

EGYPT & EXODUS: PART ONE (A)

Read: Exodus 1-11

Corresponds to Workbook pp. 41-47

The Book of Exodus is one of the most dramatic and pivotal books in the Old Testament, for the first section (Chapters 1-18) portrays the **Redemption** of Israel by God, closely followed by very specific divine **Revelation** given to the people of God (Chapters 19-40). The central character is the reluctant Moses, who eventually accepts and accomplishes the formidable mission given him by the God of his fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Story of Salvation marches through the Red Sea into the Promised Land, while God forms and reforms His people every step of the way.

In the next two lessons we shall explore:

- (1) How to discern and accept our God-given mission;
- (2) How to avoid cultivating a hardened heart;
- (3) How to worship the awe-inspiring, powerful God who knows the intricate details of our suffering and moves to deliver us;
- (4) The importance of Passover and how it prefigures the Crucifixion of the Lamb of God and deliverance from the bondage of sin.

“Three important themes in the Exodus narrative are ‘name,’ ‘know,’ and ‘serve.’

From the name of Moses, to the name of the mountain of God, to God’s revelation of his name at the burning bush, names play a vital role throughout Exodus. God reveals His ‘name’ so that both Pharaoh and God’s people will come to ‘know’ the Lord—not simply as a figure in a history lesson, but rather as the one true God who calls Israel into a covenant relationship. In coming to ‘know’ the Lord, God’s people discover the true nature of service and worship, as well as Whom they are called to ‘serve.’ Tracking the strategic repetition and development of these three themes, ‘name,’ ‘know,’ and ‘serve,’ will be vital to understanding the deeper plot of this dramatic story.”¹

Let’s begin now, 400 plus years after we last left Joseph disclosing his identity to his startled brothers and the subsequent settling of the Twelve Tribes of Israel in the land of Goshen, in the eastern Nile Delta of Egypt.

Exodus 1: 1-13

Time passes, as it always does, and how did the favor shown to Joseph’s family change with the ascent of another Pharaoh? What was the reason for the enslavement of the Israelites? (Exodus 1:7) _____

¹ Gray, Tim and Jeff Cavins. *Walking with God: A Journey Through the Bible*. © 2010 by Ascension Press, West Chester, PA, pp 60.

What had been God's first command to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28? _____

Historical note: Who was the Pharaoh who would not let the Jews depart? "The best candidate for an Exodus in the 15th century is Thutmose III (ca. 1504-1450) or possibly Amenhotep II (ca. 1450-1425). Advocates of an Exodus in the 13th century generally favor Ramses II (ca. 1304-1236).

Multiple dates have been made to determine a date for the Exodus that satisfies both the testimony of the Bible and the findings of modern archaeology. There seems to be two main alternatives: one that situates the Exodus in the 15th century and those who advocate the 13th century. The "early dating" is based mainly on the internal chronology of the Bible. First Kings 6:1 relates that King Solomon began construction on the Jerusalem Temple 480 years after the Exodus. Since the foundations of the sanctuary were laid around 966 BC, the Exodus can be backdated to 1446 BC or thereabouts, allowing some room for the possibility that 480 is a round number. The timeline proposed in 1 Kings 6:1 is corroborated by the remark in Judges 11:26 that Israel occupied lands east of the Jordan River for 300 years before the time of Jephthah. This figure fits with the period of the Judges only if the Exodus took place in the 1400's or earlier. Recent archeological work suggests that both Thutmose III and Amenhotep II were active in the Nile Delta.

The scholars who favor a "late dating" of the Exodus in the 1200's BC tend to give priority to archeological evidence as a means of interpreting the Bible. Commentators generally agree that the storage city called "Ramses" in Exodus 1:11 is named after Ramses II, who is remembered as one of the greatest monumental builders in Egyptian history. Because this city was built (or rebuilt) by the sweat of Israelite slaves, it is said that his reign forms the probably historical backdrop to the Exodus. Ramses II made the Delta city of Ramses his royal land administrative capital. This fits the scenario described in Exodus, where Pharaoh and his family were in close and frequent contact with the Israelites in the Delta (i.e. Ex 2:5-10, 5:1, 6, 15, 20; 7:15)."² This discussion of pinning the exact date remains because it was not conventional to call the Pharaoh by name before the 10th century BC.

Exodus 1:15-22

What are the names of the two midwives who defied Pharaoh out of respect for life? (Ex 1:17) _____

Peter would later embody this same principle in Acts 5:29. Have you ever had to choose between obeying God and a powerful person in authority? What happened? _____

How did God reward the two midwives (Ex 1:21)? Do you consider your children a gift and reward? See Psalm 127:3 _____

² *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: Exodus*. Commentary and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch. © 2012 by Ignatius Press, San Francisco, pp 17, 30-31.

How was the decree of Pharaoh in Exodus 1:22 a strategic move that could lead to the extinction of the Jewish people? _____

“Without any Hebrew boys, Hebrew girls would only have Egyptians to marry. Since land inheritance did not pass through the woman, the Hebrew land would return to Egypt. Not only would the Egyptians regain the prized land of Goshen, but Israel, having lost a generation of Hebrew men, would no longer pose a significant military threat. Eventually, all of Israel and its belongings would be assimilated into Egypt. Pharaoh’s murderous command was a powerful political move.”³ Repeatedly in history the Jews are under threat of extinction, from Esther to Nazi Germany, yet God’s protective hand remains in place for all time.

Looking ahead: The tables will be turned when the Egyptians lose their own first-born sons in the First Plague.

Exodus 2:1

According to Exodus 6:20, what are the names of Moses’ parents? _____
What plan by Moses’ mother saves his life? What is the significance of Moses’ name, to “be drawn out of the water”? How would this name gain even greater significance at the Red Sea?

Word study: The word for floating basket (*tevah*) is the same word for “ark” in Genesis 6. Both, made of pitch, bring salvation.

Exodus 2:10

By being legally adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter, Moses enjoyed the best education in the ancient world. (See Acts 7:22). How would this later prepare him to write Genesis and Exodus and perhaps the other books of the Pentateuch? How has God used your specific background (early education, etc) to effectively serve him today? _____

Exodus 2:11-23

Moses, like God, noticed His people’s suffering. Why did he have to flee? _____

How did Moses’ compassion lead to his marrying Zipporah? _____
Wives are often found at wells! Remember: Abraham’s servant finds Rebekah (Gen 24) and Jacob meets Rachel at a well (Gen 29:1-12).

Are you convinced that God is noticing what troubles you today? How are Isaiah 30:19 and Psalm 34:5-8 encouraging passages to memorize? _____

³ Gray, Tim. *Walking with God*. pp 62.

In the forty years that followed, as Moses shepherded his father-in-law Jethro's sheep, he was learning all of the desert trails and the location of water, vital information he would later use in leading the Israelites. Again, God prepared Moses (and you) for future missions in advance, although you may not at the time have been aware of it.

Geographical note: Midian lies in modern-day Saudi Arabia.

Exodus 2:24-25

Note that "God remembered his covenant" does not imply that He had in any way forgotten His people or ignored their intense suffering. Rather, it is stating that the time had come for deliverance. How had God prophesied this time to Abraham in Genesis 15:11-16?

Exodus 3:1-12: Moses and the Burning Bush

At 80 years of age, Moses encounters God in the burning bush that is not consumed. Later in Exodus 19:18 the Israelites will encounter God as fire on the same mountain when the Ten Commandments are given. Fire can be "a sign of God's presence (19:18), glory (24:17), and judgment (Numbers 11:11)."⁴

How have you encountered God the Father/ Jesus/ the Holy Spirit in such a dramatic way that it changed your entire life? How have you encountered God when He chose to remain more 'hidden'? _____

"God's Presence in us is terrifying, unsettling, but life-giving, sweet, and calming at the same time. It is distant because of our sins, and close because of God's infinite mercy. It is frightening because it burns and consumes us like a charring fire, but it embraces us tenderly like a Father"- Robert Cardinal Sarah.⁵

Exodus 3:13-14: God reveals His name

God reveals His divine name to Moses as "_____." This name revelation is important, for it shall be used in the future to invoke God. (For example, see John 13:19 and John 18:5-8). What do you learn about this name in CCC 206-209? _____

The Egyptians worshipped a wide array of gods, which manifested themselves also in created animals. The Jewish people had become accustomed to such gods, having passed ten generations now in Egypt. Moses anticipated that when he returned to Egypt to tell the Hebrews of God's plans for them, they would be skeptical and ask, 'Which god sent you?'

"God answers Moses' request and reveals His name: Yahweh (in Hebrew, 'ehyeh'asher'ehyeh), which consists of a double use of the Hebrew verb 'to be,' hayah, meaning, 'I am who I am,' or 'I will be who I will be' (Ex 3:14). To Moses' question "*Who am I*

⁴ Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: Exodus. pp 20.

⁵ Sarah, Robert Cardinal from *The Power of Silence*. Quoted by *Daily Catholic Wisdom*, accessed online November 21, 2020 at yourfriends@catholicwisdom.org.

that I should go to Pharaoh?’ (Ex 3:11), God responds that ‘He is’ (*I am*). But this implies more than simply that God’s existence is certain and firmly established. Rather, it means that the God of the Hebrews is the one who ‘is with’ Moses. The name Yahweh means that God is with his people. Yahweh is not a distant God, but a God who is present.

In Egyptian religious practice, each god had not only a public name known to all, but also a secret name known only to their priests. The priests would invoke this secret name in spells and in their black magic; use of this secret name gave access to the presence and the power of that god. Here at the burning bush, **Moses is the first of God’s people to learn God’s inmost, secret name. The patriarchs, who did not know God’s true name, never performed any miracles. Now, however, God reveals his name, and Moses will work signs and wonders in God’s name.** In the New Testament, Jesus will say, ‘Whenever two or more are gathered in my *name*, there I am *in their midst*’/ invoking Jesus’ name involves His presence (CCC 2666). The Acts of the Apostles repeatedly speaks of ‘wonders and signs’ being done in the *name* of Jesus Christ. Jesus’ name is a sacrament; it presents what it signifies. So, too, in Exodus, for Moses to say the name of Yahweh is to invoke His presence and His power. **With the gift of God’s name, Moses now has access to God’s presence, and mighty deeds of power are soon to follow.**”⁶

Exodus 4:10 : Accepting God’s Mission

In Exodus 3:11, 4:10, and 6:28-30, it is clear that Moses felt unqualified to carry out the task given him by God. When have you been hesitant to carry out a mission that seemed to surpass your abilities? _____

“St Therese of Lisieux tells us that she endeavored to write down her spiritual memoir at the prompting of her sister, who was also her religious superior to whom she was bound in obedience. After praying that she say nothing displeasing to Christ, she took up the Gospel of Mark, and her eyes fell on these words: ‘He went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him.’ This verse, she says, is the interpretive key to her life, for it describes the way Christ has worked in her soul: ‘*He does not call those who are worthy, but those who He pleases.*’”⁷

In particular, what excuse does Moses give God in Ex 4:10? _____

There are several proposals as to what “being slow of speech” could refer. Did Moses perhaps have a speech impediment, lack eloquence, have anxiety regarding public speaking, or simply feel that he was no longer fluent in Egyptian after four decades? Or perhaps a combination of these concerns accounted for Moses’ hesitancy.

How did God solve Moses’ objection in Ex 4:12? _____

How did Moses reply in Ex 4:13? How did God then respond in Ex 4:14? _____

⁶ Gray, Tim. *Walking with God*. pp 64-65.

⁷ Barron, Bishop Robert. *Daily Gospel Reflections*: Mark 3: 13-19. Accessed online January 22, 2021 at wof@wordonfire.org.

Can you imagine God’s frustration?! Here he had preserved Moses from an early death, provided a world-class education, and even taught him the desert pathways through his training as shepherd—a life-saving skill he will use later when leading two million to the Promised Land. And yet he protests that he is not adequately prepared! When have you given God excuses for not carrying out what you think He is asking of you? _____

Ask God for forgiveness for not quickly obeying and trusting Him to make you “equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17).

**How do you know what God’s mission for you is at this moment in time-
and how will you choose to respond?**

“Your Divine Mission is the overall action that you are given to do while on this earth. Consider these questions to help you discern your Divine Mission and slowly take them into your heart and mind and ask the Holy Spirit to come into your heart as you ponder each question.

- What do you love?
- What do you have passion for?
- What subject gives you energy?
- What people energize you?
- What people exhaust you?
- What do you hate and have a passion to correct?
- What books are easy to read for you?
- Are you in the general atmosphere of your interest?
- What would you do if money was no object?
- What enemies are you willing to confront?
- What are you really good at?
- Where do you feel you belong?
- What makes you laugh?
- What do you love to talk about?
- What do you love to hear about?
- What focus is ever before you?
- Whose pain do you want to give relief to?
- Who are the people in your life that unlock your passion?
- Whose voice makes you tired?
- Whose joy matters to you?”⁸

What pattern of interest do you see in how you answered these questions? _____

Seven Spiritual Warfare Strategies That You Must Deploy for Your Divine Mission

1. “You must not engage every enemy. You will have to be strategic in what you ignore.
2 Timothy 1:7. One of the strategies of the enemy is to try to spread us too thin.

⁸ Oney, Deacon Larry. *Divine Mission: Discovering Your Hope and Purpose*. © 2017 by Larry Oney. pp 66-68.

2. Always assess every environment that you enter into. 1 John 4:1.
3. We must not walk alone; we need each other. Ecclesiastes 4:12; Mark 6:7.
4. You will have to be strategic in how you will invest your time. Colossians 4:5.
5. You must learn the appropriate response to an adversary. 1 Peter 5:8. Revelation 12:11a
6. Every room that you enter, you bring the presence of God. 1 Corinthians 3:16; John 14:16-18
7. The enemies of God fear you. Isaiah 41:10; Deuteronomy 20:4.”⁹

How did God reassure you of His presence and power to do what you could not possibly ever do yourself? _____

“When I see that the burden is beyond my strength, I do not consider or analyze it or probe into it, but I run like a child to the Heart of Jesus and say only one word to Him: ‘You can do all things.’ And then I keep silent, because I know that Jesus Himself will intervene in the matter, and as for me, instead of tormenting myself, I use that time to love Him”- St Faustina.¹⁰

Exodus 4:21: Hardening of Heart

Scripture states that Pharaoh’s heart is hardened twenty times in the course of the next few chapters describing his refusal to meet the demands of the Lord. Twenty times! What is going on here? “Ten times God hardens Pharaoh’s heart, and ten times it is Pharaoh himself. The Hebrew word translated ‘harden’ is ‘kaved, ‘to make heavy,’ and a heavy heart had a particular significance for ancient Egyptians. Among the tombs and temples in ancient Egypt it was common to find inscriptions depicting the final judgment of the dead as carried out by the weighing of a person’s heart on a scale. Each heart weighed against a feather representing truth and justice. If someone’s heart was heavy, that person was condemned. In the Exodus narrative, Pharaoh’s heart is being weighed against the scales of truth and justice. Each time he refuses to follow God’s command and acts against God and justice, his heart becomes heavier. In the end, the heaviness of Pharaoh’s heart will condemn him—not because God forced him to harden his heart but because he was found wanting in his response to the demands of justice and truth.”¹¹

“In the course of the first five plagues, Pharaoh hardens his own heart by refusing the demands of the Lord (7:14, 22; 8:15, 32; 9:34). Beginning with the 6th plague, however, it is said that God hardens his heart and makes him unresponsive to Moses’ warnings (9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8). Inasmuch as Pharaoh hardens his own heart before God is said to intervene, we are led to see that (1) Pharaoh is no innocent victim or pawn manipulated by a higher power (i.e., unaccountable for his actions) but is one who has defiantly opposed the Lord’s plan from the start; and (2) divine hardening is a response to human stubbornness, not the initial cause of it. Most likely, divine hardening is a metaphor to describe the withdrawal of God’s mercy and grace from the sinner, which could otherwise restrain his brazen rebellion. This is sometimes

⁹ Oney. *Divine Mission*. pp 94-96.

¹⁰ Faustina, Saint. From *The Diary of St Faustina Maria Kowalska*. Published by *Daily Catholic Wisdom* at yourfriends@catholicwisdom.org. Accessed online April 4, 2021.

¹¹ Gray, Tim. *Walking with God*. pp 67.

described in Scripture as God “giving up” or “handing over” the sinner to follow the godless desires of his heart (Acts 7:42; Rom 1:24, 26, 28).”¹²

“ ‘Hardness of heart’ is not limited to Pharaoh’s dealings with Moses.

What are some other incidences of ‘hardness of heart’ mentioned in the Bible? (Matthew 19:8; Mark 3:3-5; 16:14) _____

What are the consequences of ‘hardness of heart’ for the Christian today? (CCC 368, 1859, 1864, 2840).”¹³ _____

Exodus 4:22

How does God reveal Himself as Father? _____

Slowly but surely God is disclosing His identity and character to His beloved people. “In Exodus, God shows himself a loving Father to Israel, not only by rescuing his children from bondage (12:29-31; 14:10-29), but by guiding (13:21-22), feeding (16:1-17:7), protecting (17:8-16), instructing (20:1-23:33), and living among them (25:8; 40:34-38) (CCC 238-39; 441).”¹⁴

How has God revealed Himself as a loving Father to you? _____

Exodus 4:23

God states that His desire is for the Israelites to SERVE Him (Ex 4:23). Note that the Hebrew word (*abad*) “to work” and “to serve” (or worship) are identical. This highlights the tug-of-war between God and Pharaoh: Will the Israelites have to continue to work as enslaved people or be free to worship God? (Refer to Exodus 3:12).

How do the people respond to Moses and Aaron’s explanation of what God planned to do in their behalf? (Exodus 4:31) _____

Exodus 5:1

What initial request does Moses make of Pharaoh? _____

The animals required for Jewish sacrifice were considered Egyptian deities (i.e, Apis and Mnevis, bull gods; Hathor, cow goddess; Amun and Khnum, ram gods). Therefore, to avoid inciting violence, Moses requested to leave the Egyptian premises to sacrifice the animals in the wilderness in peace.

Exodus 5:2

Pharaoh responds: “Who is the Lord, that I should heed his voice? ... I do not *know* the Lord.” Note that the Book of Exodus begins with Pharaoh not “knowing” Joseph (1:8), and now

¹² *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: Exodus*. pp 22.

¹³ Hahn, Scott and Jeff Cavins. *Our Father’s Plan: A Catholic Bible Study of Salvation History: Study Guide*. © 2002 by Ignatius Press, San Francisco, pp 18.

¹⁴ *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: Exodus*. pp 22.

he does not “know” God either. And worst that that, Pharaoh will not permit His people to go on a three-day retreat to worship Him. The issues at stake loom large: Who is God? To whom do Israel belong: Yahweh or Pharaoh? The next few chapters will describe the ensuing contest; may the best ‘god’ win!

Exodus 6:3-9

The name for God that emerges in Ex 6:3 is : _____ .
 “The Hebrew is ‘El Shadday,’ the name of God known in patriarchal times (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3). Other divine titles used in this early period include “God Most High” (Gen 14:18), “God of seeing” (Gen 16:13), “Everlasting God” (Gen 21:33). The people are coming to ‘know’ God and his name in a fuller way through his actions (see Ex 6:7; 7:5).”¹⁵

How have you experienced God as “God Almighty”? _____

In Exodus 6:6, God reveals Himself as Redeemer and promises that they will come to “know” Him as Lord. How do the people respond in Exodus 6:9? _____

When have you been “broken in spirit” by discouragement or experienced the “cruel bondage” of sin—and that made it more difficult for you to perceive the goodness of God or to “know” Him? How could keeping this in mind help you become more merciful to those who struggle acknowledging the existence of God or who seem blocked in having a relationship with Him?

Exodus 7-12

It is important to note that God had a tremendous task, for His people had absorbed Egyptian culture and even religious idolatry while in the land of Egypt for ten generations. They needed a profound conversion to their original call and to recapture a sense of their identity / purpose as given to the patriarchs. How do later passages such as Joshua 24:14-15 and Ezekiel 20:6-12 describe how far Israel had drifted from the faith of their patriarchs? _____

The subsequent plagues will prove once and for all that Yahweh is more powerful than any Egyptian deity. “The plagues in Exodus 7-12 form the dramatic prelude to Israel’s liberation from slavery. Ten times we read how Yahweh scourges the land of Egypt with mighty acts of judgment, bringing death and destruction to the Egyptian people and their property. What is not so obvious on the surface is that God is likewise bringing judgment on the “gods of Egypt” and asserting his supremacy over them (Ex 12:12; 18:11; Num 33:4). The following chart shows how several plagues may be aimed at specific gods and goddesses of pagan Egypt.”¹⁶

Number	Verses	Plague	Egyptian Deity
First Plague	Ex 7:14-25	Nile into Blood	Hapi, god of the Nile inundation

¹⁵ Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: Exodus. pp 24.

¹⁶ Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: Exodus. pp 26.

Second Plague	Ex 8:1-15	Frogs	Heket, goddess depicted as frog
Third Plague	Ex 8:16-19	Gnats	Unknown
Fourth Plague	Ex 8:20-32	Flies	Uatchit, god manifest as fly
Fifth Plague	Ex 9:1-7	Death of livestock	Apis, bull god; Hathor, cow goddess
Sixth Plague	Ex 9:8-12	Boils and sores	Shekhmet, goddess of disease control
Seventh Plague	Ex 9:13-35	Fiery hailstorm	Nut, goddess of the sky
Eighth Plague	Ex 10:1-10	Locusts	Senehem, god of pest control
Ninth Plague	Ex 10:21-29	3 Days of darkness	Re, Aten, Atum, gods of light/sun
Tenth Plague	Ex 12:29-36	Death of firstborns	Osiris, god of life and patron of Pharaoh

Summary:

The enslaved Jews had been assimilated into their surrounding culture and were in danger of losing their very identity. The time came for God to move in a miraculous way to deliver them from bondage. They would continue to learn the 'names' of this God of mystery Who was steadily revealing Himself to them, and they would learn to worship Him. But it would be a painful process to answer this call to holiness, to become the children of God. In fact, it would take 40 years in a dry wilderness to teach them to depend upon God (for manna and water, for protection from the surrounding nations). God's patience and love would be proven over and over to a stubborn and rebellious people—which now includes you and me. God wants us to know, love, and serve Him now and for eternity. All praise to the "Lord, Almighty God, Redeemer" who brought Jesus to us, in the "fullness of time," to "show" us what God is like and to draw us into His very life and love.

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