

Gleaners Bible Studies c 9

MOSES AND THE EXODUS

Study 1

A RACE OF SLAVES



Exodus chapter 1

The story of the nation of Israel is a fascinating one. In Bible history, it holds a central place. The Book of Genesis tells of individuals who were, in one way or another, the foundations of the race. It begins with the CALL of ABRAHAM, the great man of FAITH. Then it moves on through Isaac, Jacob, and then to the twelve sons of Jacob - the heads of the tribes of Israel. Through the experiences of Joseph, we are brought eventually to the happenings in Egypt. Genesis ends with Joseph in a place of supremacy in the Court of Pharaoh. His brothers and their families are allowed to dwell peacefully in Goshen. Then Joseph dies and the beginnings of the nation emerge. Notice that the final word in Genesis is about a coffin in Egypt - what a contrast to the life of Adam in the beautiful Garden of Eden. It is evident that sin had entered, and with it, death.

The Book of Exodus begins where Genesis ends. If you look at the introduction in verses 1 - 7, you will notice three facts, which lead into the history.

Firstly, we are told of those who came with Jacob into Egypt. Just seventy people made up the family of Israel. **Genesis 46: 27** will tell us the same fact, so this is the link between the two books.

Then we are told that Joseph was already in Egypt and that he and his brothers died - **Exodus 1: 6**. This again links us with **Genesis 50**, giving us the fact of the end of a generation.

But then we get a new fact altogether, which moves us forward into the circumstances of Exodus. **Exodus 1: 7** tells us of a growing nation, increasing rapidly, expanding, and, filling the land. They were beginning to grow into a mighty force, which obviously had to be reckoned with. While it was a small family with its tribes that entered Egypt, it was a great nation that was emerging. The promise of God to Abraham in **Genesis 12: 1-3** was taking shape. God had said: **"I will make you a great nation"** and He meant what He said!

We begin with a story of SLAVERY. **Exodus 1: 8-14** tell how Israel became completely enslaved to a merciless Pharaoh. The reasoning of **verses 8-10** from Pharaoh's viewpoint is sound. 'If we cannot subdue them, they will eventually destroy us,' is the essence of what Pharaoh said. So, they were made to serve with ever increasing hardship. The treasure cities of Egypt were built with the slave labour of Israel.

This story has its counterpart in modern history. If you have read any modern history of Soviet Russia, you will have learned of the cruel slavery in the labour camps of Siberia during Stalin's reign. The canals and the power stations were built out of the lives of slaves, yet for the purpose of our lesson, we can think of slavery even worse than that under Pharaoh of Egypt.

Satan holds captive countless slaves to sin, for his is the cruel master of all who do not know Jesus as their Saviour. In our Bible study, we can look upon Egypt as a picture of this world. There was a pleasant side to it, for we are told that Moses had the option of choosing the **"pleasures of Egypt"** (**Hebrews 11: 25**). Yet it is the world that is Satan's domain, for in **2 Corinthians 4: 4**, Satan is called **"the god of this age."** So, we can see a parallel between the bondage of Egypt and the bondage in which Satan holds mankind.

The STRENGTH of the nation emerges, even from the slavery of those early beginnings. God was not limited by these conditions. It is an exciting story and in **verse 12** we get a foretaste of victory. **"But the more they afflicted them the more they multiplied and grew."** We shall learn throughout this study that God was with His people, even in their times of greatest difficulty. They thought that He had forgotten them and often they groaned in their hardships. But the plan of God went on, in spite of the enemy! Here is the second lesson that we can learn. God works to a plan. Circumstances may seem to be defeating it, but still He goes on. There are many people enslaved under Communism today, who, like the Israelites may ask: 'Has God forgotten?' Similar circumstances prevailed in the days of the early church, and if you read **Acts 11: 19-23** you will learn something of this. Often God's work prospers in times of difficulty more than in times of ease.

There is still, another lesson we can learn from this chapter. It is the importance of loyalty to God in the face of the enemy. The picture of these Hebrew midwives is wonderful. **"Kill the sons,"** was the edict of Pharaoh, **Exodus 1: 16**, but we are told that the midwives feared God and saved the sons of Israel, **verse 17**. God mattered much more to them than a man like Pharaoh did. Because of their loyalty, God blessed them in that, their own families were established, **verse 20**, and the process of the growth of the nation went on. God honours those who are loyal to Him. The Bible is full of such examples of faithful men and women who would rather suffer and die than betray their God. In the story of the emergence of the nation of Israel, these faithful midwives played a vital part; and as a result, God put their names on permanent record.

The chapter ends with another cruel edict from Pharaoh to destroy the sons of Israel. He was certainly determined - but he had failed to take the God of Israel into account!

Study 2

BIRTH OF A DELIVERER

Read

Exodus chapter 2

Moses, the great Lawgiver, whose memory is respected even today among all orthodox Jews, was born into slavery with the threat of destruction hanging over his head. He was, of course, unconscious of this, just as he was unaware of the power of God that kept him. Pharaoh was determined to put an end to the Hebrew race, and **chapter 1: 22** tells of his latest plan to cast the baby boys into the Nile. Just how many perished in this way we are not told. Knowing the spirit of God's people, it could possibly have been that the case of Moses was repeated many times. It is amazing what courage is stirred up in the hearts of quiet and unassuming people when opposition arises. Remember as you read the history of these Hebrews that God was working behind the scenes to fulfil His will, giving courage where courage was needed. He is a wonderful God!

Moses was born of the tribe of Levi, and had a brother Aaron and a sister, Miriam. This tribe eventually provided Israel's first High Priest. When this boy Moses came into the world, it was evident that he was a beautiful child, as **verse 2** tells us. He was not destined to end his life in the Nile! The parents refused to let it happen - they would rather die than destroy this God-given treasure. This act of refusal to obey Pharaoh brings us to the first point of our lesson - the FAITH of Moses' parents. It is tremendous that these two ordinary people did not lose their faith in God amidst all the stresses and strains of a life of slavery. **Hebrews 11: 23** records their action among the deeds of the 'heroes of faith'. It was by faith that they hid Moses for three months in their effort to preserve his life. They ignored the possibilities of Pharaoh's anger because they had confidence in God. Not only did they have FAITH, but they also had VISION. Moses' parents looked beyond the difficulties of the present time to the possibilities of the future. Each step they took proved this.

Having hid Moses for three months, they hid him again in the basket among the reeds, by the river. Having set Miriam to watch over him, they quietly trusted in God. Those who are willing to trust God always prove that He takes care of the unexpected. Moses is eventually adopted by Pharaoh's daughter and is brought up in the palace, having first been nursed and trained by his own mother. We can be sure that while he learnt the wisdom of Egypt in the palace, he also learnt all the godly traditions of his people from his own mother. When eventually he had to make the choice as to his loyalties, it was what he had learnt of his God that led him to cast in his lot with the people of Israel.

In **Exodus 2: 11-22**, we read of the first movements of Moses as he emerges from the palace of Egypt. We could call this the FAILURE of the would-be deliverer. We are only left to imagine just how much Moses saw of the cruel slavery of his brethren. Sufficient to say, that it horrified him and aroused his anger. We can see in **verse 12** how violent he became as he killed an Egyptian, and there could easily have been two men killed by his rashness. The question asked by the Hebrews who strove together is interesting - **"Who made you a prince and a judge over us?" (verse 14)** At this point Moses realised that he was on

dangerous ground and he fled the country. It was either death at the hand of Pharaoh or self-preservation outside of Egypt. We can learn important lessons here. God had a time in His plan WHEN He was to save Israel from slavery. He had also planned HOW He was to do it and WHO was going to be the leader. Moses' rashness did not destroy God's plan; neither did God 'throw Moses overboard' because he failed just then. Remember, when God is going to use someone for His work, He is not put off by anything that happens. From God's point of view, Moses was THE MAN, but God waited another 40 years before He sent Moses to Pharaoh. In the desert, he was trained to become Israel's mighty deliverer. It is good to realise that God uses men, even with their failures, and He is prepared to wait.

But **Hebrews 11: 24-27** tells us more about this. It tells us that Moses chose to leave the house of Pharaoh and throw in his lot with God's people. He left the glamour and the pleasure of the palace behind, preferring to suffer with his own people. This was a choice of faith. It was the first step towards whole-hearted surrender to God's purpose. Thus, we can learn that, in order to follow God and fulfil His purpose for us, we are often required to leave behind the attractions of worldly advantage and pleasure. So, Moses was on the right path, in spite of all his mistakes.

Exodus 2: 23-25 tells us of a FAITHFUL GOD. Pharaoh died and the Israelites sighed because of their burdens. Notice these verses very carefully. They tell us that God had not forgotten His people. And although a new Pharaoh did not mean the end of their slavery, there was a shaft of light through the dark clouds. The captives cried; God heard, and He remembered His covenant with Abraham. Things were beginning to happen which would eventually lead to the liberation of the nation of Israel. So much - in fact, everything - depends upon the unchanging faithfulness of God.

Study 3

PREPARATION IN THE WILDERNESS

Read

Exodus chapters 3 - 6

In this lesson, we are going to cover four chapters. You may think this is a lot to read at once. The material in them is mostly narrative. It relates the way in which God confronted Moses in exile from Egypt and eventually sent him back with Aaron, his brother, to deal with Pharaoh. Moses' life had three stages of 40 years each. They can be summed up like this: he spent 40 years in Pharaoh's palace learning to be SOMEBODY; he spent the next 40 years in the desert learning to be a NOBODY; but he spent the last 40 years of his life as the leader of the nation, where God showed how much He could do with SOMEBODY who is a NOBODY. This may sound a little flippant, but it makes the important point that God could not have used Moses as he was - his life needed to be shaped in a different way altogether.

FIRE IN THE DESERT! (**chapter 3: 1-9**)

Notice the way in which God contacted Moses. At the place which was afterwards known to Israel as the 'Mountain of God', God attracted the attention of the man He wanted to use. Just a burning bush - but with a difference. It burned, but was not consumed. There is a terrible sense of awe about the place. **"The place where you stand is holy ground". (verse 5)**

This is true of all the men in Scripture whom God called.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Paul were all made aware of God's purity and majesty. It is equally true for us that we cannot serve God truly unless we have some appreciation of His holiness and power. God revealed to Moses who He was (**verse 6**), what He had seen (**verse 7**), and what He was going to do. (**verses 8-9**) Look at these verses carefully. The first step in preparation for the Leader of Israel was to appreciate the majesty of the God who was sending him.

EXCUSES! (Chapter 3: 10 - 4: 17)

Moses seemed an unwilling messenger for God. Each time God proposed some way of approach in His task, Moses hesitated. In this passage you will find five different excuses that he gave, some in the form of questions. You can study them in detail. We will just look at one or two main points, which teach us lessons.

Firstly, God KNEW who He was calling.

Each time Moses faltered, God was there with an answer. How futile were the words of Moses, **"Who am I?"** (**Chapter 3: 11**) God knew who he was dealing with. **"They will not believe me. (Chapter 4: 1)** God knew this much better than Moses did, **"I am not eloquent". (Chapter 4: 10)** God was quite aware of Moses' abilities or lack of them and He was giving him the message. Let us always remember that if God calls, He knows the kind of person He wants for the job and He equips that person for it. This is just as true for you and me when there is work to be done for God.

Secondly, God is PATIENT with His servant.

He is willing to steadily break down the opposition step by step. It is quite wonderful to see how that persistent blocking of God's plan by Moses, opens up a greater revelation of God for him and the people. Look at **chapter 3 verses 14-15**. The NAME that God gave Himself here was one that was never to be forgotten The UNCHANGING, SELF-EXISTENT One. **"I AM"** is God's eternal character expressed in human terms. So, it was by name and sign that God patiently proceeded with His servant. In all our failings and hesitation to serve Him, God is kind and deals with us graciously. He is never in a hurry. He is willing to wait.

But notice finally that God was equal to all the weakness of His servant. He did not ignore the questions nor sweep them aside. It will pay you to look carefully through the answers that God gave to Moses. He assured him of His presence (**Chapter 3: 12**). He gave Moses a wonderful insight into His character, and the kind of God He was (**Chapter 3: 14-16**). It is essential for us to know our God if we want to speak about Him to others. Then God gave Moses signs to show that He had sent him. That is the meaning of **chapter 4: 2-9**.

Then, eventually, when Moses said he could not speak, God gave him Aaron to stand by him and be his mouthpiece. (**Chapter 4: 10-14**) Moses' behaviour made God angry. Yet, it is wonderful to see how God could overcome all the weakness of His man. He knew what Moses would eventually achieve through dependence upon Him.

When Moses and Aaron returned to the people of Israel, Aaron told them about Moses' tremendous experience of God and all that the Lord had said and done. The people listened, and as they heard, they believed and worshipped. (**Chapter 4: 29-31**) What a difference to the way in which he had left Egypt! Remember that when God prepares us

for service, He is able to make our testimony convincing. We can trust Him for that.

What about Pharaoh? It seems from **chapter 5** that things became worse instead of better. Pharaoh defied the Lord, saying, **"Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?"** As Moses and Pharaoh met, it was the beginning of a bitter conflict in which God was to show His mighty power, but also in which the faith and determination of Moses was to be tested to its limits. How essential it is for those who serve God to be in the right place at the right time. God ensured that this was so with Moses. He will do the same with us if we will let Him.

Study 4

CHALLENGE TO PHARAOH



Exodus chapters 7 - 10

One of the most fascinating stories of the Bible is the story of the clash between Moses and Pharaoh. If Moses hoped that the exodus would be an easy matter, he certainly was doomed to disappointment. From first to last, it was a battle, with Pharaoh determined to hold on to his slave population. The Lord knew, even before He sent Moses back to Egypt, the kind of conflict that would take place. **Chapter 3: 19-22** shows us this. Here God says three things, which were eventually fulfilled:

- 1) That the king of Egypt would not let them go,
- 2) That God would judge Egypt with the signs in their land,
- 3) That Israel would go out with many riches. Keep this in your mind as you study.

This encounter of Moses with Pharaoh is important enough to warrant spending a whole lesson on it. We can think of two outstanding ideas in all the dealings that the king had with God's great leader. Firstly, it seemed that Pharaoh made his choices deliberately. Time and again, it seemed that he said "No". Notice how things began in **chapter 5: 2** **"I do not know the Lord and nor will I let Israel go."** This proved to be the tone all the way through. Desperation in the face of the plagues drove him to relent in word, but never in deed. But Secondly, we have to notice the PURPOSE of God. God was going to redeem His people; nothing would stop that. Events were going to show that God was sovereign and supreme. This was going to be an event in history, which would prove the love of God for His people and the power of God to destroy His enemies. This story is, therefore, vital in our understanding of God's ways, and **chapter 9: 16** lets us into the secret of it. God was going to use these circumstances and Pharaoh's obstinacy to PROVE that He was Almighty.

Read Romans 9: 14-18 before you proceed any further with this lesson.

Now look at MOSES' DEMANDS. "Let my people GO." (chapter 5: 1)

This was repeated each time Moses went in to see the king of Egypt. In Moses' approach to Pharaoh, there was no compromise. The people were to go so that they might serve their God. Nothing less than this would satisfy God.

Pharaoh tried to compromise, and told them they could sacrifice in the land. His last effort was to allow them to go, but to leave the cattle and flocks behind. Notice the reply of Moses in **chapter 10: 25-26**, ***"Our livestock also shall go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind"***. The exodus must be total. As you read through, notice how Moses stated the terms each time. Why could he not compromise? We can learn here that Israel, from God's viewpoint, were 'MY PEOPLE', whilst Egypt was a foreign land. Israel was in the grip of slavery. There was no half-way point between God and Pharaoh; it was either the one or the other. Remember this when you think of living the Christian life in this world. We must be apart from it in our way of life, for **James 4: 4 says, "Friendship with the world is enmity with God."** We cannot compromise!

Look at PHARAOH'S HOSTILITY

"Pharaoh's heart grew hard and he did not heed them", (chapter 7: 3 & 22, chapter 8: 15 & 19); "The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh and he did not heed them," (chapter 9: 12 & chapter 10: 1). Look at these two statements about Pharaoh carefully. As the constant demands of Moses came to him, there was a hostile reaction in Pharaoh's mind. He resisted time and time again. Each time his heart became more granite-like in its hardness, so that BY CHOICE he refused to obey God. It is important to underline this in thinking about this point. The first refusal was from Pharaoh, but then God hardened his heart. The process of refusal produced a reaction or answer from God.

He allowed Pharaoh to harden and then intensified this hardness. Learn this - it is always dangerous to refuse to obey God's voice, for it leaves the way open for a position where it is seemingly impossible to respond. Each plague displayed an activity of JUDGMENT. Notice the places where it mentions that Israel did not suffer with the Egyptians. God put a difference between His people and their captors. You can study the plagues at your leisure, and get hold of the principles involved. Pharaoh stands out in Scripture as a man who so shut out the light of God's message in his life, that eventually God shut up his life and judged him to the limit. In the centuries that have passed there have been many others like Pharaoh.

Finally, notice GOD'S PATIENCE.

We cannot close without mentioning this. It is quite lovely how God kept sending Moses to Pharaoh. These ten acts of judgement could have taken place in relentless succession, leaving Pharaoh out of it altogether. But God chooses His methods. You will read of at least twelve times when Pharaoh became ***"hardened"***, yet God still spoke to him. How sad that God's pleading should have fallen on deaf ears. God is always more patient than we can understand. In **2 Peter 3: 9** we read that He is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish. When we take the Gospel to unsaved people, we can always count on the patience and kindness of God towards them.

Questions

STUDY 1 A RACE OF SLAVES

1. What two facts do we read of in **Exodus 1: 1-7** of this chapter which are the same as in Genesis?
2. Why did Pharaoh make slaves of the Israelites and keep them in bondage?
3. Of what is Israel's bondage in Egypt a picture?
4. What happened to the people of Israel, the more they were afflicted?
5. a) What did the Hebrew midwives show by what they did?
b) How did God reward them?

STUDY 2 BIRTH OF A DELIVERER

1. What quality did Moses' mother and father show when they hid Moses?
2. What have we seen in this lesson that those who trust in God always prove?
3. What was there about Moses' choice that we can only learn from **Hebrews 11**?
4. What was it that made Moses cast in his lot with his brethren, the people of Israel?
5. In what way can we learn from this lesson that God is a faithful God?

STUDY 3 PREPARATION IN THE WILDERNESS

1. What was Moses made aware of when he drew near to the burning bush?
2. What important name do we find for God in **chapter 3**?
3. Why did God give Moses the signs recorded in **chapter 4: 2-9**?
4. What two things do we read of that the people of Israel did, when Moses and Aaron returned to them?
5. What lesson have YOU learnt from this passage regarding any aspect of our service for God?

STUDY 4 CHALLENGE TO PHARAOH

1. What three things did God say would happen when Moses encountered Pharaoh?
2. Give two aspects of God's character, which are brought out in this study.
3. What attitude did Moses adopt in his approach to Pharaoh?
4. Why did God harden Pharaoh's heart?
5. What have you learnt from this lesson regarding obedience to God's voice and His Word?