

INTRODUCTION:

Exodus is a Greek word which is composed of two parts, *ek*, “out,” and *hodos*, “road.” The Book of Exodus describes the departure of the nation of Israel from their bondage in the land of Egypt. Centuries before the Patriarch, Jacob, had brought his extended family to Egypt to avoid starvation (see Gen. 46:1-27). Because of a shift in political power, the descendants of Joseph and his brothers fell into slavery, but they became quite numerous. The emphasis in Genesis upon one family has given way to a focus upon the nation of Israel in the Book of Exodus. Through the Exodus God’s people will be slowly shaped into a people who are in a covenant relationship with Jehovah, God.

The main theme of Exodus is redemption. All people may have hope, no matter how desperate the situation. God will send a deliverer to display His awesome power, and deliverance will come through blood. Moses is clearly a type of Jesus Christ to the people of Israel, leading them out of bondage. God keeps His promises.

There is little doubt that Moses wrote the Book of Exodus. He penned it from first-hand experience with God and with the people of Israel. There are two distinct portions: (1) the historical section (chapters 1—19); and (2) the regulations (chapters 20—40). This study will focus on section (1) and a small portion of section (2). Because it covers so much material it will be divided into several parts. The first part will set the stage and deal with why the people of Israel went from prominence to slavery and Moses’ call to lead God’s people out of bondage (chapters 1-6). Subsequent parts will deal with the plagues (chapters 7-12), the actual exodus or departure from Egypt (chapters 13-15), the journey in the wilderness (15-19), and the Ten Commandments given by God (chapter 20).

SETTING THE STAGE:

Genesis ended with Joseph being second in authority to Pharaoh and God’s people being welcomed and given their own place (the land of Goshen) in Egypt where they would prosper and multiply. At the beginning of Exodus everything has changed and God’s people have now been placed in bondage as slaves to Egypt. In this part of our study we will look at why this happened and the significance of the events leading up to God delivering His people out of their bondage in Egypt.

(God's people multiply and Egypt's leadership changes.)

Exodus 1:6-10

(6) Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. (7) But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them. (8) Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. (9) He said to his people, *"Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. (10) Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land."*

Comments:

(Verse 6) The word “generation” is used in a variety of ways in the Scriptures. In some cases it refers to a period of time without set limits (Ps. 102:24) while at other times it is used as a simple reference to the past (Isa. 51:8) or the future (Ps. 100:5). It is also used to designate men with particular characteristics or of a certain class. Here it refers to all of a particular class living at a designated time.

(Verse 8) Joseph went to Egypt during a period when a foreign Semitic people had taken over and ruled Egypt. These people were known as the Hyksos (rulers of foreign lands), popularly called the Shepherd Kings, who reigned about 150 years (1720-1570 BC). The fact that Joseph was Semitic and from the same general area probably made it easier for the Pharaoh to elevate him to such a high post than if the Pharaoh had been a native Egyptian. The situation under this foreign rule became intolerable and in about 1580 BC a Theban king Kamose began pushing the Hyksos back into the Delta, and the following king Ahmose I, completely expelled the Hyksos and reunited Egypt. When the Hyksos were finally expelled, not only would the Egyptians have regarded foreign Semitic people who had settled in Egypt under preceding administration as a military threat (see Ex. 1:9, 10), but their continued presence would have been a constant reminder of their former foreign overlords. Hence, all the ingredients were present for the enslavement of Israel, although they had nothing to do with the earlier subjugation of the Egyptians by the Hyksos. While the invasion by the Hyksos was regarded by the Egyptians as a calamity, its influence was epoch-making and had much to do with transforming a peaceful people into a military nation.

(God's people oppressed, but continue to multiply.)

Exodus 1:11-14

(11) So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. (12) But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. (13) The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; (14) and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.

Comments:

Pithom means “house of Atum” who was an Egyptian god, the setting sun. Raamses, also called Rameses, means “the sun god.” These two storage cities were located in the land of Goshen where the previous Pharaoh had ordered Jacob and his people to live. The cities are near the most fertile lands of Egypt and grain was stored within them.

(Pharaoh attempts to kill male children, but God's people still multiply.)

Exodus 1:15-22

(15) Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah; (16) and he said, *"When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live."* (17) But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. (18) So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, *"Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?"* (19) The midwives said to Pharaoh, *"Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can get to them."* (20) So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. (21) Because the midwives feared God, He established households for them. (22) Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, *"Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive."*

Comments:

God has instituted civil government for the good of the people (Rom. 13:1-5).

Throughout the Scriptures He instructs His people to be in submission and obedient to those powers (Ecc. 8:2; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14). But those powers are not granted the right to compel men to do things which are contrary to God's law (Dan. 3:16, 18; Acts 4:19; 5:29). The question arises here as to whether the Hebrew midwives were lying and refusing obedience to the king. If they did, it was done to avoid committing murder. Of the two evils, they chose the lesser. However, there is no proof that they were guilty of falsehood. It seems that Pharaoh accepted their explanation of the case, which rested upon a well-known physiological fact. God gave His approval to their action.

(The birth and deliverance of Moses.)**Exodus 2:1-10**

(1) Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a daughter of Levi. (2) The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months. (3) But when she could hide him no longer, she got him a wicker basket and covered it over with tar and pitch. Then she put the child into it and set *it* among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. (4) His sister stood at a distance to find out what would happen to him. (5) The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her maidens walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid, and she brought it *to her*. (6) When she opened *it*, she saw the child, and behold, *the* boy was crying. And she had pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." (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?" (8) Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go *ahead*." So the girl went and called the child's mother. (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. (10) The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

Comments:

The name Moses (in Hebrew *Mosheh*) means “to draw out.” Some have objected that an Egyptian princess would not have given a Hebrew name to her foster child. However, a comparison of Hebrew and Egyptian names reveals that there was an Egyptian name virtually identical in sound and meaning to *Mosheh*, as in the case with a number of personal names in modern Western languages. It may be that the princess gave him an Egyptian name and the sacred writer chose its Hebrew counterpart. The text in the Hebrew Bible could also be construed to mean that it was Moses’ mother who named him.

(Moses flees from Egypt, escaping to the land of Midian.)**Exodus 2:11-15**

(11) Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. (12) So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. (13) He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, *“Why are you striking your companion?”* (14) But he said, *“Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?”* Then Moses was afraid and said, *“Surely the matter has become known.”* (15) When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.

Comments:

The Midianites were descendants of Abraham by another wife, Keturah, whom he married after Sarah died (Gen. 25:1, 2).

See map on page 10 for location of the land of Midian relative to the land of Goshen which contains the Egyptian cities of Pithom and Rameses.

(God hears the cries of the sons of Israel.)

Exodus 2:23-25

(23) Now it came about in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died. And the sons of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. (24) So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (25) God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.

(Moses and the burning bush.)

Exodus 3:1-10

(1) Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. (2) The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. (3) So Moses said, *"I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up."* (4) When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, *"Moses, Moses!"* And he said, *"Here I am."* (5) Then He said, *"Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."* (6) He said also, *"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."* Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (7) The LORD said, *"I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. (8) So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite. (9) Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them. (10) Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."*

Comments:

The center of population for the land of Midian was located east of the Gulf of Aqaba, and while its boundaries cannot be exactly defined, they extended to the pasture land east of Mount Horeb located in the southern end of the Sinai Peninsula. Mt. Horeb and Mt. Sinai are two names for the same mountain of God.

(God reveals His name.)**Exodus 3:13-15**

(13) Then Moses said to God, *"Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"* (14) God said to Moses, **"I AM WHO I AM"**; and He said, **"Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"** (15) God, furthermore, said to Moses, **"Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations."**

Comments:

The phrase "I AM" in Hebrew is closely related to God's personal name (Ex. 6:3; Jehovah or Yahweh or YHWH) which occurs more than 6,000 times in the O.T. Though the meaning is not completely clear to biblical scholars, it seems to suggest the timelessness of God, the very foundation of all existence. Perhaps there is a hint of this in Rev. 1:4, **"from Him who is, and who was, and who is to come."** Jesus probably alluded to this in Jn. 8:58, **"Before Abraham was born, I AM."** Christ is the same yesterday, and today, yes and forever (Heb. 13:8).

(Moses reluctant to speak for God.)**Exodus 4:10-17**

(10) Then Moses said to the LORD, **"Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."** (11) The LORD said to him, **"Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"**

(12) *Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.*" (13) But he said, *"Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will."*
(14) Then the anger of the LORD burned against Moses, and He said, *"Is there not your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he speaks fluently. And moreover, behold, he is coming out to meet you; when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.* (15) *You are to speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I, even I, will be with your mouth and his mouth, and I will teach you what you are to do.* (16) *Moreover, he shall speak for you to the people; and he will be as a mouth for you and you will be as God to him.* (17) *You shall take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs."*

(God sends Moses to Egypt and foretells what will happen.)

Exodus 4:19-23

(19) Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, *"Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead."* (20) So Moses took his wife and his sons and mounted them on a donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand. (21) The LORD said to Moses, *"When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.* (22) *Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Israel is My son, My firstborn.* (23) *So I said to you, 'Let My son go that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.'"*

(Pharaoh rejects request and increases Israel's labor.)

Exodus 5:1-9

(1) And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, *"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.'"*
(2) But Pharaoh said, *"Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go."* (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, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."* (4) But the king of Egypt said to them, *"Moses and*

Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get back to your labors!"
 (5) Again Pharaoh said, *"Look, the people of the land are now many, and you would have them cease from their labors!"* (6) So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters over the people and their foremen, saying, (7) *"You are no longer to give the people straw to make brick as previously; let them go and gather straw for themselves.* (8) *But the quota of bricks which they were making previously, you shall impose on them; you are not to reduce any of it. Because they are lazy, therefore they cry out, 'Let us go and sacrifice to our God.'* (9) *Let the labor be heavier on the men, and let them work at it so that they will pay no attention to false words."*

(God promises action.)

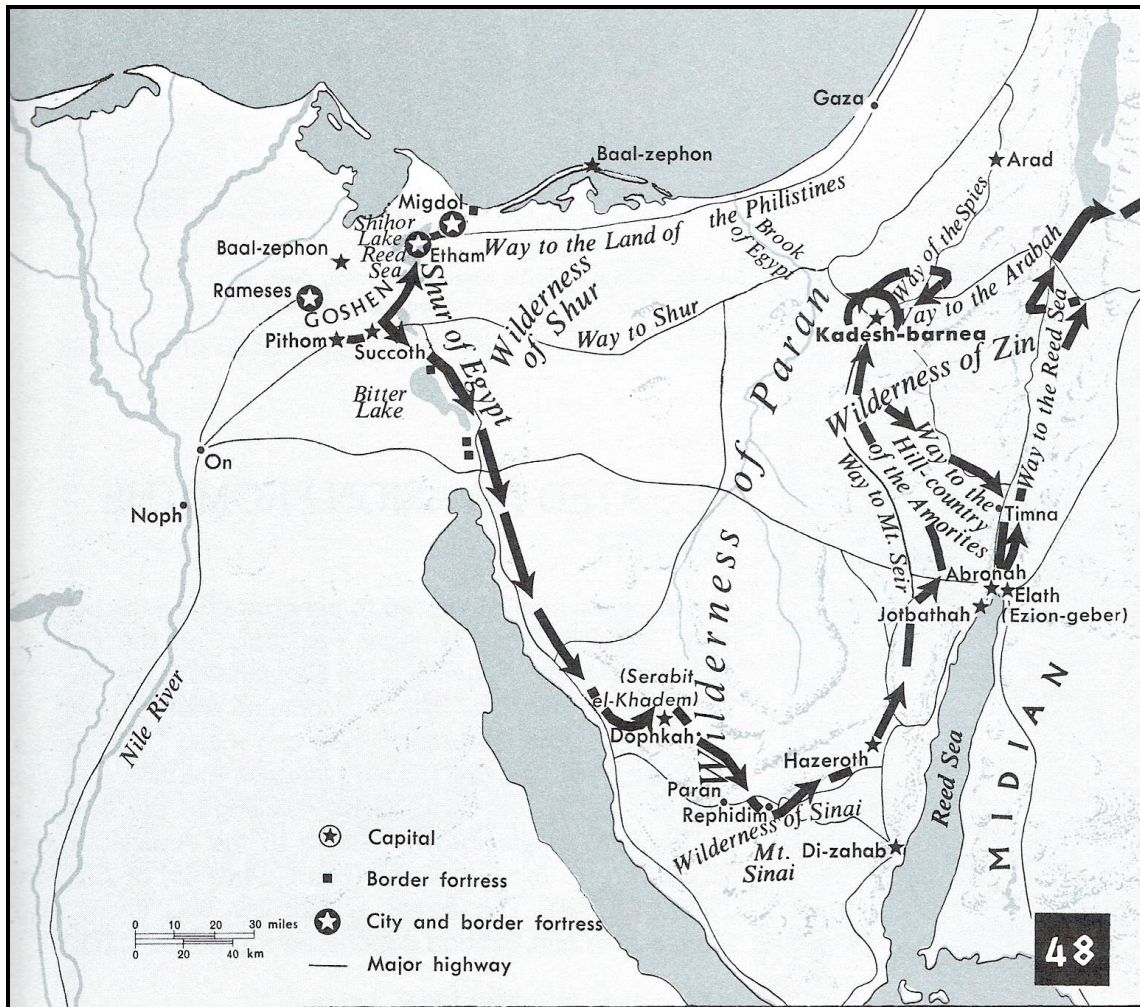
Exodus 6:1-8

(1) Then the LORD said to Moses, *"Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land."* (2) God spoke further to Moses and said to him, *"I am the LORD; (3) and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them.* (4) *I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned.* (5) *Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.* (6) *Say, therefore, to the sons 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 their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.* (7) *Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.* (8) *I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD.'"*

Comments:

In light of such passages as Gen. 12:8 and 14:22, in which LORD is equivalent to JEHOVAH, this name was evidently known among the Patriarchs. Some scholars have suggested that Moses, because of his personal knowledge of the Lord at this time,

inserted the name in the passages in Genesis when he wrote it at a later time. However, the key to this problem lies in a proper understanding of the Hebrew word *yadah* “known.” The meaning of this word is “to know by instruction or observation.” Israel was about to witness, through the events of their exodus from Egypt, a demonstration of His power in a more graphic way than had their forefathers. It was by this name, the LORD, that His powerful works of salvation would be done. Israel would know by its experience the full meaning of the name. Though they knew He was called the LORD, the Patriarchs had not seen such a demonstration of power and, therefore, had not known all the implications of that name.



Map from the Macmillan Bible Atlas.

Scriptures from the New American Standard Bible.

Comments from Zodhiates’ study Bible and the New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible.