when He chooses to confine Himself to the world's limitations. Further, this is why Jesus is so relatable, as He was fully man who confined Himself, for the most part, to the things of man (Jesus could become tired, hungry, weak; and He could be tempted).

Given all of this, I believe that God, in His interactions with us, chooses to remain within the confines of His universe laws for the most part (but not always, such as Him turning water into wine). He is not subject to these physical laws; but He can choose to act within their confines and, I believe, most often does.

For this reason, I believe the plagues are likely more natural than supernatural. And yet, these plagues are more powerful and meaningful because they are natural events.

Exodus 8:31 [And the Lord did according to the word of Moses; He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. Not one remained.](#)

Moses goes to God in prayer and God answers this prayer. God answered it in eternity past but God is glorified because Moses asked God to do what was His will. The removal of this blood-sucking gad fly (if that is the actual plague) was an amazing thing to occur. Every area of Egypt, other than the land of Goshen was heavily infested with this insect and suddenly there remains not even a single fly. This, like everything else we have studied, is a very unusual set of events.

This particular narrative is never fully fleshed out; and I believe the intention was for these events to move along, and not for things to get bogged down with details. We know that Pharaoh goes on negative signals, as we will read in v. 32. The way that the narrative is laid out, it seems to allow that Moses returns to Pharaoh when the flies are gone, and Pharaoh says, "Not on your life, Moses," when Moses goes to the palace and says, "I am

ready to lead the people out.” Then Moses might have returned to God, and God says, “Okay, this is the 5<sup>th</sup> plague.”

In the alternative, Moses goes to God, to intercede for Pharaoh, to ask for the flies to be removed. God does this, and then warns Moses, “Pharaoh, even now, has changed his mind. So, when you go in to Pharaoh, you will speak to him about the 5<sup>th</sup> plague...” which plague will take us to Exodus 9:1.

Whether there is an additional face to face between Moses and God (or between Moses and Pharaoh), we don’t know; but, in truth, that does not really make a difference when it comes to our overall narrative. I lean toward there being fewer meetings, and that, right after the flies are removed, Moses goes in to speak to Pharaoh about the next plague, as Pharaoh will have gone back on his word by that time.

Exodus 8:32a [But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also;...](#)

Pharaoh has reconsidered his agreement with Moses, because he looks around and the flies are gone and the pressure off, Pharaoh strengthens his own heart again. He seems to be fundamentally unable to consider that the God of Moses is sovereign over all. Pharaoh will, therefore, strengthen his own resolve enough to resist God once again.

Pharaoh had more or less agreed to a watered-down version of what God demanded; but now, at this point, Pharaoh has backed away from even that.

Exodus 8:32b [...neither would he let the people go.](#)

Again Pharaoh refuses to let the Hebrew people go. Whatever Pharaoh had offered before, was withdrawn. Therefore, the difference between what God demanded and what Pharaoh offered was not really an issue, as Pharaoh reneged on even his own offer.

God knew that Pharaoh would renege on his vow, yet God keeps His word even when man does not keep his. There is no compromising perfect integrity. We should emulate that (we are commanded to be imitators of Christ and of God). Our word should be our bond; what we say should be enough to commit us. It does not matter if those around us are dishonest or do not keep their word; we are to maintain our own integrity. You may be dealing with someone you know is a cheater and lacks integrity; but if you agree to something, then you need to keep your part of the bargain. That reflects the character of God. The failures of people around us should not affect our reflection of Jesus Christ in our lives. The Pharaoh's word to Moses and to God, as the ruler of his country, means nothing.

Pharaoh, degenerate as he is, finds the strength when the pressure is off and changes his own mind. With the removal of the insect, he feels empowered and strengthened.

A question which I asked at the beginning of this chapter is, *why can't God be glorified if Pharaoh is pliable and goes along with God's demands?* God has to show absolute and

complete power—greater power than ever imagined by the Egyptians concerning their own gods. There can be no question of God’s complete and total power; and it should be clear that the gods of Egypt are powerless before the God of Moses. Yet, this does not mean that God must violate His Own universal laws.

There is also a long-term strategy here. God requires a muted Egypt while Israel spends 40 years in the desert-wilderness followed by 7 or so years conquering the Land of Promise. God cannot allow for some heathen group of Canaanites to go to the Egyptians and make a pact to work together to defeat the Hebrew army. For the next 47 years, at least, Egypt must be a neutered nation. This would allow Israel to establish itself in Canaan.

Furthermore, what happened in Egypt was known far and wide in the Land of Promise. These people in Canaan and in the surrounding areas, knew what the Hebrew people (or, more accurately, their God) did to a much stronger nation, Egypt. Therefore, they have the option/opportunity of allying themselves with the Hebrews, when they come into the land. That would have been the smart option (in the book of Joshua, this was an option not taken by many—we only know of one group of people who did).

## **Lesson 095: Exodus 8:32**

## **Free Will and Politics in the Modern World**

We have come to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> plague, the judgment of the flies (as well as to the end of Exodus 8). Just like the previous plagues, God removes the flies and Pharaoh turns against God once again.

Exodus 8:32 [But Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also; neither would he let the people go.](#)

Obviously, there is a great deal of related suffering leading up to these confrontations between Pharaoh and Moses. The Hebrew people suffered for a century or more of slavery; and right now, the Egyptians are suffering due to these plagues. Some may wonder, why can’t God simply make a passageway for the Hebrew people out of the land, where they are supernaturally separated from Egypt; and *boom*, they are gone, outside of Egypt, with perhaps a magical barrier to make it impossible for Egypt to pursue them? God is fully capable of doing this. God could separate His people from Egypt supernaturally, where they could leave without being pestered by the Egyptians, but He does not do this. God could have wiped out every single Egyptian suddenly, overnight—but He doesn’t. Generally speaking, when God does something, it involves a lot of human interaction; and, more importantly, human volition, both positive and negative. In fact, there is far more human interaction, drama and volition revealed in this narrative than there are miracles (and, as I have suggested on many occasions, there may not have been any miracles in the sense of defying God’s natural laws).

With these plagues, God is giving every person in the land of Egypt the ability to make a clear choice, either for or against Him, Egyptians and Hebrew alike. The Egyptians may

have been raised to believe in all of their various gods, but the God of Israel is clearly far more powerful than any of those gods. With every plague, God shows Himself to be greater than any Egyptian god (or any alliance of Egyptian gods). Any Egyptian, at any time, can choose to take a stand with the Hebrew people (and some will<sup>83</sup>).

God puts on the pressure, allows the people to endure it and think about it and to consider His power. Then He removes the plague. The Egyptian people get to consider each event as it occurs. Every one of these Egyptians experiences something that he has never experienced before with the intensity of each separate plague.

These acts of God also have an effect upon the Hebrew people. As we will discover, they do not hear the Word of God through Moses and then say, “Okay, we will do that;” and then they do whatever God has required. No, not at all. These people are very hard-hearted; and a significant portion of the book of Exodus will be about them rebelling against Moses and against their own God (that is a considerable portion of the second half of the book of Exodus). So, God had to (1) allow their lives to become completely and totally miserable; this will give them the motivation to leave Egypt. Secondly, (2) God also allows them to see multiple signs in order for them to learn respect for His power. Thirdly, (3) God gives the Hebrew people a clear leader, a man who is clearly associated with God’s power. The Hebrew people would be without excuse; and the Egyptians would be without excuse. Both nations are given a space within which their free will might operate.

The free will of man is integral to the plan of God. What God wants is not for man to act simply as automatons, but as men making the right choices from their uncoerced volition (putting the truth in front of people is *not* coercion).

The Egyptians will see, over a very short period of time, that the God of Moses, the God of the Hebrew people, is far superior to their gods; and that this God has afforded great protections to the Hebrew people throughout these plagues. There is clear interaction between the Egyptian people and the Hebrew people near the end of these plagues, and any of the Egyptians could have joined up with the sons of Israel at any time.

We learn a great deal about the free will of man through this study. Every Hebrew person was, at the very end, ready to leave Egypt, despite them being, in general, negative towards God’s plan (we are going to find them to be very inconsistent). Some Egyptians were also willing to leave Egypt—I assume that they made up a portion of the mixed multitude, which group we will study later. However, for the most part, the Egyptians will remain in their land, despite it being gutted and destroyed by these successive acts of God. Both the Egyptians and the Hebrew people saw the same things; yet they reacted in different ways to the same stimuli.

The angels which observe us also notice this—the Hebrew people and the Egyptian people see the same great signs and see the distinction that God draws between the peoples.

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<sup>83</sup> The Bible speaks of a mixed multitude of people who go out with the Hebrew people; and I have assumed that this included some Egyptians.

They see the same things and view the same struggles; and yet, every Hebrew will follow Moses out of the land. Most of the Egyptians will remain in their destroyed land; and, in fact, many in their military will make one final attack against the Israelites before this is all over. The Egyptians will give one last expression of anger, hatred and negative volition. They hate God; and so they hate God's people, the Hebrews (the same thing holds true today; people who hate God are far more likely to be antisemitic than those who don't).

### **Free will, God, evolution and politics:**

One of the most difficult things to understand—even though we all have it and use it—is free will. Every person in the world can choose for or against God—specifically, for or against His Son. Many people today live to the age of 70 and older; and amazingly, some will spend every moment of their lives in rebellion against God, not wanting anything to do with Him. And, it is not as if these people simply lack the knowledge. I know many atheists who spend all of their lives resisting God, some of them actually learning more about certain parts of the Bible than the average Christian, using this acquired knowledge to bolster their reasons to reject God. From time to time, many of them even appear to have legitimate objections; but even when you clear up their objections, that negative volition is still there. I am not aware of any atheist, who, after having 3 or 4 objections cleared up, say, “Okay, you have presented some good arguments. What must I do to be saved?” Most of the time they will not acknowledge that you are given them a good argument or explanation.

No doubt there are yet millions of Jews in this world today who have heard the gospel. They know about Jesus, and yet, they choose to reject Him (on the other hand, millions of Jews today have believed in Jesus). As an aside, interestingly enough, Jews who believe in Jesus often believe themselves becoming more Jewish as a result of exercising faith in Christ—or more authentically Jewish. This makes sense, as they are accepting and believing in the Messiah sent to them by their God.

What we find throughout the Bible is a clear indication that people make decisions, acting in accordance with their free will, some believing in the God of Moses, and others completely rejecting the Lord.

Free will is a fascinating aspect of the human experience, and when we isolate our free will relationship with God from all other free will actions, we sometimes come up with some very odd theories. Ultra Calvinism maintains that, when it comes to God, we really have no free will, but God simply chooses us, presents us with irresistible grace, and we are drawn to Him, unable to resist. I have not studied Calvin deeply enough to know whether this is what he himself believed, but 5-point Calvinism takes the position that God irresistibly draws us to Him, and that we cannot resist this. The logical result of believing 5-point Calvinism is, no believer believes in Jesus Christ completely of his own free will; he is simply irresistibly drawn to God, his free will not being a factor. They believe that, only if they are irresistibly drawn to the Lord by God will they choose to believe. The only will that matters in their theology is God's sovereignty. Our free will is never really an issue.

This is despite the hundreds of passages which seem to stress the importance of individual choice.

Similarly, I have talked and argued with people on *Christian versus Atheist* facebook pages, and they present a very similar view to 5-point Calvinism, but from the other side. Christians believe in the God of the Bible; and atheists do not. And these atheists put the onus upon Christians to convince them, by argument, that there is a God and that God is the God of the Bible. Even though many of these people understand Christianity and many have heard and understood the gospel message, it does not matter what approach that you take with them, your argument and reasoning is never going to be enough to convince them. In fact, many such people, no matter how well you reason with them, will always, at the very end, accuse you of lacking sufficient evidence and/or reasoning skills to convince them. They may say, "Your argument is just not persuasive enough" (or words to that effect). However, the problem is and will always be with their own volition.

If you have ever studied Christian apologetics, you will find that there are a great many logical reasons to believe in a Creator God, to believe in the Savior Jesus, and to believe the Bible is the Word of God. Josh McDowell has written many excellent books on these topics. I found several of McDowell's books more much logical and persuasive than books that I have read, written by atheists and skeptics.

Speaking of atheists: many of them present the idea that they themselves are random events which have occurred in a random universe, and their thoughts and thinking are nothing more than random electronic signals running through an evolved brain sloshing around in their skulls. They do not see themselves as having been created or designed. Their life is a happy (or unhappy) evolutionary accident. Their excuse before God will be, "You did not do enough to convince me that You are God. Therefore, my rejection of You is Your fault!"

In all other aspects of life, these same people will accept their free will as a very real thing; even to the point of accepting the idea that, if a man wants to think of himself as a woman (or vice versa), which concept is completely an act of free will that defies all biological science and logic. The current political climate is, we should accept this and even celebrate it; and a preponderance of atheists do (most atheists appear to be very liberal—I should say *leftist* to be more accurate).

At this time (I write this in 2019 & 2020), there are climate science fanatics and climate science deniers; and both sets of people believe that science is on their side. We have had a very popular politician on the left recently say that we have 12 years remaining (I believe until there is no *going back* on our denial of science) (and, of course, lest you be worried, this problem can be solved if he or she and members of his or her party are elected to power). The side which we take in politics is very much related to free will; and where we place our faith—because, quite obviously, you or I have *not* done any actual

climate research ourselves (reading a few articles from the internet is not really climate research<sup>84</sup>).

Furthermore, it is clear that our politics is very closely related to our belief that the world is coming to an end this century due to global warming (or not). One side, for the most part, believes that earth will be inundated with water, as we heat up due to man's use of fossil fuels; and the other side, for the most part, does not believe that man can destroy planet earth or even himself. Interestingly enough, these beliefs often highly correlate with whether or not a person believes in the Christian God. The Christian is far more likely to reject the *end-of-the-world* predictions of global warming alarmists; and the atheist is far more likely to believe these warnings (notice the word *believe*).

Speaking of politics, we have had two recent presidents, Barack Obama and Donald Trump, about whom there seems to be an undeniable split in the thinking of most Americans. One set of Americans, when they hear a negative news story about Donald Trump, believe it. Often, they believe that any negative news story about him was well-researched and well-documented, and that it is true; and that he should be removed from office (a significant percentage of Americans *still* believe that candidate Trump colluded with Russia to steal the 2016 election). Another equally large group of Americans reject virtually every negative story about him, either as not true or as exaggerated or as unimportant. I could have said essentially the same thing about President Obama when he was in office.

I have seen lifelong friendships dissolved because two people have opposite ideas about Trump (or about Obama); and I have seen family members sever ties for the same reason. Essentially, these lifelong friends or relatives often go their separate ways, not because one of cheated or harmed the other person, but simply because they *believe* in different things. Again, note the word *believe*. A person's faith/free will is the underpinning of most everything a person is passionate about—and it ought to be clear that, in the United States in the year 2020, there is a great deal of passion for diametrically opposed candidates and systems of government that people support.

My point in giving these illustrations is to indicate that we have free will. In politics, many of us choose a side and often are vociferous about defending it (more so in the past decade than any time in the past century). With regards to climate change, some of us believe that we or our children will see the end of this inhabitable earth and others of us believe that to be hooey. These beliefs are surely not a result of scientific fact, or else, virtually everyone would believe them (just as virtually everyone believes in gravity or in a spherical earth).

There are even strong disagreements in the scientific community, and it may be surprising to know that, there is not a 97% agreement that electing the right political party is going to

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<sup>84</sup> Instead of speaking of climate change, I could have used the illustration of evolution instead.

save us from this climate crisis. Even if 97% of scientists believe that the earth is in a warming trend (which figure is strongly contested), this is not the same as having the belief that an inhabitable earth will no longer be a thing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or that electing politicians from one particular party is going to solve this problem. Even with scientists, there is this thing called free will, and it plays an important part in what each scientist believes. In case you wonder, *how can that be?* Here is how that is possible: scientists determine for themselves what constitutes evidence of this or that belief (politically-charged climate change and evolution are both concepts which a person believes or does not believe, scientist or not). And one set of people say, X, Y and Z prove my point of view absolutely; and another set of people disagree vehemently; believing that X, Y and Z prove nothing. What is the true basis for these disagreements? Free will. Free will is at the heart of these passionate disagreements.

About these particular topics, myself and two of my brothers think one way; my mother and a middle brother think the other. We were all raised in the same household in roughly the same environment, seeing the same television and news programs, reading the same newspapers. Somewhere in this similar environment, free will plays an essential part in these opinions. I have a set of values which I believe in, and they form my world view and my beliefs (which I believe is very much centered upon the Word of God); and yet, I have a brother whose beliefs, as a whole, are not really much different than mine (as compared to the thinking of other cultures), who also attends church; and yet, his views and mine are polar opposite in many issues of the day.

My belief is, that, fundamentally, all of this comes down to free will.

If we accept free will as being a very real part of our daily lives, then logically, our free will functions when it comes to God. If I am able to come to a set of free will conclusions, based upon what I read about President Trump or about global warming; then has God not also made me *able* to exercise my free will regarding Him?

That God has given us free will seems like an obvious truth to me, having given many examples of areas where our free will functions. If we exercise our free will throughout our lives, regarding the things that we do or choose not to do; then does this not mean that we have a free will when it comes to God and to God's plan?

There is certainly another dimension to this which I did not mention—grace and free will. It should be clear, based upon what we read in the Scriptures, that I cannot take any personal credit for believing in Jesus Christ. I cannot say, "I am better than Charley Brown because I believed in Jesus, but he did not." Now, I am better off than Charley Brown, as I will spend eternity with God (and he won't); but I am still a sinner separated from God by my sins, my sin nature and Adam's original sin (which sin is imputed to me). My salvation depends completely upon Jesus. Take Jesus out of the picture and I have no real or legitimate access to God.

Throughout the Bible, there are numerous Scriptures which speak of man's free will; and man choosing to commit this or that sin; or choosing to resist that temptation. Men are, over and over again, encouraged to believe in Jesus. Now, if someone cannot really believe in Jesus unless irresistibly drawn by God, isn't the call of the gospel almost mocking? Or, if God wills for all men to be saved, and since Jesus died for the sins of all mankind, why does God not draw all men to Himself? For me, there are too many logical problems with 5-point Calvinism.

Given this discussion, I am forced by reason to believe that God allows every single person the free will to respond to Him (or to resist Him). In our era of the Church Age, God requires believers to take the gospel into the world; but that God has not left out any person who might believe in Him. That is, no matter where or when a person might live, if he would respond positively to the gospel message, then God must provide that message for him—in every single case.

Because this discussion was focused upon the reality of man's free will, I did not cover in any details God's grace when it comes to our having believed in His Son. If a person is positive towards God at God consciousness (when he considers that there may be a God much greater than himself), God is obligated, by His love and by His justice, to provide gospel information for that unbeliever. God can do that in a myriad of ways. However, what God always does—and this is the grace process—the Holy Spirit acts as the human spirit for this unbeliever, so that he might apprehend the spiritual information (information that he is, without the Holy Spirit or the human spirit, unable to fully process). This may take place over a period of a few minutes or a few hours. This decision may be offered once or many times by God; but, no matter what the circumstances are, this is a window of opportunity which will close at some point. That is, for a period of time, this person will understand that he has a decision to make, that this decision involves the Son of God, and that decision is something which he and he alone can make. That time frame where he has the ability to understand and believe is limited.

## **Lesson 096: Exodus 9:1–3**

## **Plague #5—Livestock are Diseased**

We have just completed Exodus 8. Up to this point, there have been 4 plagues/judgments: (1) blood in the waters of Egypt; (2) an invasion of frogs; (3) lice/gnats everywhere; and (4) a massive number of flies, which, interestingly enough, only affected the Egyptians and not the Israelites. These plagues would seemingly break down the strength and resolve of Pharaoh, to a point where he would make promises to let Moses and his people go. However, once the blight had been lifted, Pharaoh's heart would strengthen and his resolve against the God of Israel would be restored. If anything, it appears that Pharaoh's anti-God resolve became stronger with every judgment.

### **The Fifth Plague: Livestock Diseased**

In chapter 9, there will be 3 more plagues, just as there were in Exodus 8—plagues (or judgments) #5–7. We will study the plague/judgment of a disease among the livestock, of

boils on the skin, and of hail. The first two judgments will be covered briefly (12 verses total are allowed for both plagues); and much more time will be given to the 7<sup>th</sup> judgment (23 verses). Like all of the judgments, these 3 judgments will be universally felt in Egypt. Like the 4<sup>th</sup> plague, the people of Israel will be isolated from them (as we read so many times in Scripture, *God makes a separation...*).

This isolation from these plagues means that, any Egyptian at any time could have come into Goshen and asked for shelter from the judgments of the God of Israel. There is nothing which would have stopped an Egyptian from doing that. However, if any did, we are unaware of them. These plagues are not upon Pharaoh alone.

The 4<sup>th</sup> plague was the plague of flies. Pharaoh refused to let God's people go, and God brought flies to Egypt, and they were everywhere—there was no escaping these flies. Pharaoh told Moses that he would let the people go to worship God (although he put some unauthorized restrictions on them). Moses went to God, God removed the flies; but Pharaoh turned negative once again, refusing to allow the people of God the chance to worship their God.

There are two basic options in the actual events: (1) Moses returned once the flies had gone, and Pharaoh said, "Sorry, no one is going anywhere;" at which point, Moses and Aaron return to speak to God. Or, option (2) where Moses speaks to God before the flies are removed. God tells Moses that He will remove the flies; after which, God also says, "But Pharaoh will not let My people go; therefore, when you go to speak with him and if he refuses to let My people go, then you tell him about the 5<sup>th</sup> plague." I lean toward the second scenario, although it really does not matter, in the grand scheme of things, which specific series of events is correct.

In the latter approach, Moses is speaking to God *while* there are flies throughout Egypt, and God tells Moses that Pharaoh will sound agreeable until the flies are removed, but that he will go back on his promises. At that time, Moses would bring the 5<sup>th</sup> judgment upon Egypt.

Whereas, I believe that these plagues may have had some overlap as I have suggested above. By overlap, I mean that God may have discussed 2 plagues at the same meeting with Moses (I do not mean that two plagues are happening at the same time). So, Moses would go to God and say, "I told Pharaoh I would petition You to remove the 4<sup>th</sup> judgment." God might then say, "I will do as you have promised Pharaoh, but he will renege on what he promised. Therefore, I have a 5<sup>th</sup> judgment locked and loaded; it is ready to go. So, when he tells you My people may not come out to worship Me, you warn him about the 5<sup>th</sup> plague."

In the way that they are presented in the book of Exodus, there appears to be no overlap. Each plague is recounted as if it is disjoint from the other plagues.

Let me try to explain this in a different way. I have, at one time in my life, had a 10 course meal. My guess is, you probably have not. But, every 5 minutes or so, a waiter will pick

up the dishes from the previous course and then bring out each individual course. Let's say you wanted to bore your friends, and you tell them about each individual course. You would recount them as 10 separate events. However, it may have been that you had not completed the 4<sup>th</sup> course, so you kept it back and ate it along with the 5<sup>th</sup> course when that was served. But when recounting this event, you probably treated every course as a separate event.

The actual plagues of God do not overlap in the sense of, there are two plagues happening at once. But, when Moses goes back to God to ask for God to remove a plague, God very likely at that time says, "I will remove this judgment, but Pharaoh will strengthen his heart; and so, you will then speak to him about the next judgment."

Let's begin the 5<sup>th</sup> judgment:

Exodus 9:1a *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and tell him,...*

God has removed the 4<sup>th</sup> plague, the curse of flies. Pharaoh had agreed to let the people go, but he has reneged on that agreement. God may be speaking to Moses *before* the removal of the flies at this point. My point being, Moses does not necessarily listen to Pharaoh renege on a promise, throw his hands up in the air, go back to Goshen, go back to the tent of meeting (not *the* Tent of Meeting), tell God, and God sends him back with the next plague ready to go.

Exodus 9:1b ...*'Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: Let My people go, that they may serve Me.*

I have used italics above rather than a third set of quotation marks, as the NKJV does. So, I am using the NKJV still, but I have modified how the text looks. This is a quote within a quote within a quote.

Moses goes to Pharaoh and speaks on behalf of God. God calls for His people to be allowed to leave and serve Him.

Now, actually, at this point in the narrative, God is speaking to Moses; but, as far as we are concerned, that is equivalent to Moses speaking directly to Pharaoh. When God told Moses to do something, Moses did it.

Exodus 9:1 *Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and tell him, 'Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: Let My people go, that they may serve Me.*

God sends Moses back to Pharaoh, and that famous line is repeated: "*Let My people go, that they may serve Me.*"

Just as we have studied in previous judgments, there are many repetitive details which are left out. At this point in the narrative, God is speaking to Moses and telling him exactly what to say to Pharaoh. This plague narrative will not tell us about Moses going to see

Pharaoh—how he finds him or where he finds him, or any of those details. Nor will we have these words from vv. 1–4 repeated in this narrative, even though they will be spoken by Moses to Pharaoh. All of that will be assumed to have happened. In vv. 1–5, God is speaking to Moses. In v. 6, what God says will happen, happens. And in v. 7, Pharaoh's response of negative volition will be noted. This entire plague is covered in 7 verses.

Exodus 9:2 *For if you refuse to let them go, and still hold them,...*

God is still speaking to Moses, and Moses is to warn Pharaoh of the consequences of his negative volition.

It is quite obvious that vv. 2–3 belong together. I cannot provide a shred of insight why someone, at some point in time, decided to separate these verses. V. 2 is the protasis and v. 3 is the apodosis. V. 2 is the *if*; and v. 3 is the *then*.

God will not bring Israel out of Egypt against Pharaoh's authority. Pharaoh must, as the king of Egypt, send Israel out.

As has been discussed before, there are a myriad of ways that God could have gotten Israel to leave Egypt—with or without Pharaoh's permission—but what we are studying is the way that God chose to do this. God's approach is to allow the maximum exercise of human volition.

Exodus 9:3a *...behold, the hand of the Lord will be on your cattle in the field,...*

God now warns of what will happen. His hand will be on the cattle which are in the fields. Here, *cattle* is used as a general designation; and the animals will be specified in the next section.

Exodus 9:3b *...on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep...*

God specifically names the animals that He will afflict: the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the cattle and the flocks (of sheep and goats).

All of God's plagues are designed to come down upon the Egyptian people as a whole. Every Egyptian is to know and understand each and every plague. Everyone of them will be affected. When it comes to the plagues of Egypt, God always goes big; so that all of the Egyptians were aware of His power and the extent of His reach. When God reveals His power through a human representative, His power is always revealed in a way that is appropriate to the audience.

We tend to focus upon Moses versus Pharaoh, but all of Egypt was affected and it is reasonable to suppose that all Egyptians understood what was happening. God's warning to Pharaoh would have been spread by word of mouth, to be soon followed by Pharaoh's refusal and then all of Egypt would experience the plagues. The people of Egypt could

have, at any point in time, sided with the Israelites; they could have stormed the palace and demanded, “Let God’s people go, so that we may have peace;” but they did not. When the plagues began to affect Egypt only; they could have taken up residence among the Hebrew people, if only temporarily.

There will be a mixed multitude who will exit Egypt with the Hebrew people. Some of these undoubtedly are Egyptians; but there would have been other slaves and other foreigners as well. What we will not have, despite God striking these Egyptians down, is a mass exodus of sympathetic Egyptians who have decided to follow the God of the Hebrews.

Exodus 9:3c ...—*a very severe pestilence.*

God warns Pharaoh that there would be a terrible pestilence brought upon all of the livestock of Egypt. Pharaoh would have had his animals; and the people would have had theirs.

You may recall back in the days of Joseph, all of the livestock became property of the state (so that the people could pay for grain during a famine). We do not know if that is still true; but it is a moot point, whether the livestock is owned again by the Egyptians or by the state, they will still die out in large numbers.

One of the words translated *plague* is *deber* (דֶּבַר) [pronounced *DE<sup>B</sup>-ver*] and it means *pestilence, illness, plague*; it is actually only found in this one passage of Exodus in this particular context, yet is found in several other places throughout the Bible (Num. 14:12 1Kings 8:37 Ezek. 5:12). The vowel points, though not coming into play in the manuscripts until centuries after the first advent are key. A very similar word in the Hebrew is the very commonly used *dâbâr* (דָּבָר), which we examined in the last chapter—it means *word, speech, command, matter, affair, etc.* Next door to those two words is the verb *to speak*, with again the same consonants and different vowel points. It is these vowel points which separate for us the noun from the verb from other words which mean entirely different things. For many centuries, the Hebrew people understood what the vowels were and, when speaking these words aloud, spoke the correct vowels, even though there were no vowels found in the manuscripts that they read from (which suggests that the people, in general) had the Scriptures firmly impressed in their minds. .

In fact, it was not until the Middle Ages when the Masoretes began to use vowel points. They were added in such a way, above and below the Hebrew consonants, so that the original manuscripts were preserved. So, if you put, say, a ruler, over the top of each line and over the bottom of each line, what you would see would be the original text.

The text of the manuscripts which then had this addition of vowel points is called the Masoretic text.

Because of the plagues still to come—specifically the plague of hail—we know that some of the cattle of the Egyptians had to survive. Whether there were shelters or pens or whatever, there were apparently a considerable number of livestock not affected by this plague. So, the livestock out in the field refers to a very specific bunch.



**Algerian Livestock, Dead from Plague** (a photograph); from [Vision News](#); accessed January 8, 2020. Algeria, at the beginning of 2019, suffered a plague on their livestock.

## Lesson 097: Exodus 9:1–6

## The Judgment of Livestock (Part II)

Exodus 9:1 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh and tell him, ‘Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews: *Let My people go, that they may serve Me.*”

Exodus 9:2 *For if you refuse to let them go, and still hold them,...*

Exodus 9:3 *...behold, the hand of the Lord will be on your cattle in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the oxen, and on the sheep—a very severe pestilence.*

I have spoken of many of these things as possibly being a natural phenomenon; that one massive infestation/judgment logically follows another. I am of the school of thought which believes that these plagues of God represent a natural progression of a set of essentially natural phenomenon. I don’t mean that every aspect of every plague was simply nature; but that God used natural things of the earth to judge Egypt. Furthermore, there is no reason to think that God conjured up these various plagues from nothing. Even though, the lice may have appeared to spring from the ground from nowhere, this does not mean that God suddenly created them. It only appeared that, one instant, things were normal; and the next, there are lice (or gnats) everywhere.

These kinds of plagues allowed God to make a statement to the Egyptian people that He was far more powerful than any of their gods, who were all associated with all the natural phenomena which were used against them.

Perhaps because of the flies, the animals have been exposed to a variety of diseases, and God is going to allow nature to take its course, and allow many of their animals to die. Since the flies infested Egypt but not Goshen, so the diseases would affect the Egyptian cattle and not the Hebrew cattle, as a natural progression of these judgments.

Exodus 9:4a *And the Lord will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt.*

Again, God will make a distinction between Egyptian cattle and Hebrew cattle. Therefore, this is more than a simple plague which strikes a general area—this plague will affect only the Egyptian livestock and leave the Israeli livestock alone.

Again, we have separation between the Egyptians and the Israelites. The word used to denote this is *pâlâh* (פָּלָה) [pronounced *paw-LAW*] and it appears to have two distinct meanings. When two things are involved, then a distinction is being made between those two things (Ex. 8:22 9:4 11:7 33:16 Psalm 4:3); however, it seems to mean something entirely different in other contexts (Psalm 17:7 139:14). Furthermore, this distinction is not in the tense or the stem but in the context—a very unusual word. Many translations use the word *distinction* rather than *difference*. I believe that *distinction* better explains what God is doing.

This temporal distinction foretells an eternal separation between those who follow Y<sup>e</sup>howah and those who reject Him. Throughout all Scripture, God is continually making a distinction between sets of people. There are those who believe in Him and follow Him<sup>85</sup>; and those who reject Him. Here, the distinction is between the livestock of these two sets of people.

Exodus 9:4b *So nothing shall die of all that belongs to the children of Israel.’ ”*

The word *nothing* (or, *none of*) combines the negative with the final word of this verse, which is *dâbâr* (דָּבָר) [pronounced *daw<sup>b</sup>-VAWR*], which can mean, *word, thing*.

None of the animals belonging to the Hebrew people will be harmed in this plague. God promises that Israel will be exempt from this judgment. There would be large numbers of Egyptian livestock which would die out; but this would not affect Israel in Goshen.

Exodus 9:4 *And the Lord will make a difference between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt. So nothing shall die of all that belongs to the children of Israel.’ ”*

Exodus 9:4 perhaps implies that the flies are key to this disease rampant among the livestock. Remember, there were no flies among the people of Israel; and there will be no disease affecting their livestock either.

I tend to go along with a more naturalistic approach to these judgments, not seeing them necessarily as something which God created from nothing (which He is fully capable of doing), but using the raw materials on earth. These plagues would then come upon Egypt in precise conjunction with the warnings of Moses and Aaron.

Interestingly enough, when searching out some images, I came across a Reader’s Digest article alleging the same thing. The explanations are quite brief, not too different from what

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<sup>85</sup> Among believers, there are those advancing in the spiritual life and those who are retrogressing.

I have proposed. For instance, regarding this particular plague: *Natural explanation? The fields from which the cattle fed were turned toxic by the previous two plagues.*<sup>86</sup>

Exodus 9:5a [Then the Lord appointed a set time,...](#)

V. 5 is a transitional verse. This appears to be what God is saying to Moses; but, we can imagine, at this point, these words having been said by Moses to Pharaoh; and then adding, “And the Lord has appointed a set time for this to take place...”

Exodus 9:5b [...saying, “Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land.”](#)

God is telling Moses when this will happen; but then Moses will go to Pharaoh and tell him when this will taking place.

Exodus 9:5 [Then the Lord appointed a set time, saying, “Tomorrow the Lord will do this thing in the land.”](#)

God set a time for this to occur; thus allowing Pharaoh to change his mind before it happens. I am assuming that Moses went directly to Pharaoh so that when the plague is said to be tomorrow, that will be the time frame for Pharaoh.

Now, one might think that, based upon the previous 4 plagues, that Pharaoh would finally say, “Okay, look, you’re right. I am being hard-headed. Go and take your people and worship your God.” But he does not say that. Negative volition can be extremely powerful.

Allow me to draw a parallel here:

We live in an era where journalism has become, for most media outlets, advocacy journalism, meaning, they are simply a front for one political party or the other. Their side believes things or has a set of doctrines to which they adhere, or particular people to whom they owe their allegiance, and their actual news reporting reflects this predisposition. They have a template, so to speak, which reflects their reality. So, whatever happens that day, they try to fit it into their template. Now, if the news event does not fit that template, they either ignore it or give it very little air time (some stories may be found on their website, but are never aired). If the news event can be made to fit that template, then it is presented within the confines of their template—and many times, even when a news event does not fit into their template, they massage it so that it does.

To understand a template, when I write, I fit things into a particular style template, which has a particular font, a particular font size, a particular justification, particular margin sizes, etc. This way, the documents I create have a consistent look to them (most people or groups that develop documents do the very same thing). Whatever word processor you use, it already has a built-in template for writing (you may or may not be aware of that).

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<sup>86</sup> From [Reader’s Digest](#); accessed December 11, 2019.

The template for current news media is more than have a certain look; but their template includes a certain set of views, which are integrated into their news stories. To the viewer (or reader) this imposition of views may not even be apparent, because they themselves often have that same set of views; or they are used to that particular bias, not realizing that they are receiving biased reporting.

For awhile, Pharaoh was able to depend upon the template of Moses and Aaron as being religious figures of little importance. They would seemingly present a plague from God; and Pharaoh's religious illusionists would, often to a lesser degree, reproduce the plague. Pharaoh could simply place Moses and Aaron into the same category as his religious illusionists.

However, there came a point where, Pharaoh's religious illusionists could not do what Moses and Aaron appeared to do. Even they admitted that what was done could only be attributed to the finger of God (which is outside of Pharaoh's template). So, because of his negative volition, Pharaoh ignores that which does not fit his template. However, what God does to Pharaoh and to Egypt cannot be simply ignored.

We are studying Pharaoh's negative volition. To draw a modern parallel, it can be shown to anyone who is interested, just how much slanted is the presentation of their news source. And yet, in almost any case, despite seeing the evidence, they will continue to get news from that particular news source. They will choose the media source which backs up what they fundamentally believe, even if they are aware that they are watching biased reporting.

I have known people of a different opinion and I show them a news hour which is, for the most part, without bias. I have even asked them from time to time, "Do you think that was fair or biased?" Every time, I have heard the answer, "Fair." But, after seeing such a program, does that person choose to watch it? No. To get their *news*, they watch their own biased programming, even after realizing that it is biased. That is negative volition.

Pharaoh has a default setting regarding the Hebrew people. They are his slaves and they are necessary for Egypt's economy. When something interferes with this, his volition kicks in. What is fascinating in the expression of his negative volition is this: part of the reason that Pharaoh wants to keep the Hebrew people in Egypt is, their contribution to the Egyptian economy. But, because of Pharaoh's negative volition, the Egyptian economy will be ruined and his slaves will, in short order, leave Egypt entirely (which is not what God originally required of him). Pharaoh could have saved his economy by listening to Moses, but he chose not to.

Pharaoh's underlying default setting is, *against God*. That is fundamental in his thinking. It is really God that Pharaoh is resisting. He may tell himself, from time to time, that he is resisting on behalf of Egypt or on behalf of his people; but all of his choices will be made

to the detriment of Egypt. Every negative decision that Pharaoh's makes ends up harming Egypt and his own palace more. His negative decisions do not harm Israel.<sup>87</sup>

How many people, whose life choices and opinions seem to be illogical and poorly thought out, harm themselves and the people around them? Anyone with addictive behavior. So many times, it turns out that their problem is, fundamentally, they have a negative attitude towards God.

At this point, given the abbreviated nature of this narrative, there is a great deal of narrative missing. We assume that, after God spoke to Moses and Aaron, they then go speak to Pharaoh, tell him what the deal is; and Pharaoh tells them to go out and pound sand. "You are not leaving Egypt to worship your God!" Pharaoh might exclaim.

To this, Moses replies: "[Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land.](#)" (ESV). And then he and Aaron walk out (from the palace or from wherever they are).

All of this drama is left out of the narrative. V. 5 is God promising that this plague will be put upon Egypt the next day; and v. 6 is the fulfillment of that promise:

Exodus 9:6a [So the Lord did this thing on the next day,...](#)

In between v. 5 (where God is speaking to Moses) and v. 6, Moses and Aaron have gone to Pharaoh for final permission to leave Egypt to worship their God; and this permission is denied. Moses tells Pharaoh, "[For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, behold, the hand of the LORD will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock that are in the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks. But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die...Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land.](#)" (Exodus 9:2–5; ESV)

The day after Moses and Aaron speak to Pharaoh, God then does what He promised to do.

Exodus 9:6b [...and all the livestock of Egypt died;...](#)

All of the livestock belonging to Egyptians died. Now, remember that there was the specification that this would be the livestock out in the field.

The word *all* in the Hebrew is sometimes misunderstood. To some, it may appear to say that all of the cattle in Egypt have died; however, if that is so, then how can future judgements have any affect upon the cattle? However, *all* here does not refer to the entirety of the population but refers back to the enumeration of types of livestock listed in v. 3. All of the groupings therein listed were affected by this plague—therefore, the writer

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<sup>87</sup> There is a very short-lived exception to this when Pharaoh assigned a greater workload to the Hebrew people than they could bear. Because of subsequent plagues, this situation lasted less than a week.

to not have to list all the various types of cattle again. Some livestock would remain alive after this judgment to be affected by the plague of hail (Exodus 9:13–35)

Exodus 9:6c ...but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died.

All of the animals of Israel survived. They were not affected by this plague.

The same word for *dying* is found twice in this verse, but I have translated them somewhat differently because the first one is found in the Qal imperfect (which is often continuous action) and the second use of this word is in the Qal perfect, for completed action.

## Lesson 098: Exodus 9:1–7

## The Judgment of Livestock (Part III)

Exodus 9:1–4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, *Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, behold, the hand of the LORD will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock that are in the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks. But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die.*’ ” (ESV; capitalized; with a slight format change)

God tells Moses exactly what is going to take place in the next plague.

Exodus 9:5 And the LORD set a time, saying, “Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land.”

God is still speaking to Moses, who will go off to find Pharaoh and tell him about this plague.

The plagues are presented as disjoint events. However, what seems to have taken place is this: Moses was speaking to Pharaoh about the previous plague, and Moses said, “I will pray to God; and tomorrow, the Lord will remove these flies from your land.” Then Moses goes off to speak to God. God agrees to remove the flies, but, then speaks to Moses: “Pharaoh’s heart will harden and he will not let My people go. So, you will go in to Pharaoh and you will speak to him...”

So, Moses goes in to speak to Pharaoh, after the flies have been removed. “The flies are gone,” Moses says. “Now my God says, ‘Let My people go and worship Me.’ ” And Pharaoh looks at Moses and says, “The flies are gone, but you and your people will not go and worship your God.” (I am filling in some missing dialogue and interaction.)

Then Moses looks Pharaoh in the eye and announces the next plague, “Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, ‘Let My people go, that they may serve Me. For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, behold, the hand of the LORD will fall with a very

severe plague upon your livestock that are in the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks.’ ”

And then, just as God had promised...

Exodus 9:6 So the Lord did this thing on the next day, and all the livestock of Egypt died; but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died.

Exactly what God promised, God did. The next day, all of the livestock of Egypt that were in the field died; but none of the animals of the Israelites died.

We have here the word *kôl*, which means *all*, affixed to the word for *cattle, livestock*; yet, it is clear, by certain passages which follow (Exodus 9:19–21) that some livestock must have remained alive. This would suggest to us that *kôl* does not necessarily mean, *every single one, without exception* died. It suggests that, so many died that it is as if all of their livestock died. For instance, let's say a rich Egyptian has 100 head of cattle. After the plague, perhaps he has 5 or 10 remaining. So virtually, all of his cattle died. Yet there are enough remaining that, the seventh plague of hail will kill many of those which remain. Or, many of the Egyptian ranchers had cattle which, at this time, had been kept in their barns or stables—and those remained alive.

The other understanding of this is, there were specific types of livestock named back in v. 3 (which really has some general categories), and only they were affected. In any case, there will be a great deal of livestock which die; but there will some that remain alive.

**The Fifth Plague of Egypt (The Livestock Diseased)** (a painting); from [PESSCA](#); accessed December 11, 2019.



This artist for this painting is unknown; and, as you may well imagine, there are not a surfeit of paintings that represent this particular plague.

This painting is oil on canvas, it comes from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the artist is merely described as an *Unidentified Quito Artist*.

Along with each plague, I attempt to find an Egyptian god or goddess which might be pertinent to the judgment at hand.



**Hathor — Egyptian Goddess of Love and Protection** (a graphic); from [Hub Pages](#); accessed April 25, 2018. There are other gods, such as Ptah, Mnevis and Amon, Egyptian gods who are actually portrayed as bulls and/or cows; or they are associated with livestock in some way.

Exodus 9:7a [Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead.](#)

Again, God protects His people. Whatever affliction came upon the animals of the Egyptians did not affect the Hebrew livestock.

I have suggested that there is a progression involved in these plagues, which suggests that God is using nature in order to inflict these plagues upon Egypt. The 4<sup>th</sup> plague, which affected Egypt only, was the massive invasion of flies. The flies swarmed the land to the point where Pharaoh called for it to stop, promising to allow Israel to go to the desert-wilderness and worship their God.

We all know that some insects carry an abundance of diseases, and given that these flies are everywhere throughout Egypt, they may have brought the disease of plague #5 to Egypt. Obviously, this would be a disease which affects livestock but not man.

Exodus 9:7a [Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead.](#)

Pharaoh decided to check this out. Many times when we find the phrase, *and so-and-so sent,,,* there is often no direct object stated, but one is implied. We may assume that personal messengers or people that Pharaoh could trust were sent to verify what Moses told him.

Moses has been telling Pharaoh that, from the curse of the flies, God's plagues have only touched Egypt and not Israel.

A very large percentage of cattle belonging to the Egyptians had, apparently, died. So Pharaoh sent some trusted servants to see what was going on in Israel—to see if the cattle were alive among the sons of Israel. His messengers confirmed this to him. It is reasonable to assume his people checked around his city and outside the city for information about their own livestock (which were all dead); and checked Israel, and their livestock were alive and healthy.

Exodus 9:7a [Then Pharaoh sent, and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead.](#)

This is somewhat of a play on words. God is telling Pharaoh, “Send My people out of your land.” Instead, Pharaoh *sends* his own men into Goshen (the place where Israel lived) to see if what Moses said is true.

Pharaoh does not want to agree to what the God of Moses demands, but he has seen livestock everywhere die so he wants to find out, *is it true? Did God only kill Egyptian cattle?* So Pharaoh sends his own men out (his servants in this case). God said that He would destroy all of Egyptian’s cattle (those who are out in the field); but that He would not destroy the livestock owned by the sons of Israel. Pharaoh investigates this and it turns out, what God said was true.

There is another aspect to this narrative that is quite interesting. There is a small delegation of men, sent by Pharaoh, to go into the territory occupied by the Hebrew people. At this point, they are relative unaffected by these plagues. Their lives in Goshen are pretty normal, apart from the fact that they do not appear to be subject at this time to the yoke of slavery—given all of the plagues which have occurred.

Would these men who investigate Goshen not talk amongst themselves and consider, “Why don’t we come here for the next judgment by their God?” Let me explain why they do not:

Christians tend to have better lives overall than unbelievers. A Christian is less likely to be taking drugs, drinking alcohol to excess, chasing women, committing adultery, etc. That in itself is going to make a believer happier and more stable. If that person has some doctrine in his or her soul, then life is even that much better. Yet, do smart unbelievers make this observation and think, “I really need to have what Charley Brown has. I might follow him to church and sneak inside and see what is going on.” To some degree, this does happen—particularly when the unbeliever has made a mess of his own life. But, generally speaking, it does not. Understanding this helps you to understand how the messengers of Pharaoh can walk into Goshen, see that it is undisturbed by the plagues of their God, and yet not think, “If their God brings another plague, I am coming here to hang out until it is over.” Their negative volition toward the Hebrew God keeps them from putting this most logical approach aside.

In some ways, this negative volition is almost humorous. Who among us, in the midst of a difficult winter, does not see a vacation in the tropics being hawked, and we think to ourselves, “Wouldn’t it be nice to be laying out by a beach right now.” So, we, as human beings, can look at two environments and be able to clearly view the tropic vacation environment as the better place to be. Yet, for some reason, the unbeliever is unable to apply the same thinking when it comes to a relationship with God (through faith in Christ) and going to church.

Exodus 9:7b **But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go.**

Even though these reports again vindicate the Word of God, Pharaoh continues in his negative volition towards God. The word used here is *kâbêd* (כָּבֵד) [pronounced *kaw<sup>h</sup>-*

VADE], which means, *to honor, to glorify, to recognize; to be great, to be vehement, to be heavy, weighty, burdensome; to be insensible, to be dull*. The latter 4 definitions are applicable. Kâbêd refers to the negative volition in Pharaoh's soul; as opposed to the strengthening of Pharaoh's heart so that he could express his negative volition. To remind you, there are two different words being translated *hardening* of Pharaoh's heart. This one expresses negative volition. God tells Pharaoh to release the people of Israel and Pharaoh stubbornly says *no*. His heart is *weighty, insensible, dull*. Strong's #3513 BDB #457. That is the use found here.

Pharaoh sent out men to determine if what Moses said was true or not—*did people in Goshen (the sons of Israel) lose any of their livestock?* This means that Pharaoh sat around and waited for a report. My guess is, the servants that he sent out had to take at least an hour, if not more. It would have taken them time to get to Goshen and then to make inquiries. All that time, Pharaoh had time to think and to consider what happened.

That should be fascinating—Pharaoh was interested enough to check out whether Moses was telling him what was true—but the answer to that does not change Pharaoh's negative volition.

Despite all of the mounting evidence, despite God promising this and that great sign, Pharaoh's heart continues being strengthened against God.

Bear in mind, Pharaoh sat around for an hour or two, thinking about this; and then, his servants came back and told him that what Moses said was true. None of the cattle in Israel had died.

It is fascinating that Pharaoh checks out the veracity of Moses' statements but then, the outcome does not affect what he does.

This is quite important in our lives. I frequent a site which is frequented by so-called rationalistic and empiricist atheists who have great faith in science. This is a facebook page and they express their opposition to brainwashed Christians there. They see Christians as people who (in their opinion) reject science, reject empiricism and reject rational thought. For most of the atheists, it matters little how good the arguments are against them. They love it when a Christian comes off as stupid, unlearned or easily provoked. However, it does not matter if they face rational arguments or even well-reasoned empirical arguments. These atheists are strong in their faith in global warming and evolution; they refuse to acknowledge that these are matters of faith (they believe that these are both unshakable sciences rejected only by the insane and the brainwashed). So, here we have Pharaoh, who has seen a plethora of empirical evidence that God is Who He says He is and that Moses is God's legitimate representative; and yet Pharaoh continues to strengthen himself against God.

Pharaoh, in his position, has responsibilities and decisions which he must make. This places him under great pressure at this time—enough to cause him to lose his mind, to turn into an emotional wreck, to a point where he could no longer function as a leader.

Even if he is the most heartless ruler on earth, the pain and discomfort that he must personally bear must weigh on him. There may even be developing some hatred from his own people because he, as Pharaoh, cannot seem to do anything right. This is pressure beyond what most of us could bear. God allowed him to continue. In order for Pharaoh to continue, despite all of these pressures, he needed strength. God continues to give him the strength to persist and resist. God strengthened or fortified his heart. However, God in no wise planted negative volition inside of Pharaoh—Pharaoh did that himself.

Exodus 9:7b **But the heart of Pharaoh became hard, and he did not let the people go.**

It sounds as if there is a change here in the NKJV; whereas, before Pharaoh hardened his heart, but here, it reads that his heart *became hard* (passive voice). I do not know exactly the difference here; but previously, Pharaoh acted on his own heart.

In the Hebrew, the subject of the verb is *a heart of Pharaoh*; but the verb is the Qal stem, which is the normal form of the verb (the Niphal stem is the passive stem and would indicate that Pharaoh's heart received hardening). The best way to translate this is, *the heart of Pharaoh became weighty and insensible*.

A better translation of v. 7b: **But the heart of Pharaoh continued being heavy, insensible, and dull, so he did not let the [Hebrew] people go.**

The end result is what we would expect—Pharaoh did not let the people go. So, despite the plague of the flies (which was removed) and then the plague of the disease on Egyptian livestock, Pharaoh holds strong to his position; he will not allow the people of Israel to leave.

Exodus 9:7 **Then Pharaoh sent** [his people into Goshen to check what Moses said], **and indeed, not even one of the livestock of the Israelites was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh became hard** [or, *kept being heavy, insensible and dull*], **and he did not let the people go.**

Do you see how irrational this is? Why bother sending people out to check the veracity of what Moses says, if that does not affect what you are going to do? Moses tells Pharaoh that the livestock of Israel will be untouched, but that the livestock of Egypt will be destroyed. So Pharaoh sends out men to determine whether or not this is true; but, in the end, Pharaoh remains negative to the demands of God. He will not allow the people of Israel to leave Egypt.

**Application:** Negative volition towards God is not necessarily rational. Rational and empirical proofs will not necessarily change a person with negative volition.

You can argue until you are blue in the face, pointing out the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, the uniqueness of the Bible, the existence of God, the shortcomings of evolution; and for most atheists and agnostics, it will make no difference. Before you even open your mouth, they *know* in their own souls that you are wrong and that your arguments are stupid. That is the power of negative volition.

**Application:** You might even get a person who is negative towards Jesus Christ to click on a link or to read a short article or to consider an argument; but most often, they will return to their negative volition in very short order. I say this not to discourage you from witnessing, but for your witness to clearly present the gospel. You may or may not provide rational or empirical arguments; but the fundamental question is always, “What do you think of Christ?”

## Lesson 099: Exodus 9:8–10

## The Sixth Plague: Boils

We go right from the 5<sup>th</sup> plague in this 6<sup>th</sup> plague. However, we filled in the blanks already. So that these plagues are not too repetitive, sometimes all that is preserved in the written record of God telling Moses what the plague is; which is then followed by the negative volition of Pharaoh.

### The Sixth Plague: Boils

Regarding the plagues overall, we are at the halfway mark here; 5 plagues have already occurred (blood, frogs, lice, flies, livestock); there will be 5 more plagues which will take place.

Here, God is speaking to Moses and Aaron; and then they will do what God has told them to do, and that will be recorded as well. This 6<sup>th</sup> plague will be covered in only 5 verses.

Exodus 9:8a [So the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Take for yourselves handfuls of ashes from a furnace,...](#)

God tells Moses and Aaron to take fistfuls of ashes from the kiln.

The beginning of this plague is going to be small, yet theatric for its small audience (Pharaoh, his entourage; and perhaps his magicians). The effects of the plague will be widespread, however. All of Egypt will feel it.

Exodus 9:8b [...and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh.](#)

Moses and Aaron are to take these ashes, go find Pharaoh, and throw them up into the air. Now, there are details left out of this narrative. It appears to take place outside, which leads me to suggest that Moses and Aaron track Pharaoh down (perhaps when he is walking back from his morning swim/bath in the Nile).

Recall that Aaron was brought into all this by Moses. God, when Moses began to do what God had told him to do in the first place, did not discard Aaron. Throughout Moses’ life, Aaron would play a very important part in the national history of Israel. In fact, in the long term, Aaron’s progeny will be far more important than Moses’ (we do not even know what happened to Moses’ sons—I have always assumed that they went back with their mother when she deserted Moses again).

Up to this point in time, Pharaoh became somewhat used to both men—Moses and Aaron—coming to him and presenting God's Word. In fact, Pharaoh does not appear to understand that it is Moses who is the primary actor in all of this. In any case, God has allowed Aaron to continue to take part in this judgment of Pharaoh and Egypt. Moses continued to do all of the talking and most of the action, but God continues to find a place for Aaron.

Here is the theatric approach, orchestrated by God. Moses takes this soot which he has in both hands and he throws it into the sky. All of this is observed by Pharaoh, although we do not know how close or how far away Moses is. The point is, Pharaoh could see what Moses is doing.

As discussed, there is more to this plague than is recorded; but we focus primarily upon the plague. It is possible that this is all that there is—the plague. No warning, no *let My people go*, etc. However, I believe that all of those elements are a part of this plague.

Exodus 9:8 [So the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Take for yourselves handfuls of ashes from a furnace, and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh.](#)

Pharaoh is the man who would make the decisions. So, Moses and Aaron must perform whatever is required by God in front of Pharaoh.

There were 4 factors required by God’s justice for each plague: (1) God did not want to simply inflict injury upon Egypt. God does not act from the motivation of malice or revenge. Therefore, each plague had to be more than just a painful experience for the Egyptians. (2) It had to be clear that what God was doing was seen as coming from the hand of Moses and Aaron. (3) Pharaoh always had the option to stop any judgment from God. All he had to do is call Moses and Aaron into his palace and say, “Stop the plague and tell me what you want. I will do it.” Pharaoh knew what God required of him from the beginning (4) Finally, these great signs had to affect all of Egypt. The volition of the Egyptians had to be engaged as well. We primarily view Pharaoh and his actions; but he is a representative of his people. Although we focus on Pharaoh, his negative volition is representative of the negative volition of his people.

It would seem that throwing the ashes into the air would be something that takes place out of doors. Whether Pharaoh is taking his morning swim/bath; or wherever they are, God will make certain that Moses and Aaron are able to find Pharaoh.

Exodus 9:9a [And it will become fine dust in all the land of Egypt,...](#)

The ashes would become fine dust. This is, of course, how it would appear. We have no idea exactly what was physically happening. We may reasonably assume that there is a wind which takes the ashes up into the air. What appears to come down from the sky is a fine dust. Now, whether or not there was an actual metamorphous taking place here, we do not know. It sounds that way; but we have to be careful to distinguish between what appears to have happened from what actually is happening. Quite obviously, a few

handfuls of ashes thrown into the air cannot come down and land on every man and beast in the land of Egypt. However, it has to seem that way to those watching Moses and Aaron.

Exodus 9:9b ...and it will cause boils that break out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt.”

All of a sudden, boils broke out upon the skin of the people and animals all over Egypt. These boils erupted into oozing blisters.

The only thing I can liken this to is being bitten by fire ants, which are very small ants who many not be felt at first, even if there are a few dozen of them on you; but, then, all of a sudden, you begin to feel their bites and many times, a boils will erupt on your skin (for me, these boils last a little over a week).

I envision the fine dust landing upon people in the same way. They may not feel it at first, but then they notice that this dust is on them; and then, after the passage of time—a few seconds or perhaps a few minutes—boils erupt.

So far, in the narrative, this is simply what God is telling Moses and Aaron to do. Moses and Aaron will follow through, doing what God tells them to do, in v. 10.

Conservapedia suggests<sup>88</sup> that this particular judgment breaks God’s pattern. Previously, He warned what would happen; and this time, He just does it. I do not agree with this interpretation. Now, it is true that Moses and Aaron are not ordered to go and speak to Pharaoh and to warn him; they are simply to be somewhere that he can see them; and they will then do what God has asked them to do. However, Moses and Aaron are not told where to find Pharaoh either.

What makes the most sense to me is, there is an overlap as I have described earlier. Moses and Aaron have come before Pharaoh, who has seen much of the livestock of Egypt die (and checked to see if this happened to the Jews in Goshen and found that it had not). And Pharaoh looks at them and says, “You and your people aren’t going anywhere.” At which point, Moses and Aaron take these ashes and Moses throws them into the air. There had been a meeting with God, but it had taken place while the judgment of the livestock was taking place.

Again, insofar as storytelling goes, this is easier to follow if each plague is presented as a disjoint event; but that does not mean that there was no overlap. Here, there would be no problem with the narrative, even if we understood that, *while* livestock were dying, Moses and Aaron were in front of God, and He is telling them to take fistfuls of ashes.

Exodus 9:8–9 So the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Take for yourselves handfuls of ashes from a furnace, and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh.

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<sup>88</sup> From [https://www.conservapedia.com/Exodus\\_8-14\\_\(Translated\)](https://www.conservapedia.com/Exodus_8-14_(Translated)) accessed January 5, 2019.

And it will become fine dust in all the land of Egypt, and it will cause boils that break out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt.”

Vv. 8–9 are the meeting which God has with Moses and Aaron, which will take place in the very near future.

When this fine dust came down (or appeared to come back down), it (or whatever came down out of the sky) would cause boils and sores to break out over both men and animals throughout the land. Now, it is not necessarily the ashes which cause anything. The ashes may have effected the people and animals; or they may have been used simply for theatrics. We have no idea as to what actually comes down and causes the boils to break out. What appears to be the case is, the ashes are thrown into the air, and they seem to come down and cause the boils to break out.

Exodus 9:10a *Then they took ashes from the furnace...*

We suddenly go from God giving Moses and Aaron direction (vv. 8–9) to Moses and Aaron acting.

*They* is a reference to Moses and Aaron. Obeying God, they went to a furnace or oven and took out handfuls of ashes.

Exodus 9:10b *...and stood before Pharaoh,....*

When Moses and Aaron came before Pharaoh, whatever conversation took place is not told to us. I see this as Moses and Aaron appearing before Pharaoh and saying, “We are ready to lead Israel out into the desert to worship our God;” and Pharaoh responds with, “Not on your life.” Then Moses and Aaron act. I believe that a great deal of the repetition was left out of this narrative simply to move it along. So, even though there was likely an intervening conversation between them, it is not recorded. It actually sounds more as if Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh and then suddenly, Moses begins throwing ashes into the air.

The verb used here can mean *to take a stand*. Many times, the implication can be that they are *taking a stand against Pharaoh* or *are standing in opposition to Pharaoh*.

There is no doubt some interaction which takes place. Perhaps Moses says, “God tells you to send His people out of Egypt. If you don’t, I will throw these ashes into the air and they will come down as boils and erupting blisters on everyone in Egypt.” And Pharaoh says, “Do what you think you need to do; I do not fear your God.”

It could also be that, Pharaoh had promised in the previous plague to let the Hebrew people walk out of Egypt in order to serve God; and then relented on his promise. So, as a result, Moses and Aaron stand before Pharaoh, and they say, “You are now refusing to let God’s people go, and therefore, these ashes will become boils and blisters that will erupt upon the skin of everyone in Egypt.”

The pattern, whatever exactly occurred, continues. There is the plague, the negative volition of Pharaoh, followed by another plague.

Exodus 9:10c ...and Moses scattered them [the ashes] toward heaven.

Aaron does not act here, but Moses does, and he throws these ashes into the sky. Aaron probably hands him the ashes in his hands, and Moses throws those into the air as well.

Most of the time, when you throw something into the air, perhaps it goes 10' or maybe 30'. Although nothing is said here about the distance, my guess is, there is a wind, and these ashes are picked up by that wind. I am only speculating here, but the idea is, these ashes will go up rather high and then seemingly come down all over Egypt.

Exodus 9:10d And they caused boils that break out in sores on man and beast.

This soot comes down and it appears to erupt into sores and blisters on the skin of men and animals.

Nothing has been said about the systems of communication in Egypt. Allow me to speculate at this point. Some of pharaoh's servants, being subjected to economic ruin and pain and suffering, would talk to their families. They would be stopped in the street and asked what was going on by others who knew their position in the Egyptian government. The Egyptians would have nothing more important to talk about. They faced economic collapse and a series of great physical pains and discomforts due to these plagues. The story of what was occurring would get out and circulate throughout all of Egypt. Some information would seep out of Egypt. People who came to Egypt to trade would leave quickly after being subjected to one or two plagues. In the few days they might stay and endure, they would find out what was occurring and noise this information abroad.

Most of the plagues went on for 3 days or so; and no more than a week. These kinds of things were so significant, so devastating, so painful, that the news of them could not help but spread throughout the land as to their cause, revealing to all Egyptians the power and severity of Y<sup>e</sup>howah, the God of the Hebrews. And this news would easily, by now, find itself being voiced abroad, possibly by even some Egyptians who left Egypt themselves, no longer able to endure the pain and suffering that they faced each day (we have no Biblical record of this; I am only speculating here).

However, there are potentially two responses occurring in Egypt. There would be a growing dissension against Pharaoh from within and without the palace. But the larger growing response appears to have been a growing animosity against Moses and Aaron and against the Hebrew people. People under great pressure often experience a great range of emotion. However, I think that this kind of anger will occur in large part after Israel leaves (otherwise, how could Pharaoh raise up an army to pursue Israel?).

I suspect that, most people are simply dealing with each crisis as it comes, being worn down, suffering, but being too busy with the difficulties to try to place blame. Each plague

occurs right after the previous plague, so there is little time to take a breath, let alone, to gather and discuss and get one another worked up.

Whatever response there was among the Egyptians, they could have gone into Goshen and avoided these plagues, but we have no record of them doing so.

## Lesson 100: Exodus 9:10–11a

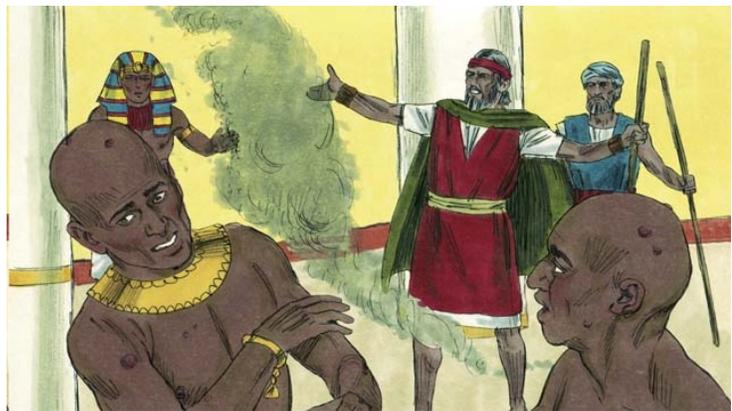
## The Plague of Boils (Part II)

Exodus 9:8–9 So the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Take for yourselves handfuls of ashes from a furnace, and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh. And it will become fine dust in all the land of Egypt, and it will cause boils that break out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt.”

Exodus 9:10 Then they took ashes from the furnace and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses scattered them toward heaven. And they caused boils that break out in sores on man and beast.

**Moses Throws Ashes into the Air** {a graphic}; from [Door 43](#); accessed January 21, 2020.

In v. 10, Moses throws ashes into the heavens; and it is these ashes which appear to turn into dust and come back down and cause sores and boils to break out and man and beast.



The KJV is an excellent translation, but it is outdated. The NKJV is not quite the literary masterpiece that the KJV was, but it is also an excellent translation, and more appropriate for our times. In fact, it is my opinion that using the KJV in public sounds like a foreign language to most young ears. I think that, in this regard, the local church which has a KJV-only approach is completely wrong.

Despite being an excellent translation, this does not mean that we may always depend upon the NKJV to be completely accurate. In v. 9, we read *and it will cause*; and in v. 10 we read, *And they caused...* The problem is, we do not have a word for *cause*; and we do not have the Hiphil stem of a verb (the causative stem) used in either verse. Furthermore, whereas the English appears to be singular in v. 9 and plural in v. 10, even that is not the case. In fact, the phrases *and it will become*, *and it will cause* (both in v. 9) along with *and they caused* are all the same verb. Literally, what we have is *and he was*, *and he was*, and *he is*. Perfect tenses of the verb *to be* are found in v. 9 and the imperfect tense is found in v. 10. Although the perfect tense in the Hebrew is used to indicate a singular or

completed action; it is not equivalent to our past tense. God, in v. 9, is telling Moses what he would do in the future. The *ashes* (actually a singular noun in the Hebrew; think *ash*, *soot*) *will become a fine dust*. We use the translation *become* rather than *is* (or *was*, *will be*) because the verb *to be* is followed by the lamed preposition, which can cause the verb *to be* to mean *to become*.

The grammar specifics of that critical view of the NKJV may have been hard to follow, but let me make these changes in the translation of vv. 8–10:

Exodus 9:8–9 So the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Take for yourselves handfuls of soot from a furnace, and let Moses scatter it toward the heavens in the sight of Pharaoh. And it will become fine dust in all the land of Egypt, and it will become boils that break out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt.”

Exodus 9:10 Then they took soot from the furnace and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses scattered it toward heaven. And it became an inflammation which breaks out in sores on man and beast.

Much of what I have just said about the grammar of this passage may seem fairly esoteric to the average reader; even with a corrected translation. Furthermore, almost no translation will tell you any of that information (sometimes the NET Bible does so in their footnotes). The translators have to find the right balance between giving us a literal translation, but also a translation which makes good sense in the English—and many times, this involves substituting a plural for a singular, or adding a few words here or there, to smooth out the translation.

Now, the point I am trying to make here is, the ashes may simply appear to become a fine dust in the air. What happens after Moses throws ashes into the air is not completely known. Does God transform the ashes into something else (this fine dust); and then this fine dust turns out to be an irritant when it lands upon skin? If we take this completely literally, that would be the case. In any case, whatever falls down upon man and beast irritates their skin and their skin erupts in boils.

Bear in mind that, throughout the book of Exodus, God is very theatrical. He wants Pharaoh and all of Egypt to see what Moses is doing. God wants Pharaoh to associate the plague with Moses acting at God’s direction. All of this is accomplished in this narrative. There may be some speculation as to the exact nature of the fine dust and its actual origin, but that is not a real issue. God is capable of taking a natural occurring set of circumstances in using them for His purposes; and He is also capable of actually transforming these ashes into something else, and raining that down upon the Egyptians.

One more grammatical note. I mentioned that the verb *to be* is found in the perfect tense in v. 9 but in the imperfect tense in v. 10. The imperfect tense can stand for a present action or a continuous action; but, it is also used when describing a series of actions taking place one right after the other. When we find a series of wâw consecutives followed by imperfect verbs, one after another; then these are a series of actions which take place in

succession (or coterminously). That is what is happening in v. 10. Literally, v. 10 reads like this: *And so they take ash of the furnace and so they stand before Pharaoh and so Moses throws it heaven-ward. And so it is a boil/blisters are breaking out on man and on beast.* (I even took some liberties even in this literal translation.) So, we have 4 verbs, all given in order of the actions which occur in this verse.

My intention is to provide the best explanation for a series of events as possible. Once and awhile, I will explain exactly what I am looking at when I develop a particular interpretation.

If I were to guess, the ashes seemingly became this fine dust; but the fine dust came from somewhere else (caused by God, perhaps through a natural series of events). The ashes being thrown into the air is all about theatrics.

Now, another person who knows the Hebrew might dogmatically state, *the ashes became the fine dust.* And that is a possible interpretation. However, when all is said and done, we have the important information, which is, God had Moses and Aaron act in such a way to let Pharaoh know that all of this is of God. They are acting as spokesmen for God. They warned Pharaoh; Pharaoh strengthened his heart against God and acted; and, therefore, God had to act.

**Isis — Egyptian Goddess of Medicine and Peace** (a graphic); from [Hub Pages](#); accessed April 25, 2018.



Interestingly enough, the religious illusionists are mentioned again:

Exodus 9:11a *And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils,...*

There is this play on words going on. Moses and Aaron are able to stand before Pharaoh; they are able to take a stand against him (v. 10). However, the religious illusionists are unable to stand before Moses, because they are covered in boils (v. 11). I am assuming that they had boils on their feet, making it impossible for them to even stand.

These religious illusionists<sup>89</sup> have not been mentioned since the invasion of the gnats. They have still been involved in the court decisions, in strengthening or bolstering Pharaoh. There are several views here as to why they were unable to appear before Pharaoh: (1) the priests were supposed to be spotless and without blemish; these boils defiled them; or, (2) they were in too much physical pain to even come to Pharaoh. Their bodies are covered with painful, and possibly cancerous sores. These boils are beyond discomfort. I guess that you could say that they are in too much physical pain to show up to work, so

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<sup>89</sup> I call them *religious illusionists* because they were able to imitate some of the miracles and signs of God. However, there even came a point where they were unable seemingly duplicate the power of God.

to speak, and their uniforms are dirty. Quite obviously, if they suffer from the same ailments as everyone else, it is clear that they had no power to resist the plagues from the God of Moses. (3) I think that they are in the palace, with Pharaoh, at this time; and that, quite often, they would stand up, almost like bodyguards, when Moses entered the palace (or came to Pharaoh in some other place). At this point, I believe that they are with Pharaoh, but that they cannot physically stand up. They may have even collapsed before Moses, as their boils began to form.

What I find interesting here is, the religious illusionists continued to come before Pharaoh throughout these various plagues. At first they tried to duplicate each plague (on a rather small scale, I would imagine), but they could never undo what God had done; nor could they even really duplicate what God had done. At some point, they were unable to duplicate what God does, at one time, even admitting that what was being done was *by the finger of God*. But, in any case, they continue to come and stand before Pharaoh; and they even stood before Moses whenever he came into Pharaoh's periphery. However, at this point, even they are even unable to do that.

Exodus 9:11a [And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils,...](#)

These boils were all over the magicians and on all the Egyptians. The magicians could not stand before Moses, and I take that very literally, because of the boils all over their bodies. Did some of them not come in to work this day? Or did they show up, but were unable to stand at attention off to the side? It sounds as if they were unable to even come in to Pharaoh's palace, giving us an idea as to how painful these sores must have been.

The way that I see this, based upon the text of this verse is, the religious illusionists were an integral part of Pharaoh's cabinet. So, even though the Bible often spoke of what Moses and Aaron did before Pharaoh, it appears that most of the time this was before Pharaoh and a group of men—his underlings—which included the magicians.

Throughout all of these plagues, the magicians were unable to undo with some magic tricks what Moses and Aaron did.

Originally, whatever Moses and Aaron could do, the magicians of Pharaoh could duplicate those miracles (by means of a trick; and never quite up to the scale of what Moses and Aaron did). However, Pharaoh was strong enough to express his negative volition, whether their own duplication was any good or not. "Moses and Aaron did this? Well, my magicians just did the same thing. I don't have to listen to their God." Pharaoh may have thought.

However, at this point, the magicians of Pharaoh cannot duplicate the miracles of Moses and Aaron; nor are they immune from the effects of said miracles. Pharaoh is still negative to the demands of God. His heart is strengthened, despite the fact that he can no longer look to his magicians for intellectual (and emotional?) support.