

Chapter 10: Freedom from Slavery

As it was written, so it was done

12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.

13 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.

14 "And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

15 "Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age

Genesis 15:12-15 (NKJV)

When God made his covenant with Abraham He also gave him this prophecy. This was a part of His plan, which was executed through Joseph. This was accomplished through the power that was given to him and the famine, which God sent to the land of Canaan. This caused the people of Israel to dwell in the land of Egypt, because of the abundance of food that Joseph had stored there. As we will discover in the next portion of our study the Egyptian people afflict the Israelites and force them into slavery just as God had foreseen. As we study the book of Exodus we will learn how God executed the next phase of His great plan.

1 Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob:

2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah;

3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin;

4 Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

5 All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt already).

6 And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation.

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

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

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

10 "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."

11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.

12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.

13 So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor.

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.

Exodus 1:1-14 (NKJV)

Just as God had promised the descendants of Israel multiplied greatly, and just as He prophesied the Egyptians began to afflict them because they feared their numbers.

Called to God's will

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.

24 So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.

Exodus 2:23-25 (NKJV)

Read Exodus 1- 4.

Moses is given the task of leading the Israelites to freedom. Pay close attention to what God said in chapter 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.

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.

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.

10 "Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

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?"

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."

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?"

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.'"

Exodus 3:7-14 (NKJV)

It is important to realise that Moses was born in Egypt and was exposed to their beliefs, which were based upon the worship of multiple god's, which all had names. The True God never presented

Himself with a name to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Therefore God being the creator of all things gave Moses the name "*I AM WHO I AM*". A name for the God who '*Since the creation of the world, His invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.*' (As is written in Romans 1:20 and understood by Faraday) His power is not demonstrated by this, but rather by His actions and love towards us all. This is the closest name that could be used to describe God as He cannot truly be described by a single word.

God Demonstrates His Power

In Exodus Chapter 4 God gave powerful signs to persuade the people to believe Moses' account and God's promise. As we can tell from Moses own writings he was not a great and powerful public speaker. Therefore God had chosen a humble man to perform His purposes with Egypt and Israel. Notice also how God planned to use Pharaoh to fulfil His purpose by causing him to "*harden his heart*" which caused him to become stubborn and refuse to release the Israelites.

"Let My People Go!"

Read Exodus 5-14.

God demonstrated His power by causing the ten plagues. Each one of these plagues demonstrated God's power and authority over the false gods, which were worshiped by the people of Egypt. One example of this is the god Ra who the Egyptians believed controlled the sun and God's demonstration of His authority by darkening the sky for three days, which neither Ra nor his priests could prevent from happening.

A faithless people

Read Exodus 16-18. Here we begin to see a disturbing pattern. Notice how the people of Israel who were miraculously rescued by the powerful acts of God began to doubt His promises and intentions. In chapter 16 the people doubt God because the fear they will starve, and when He sends miracles of food to them they doubt again by attempting to store it in fear that they would not receive further provision, even though Moses implicitly instructed them not to do so. It quickly becomes apparent that despite all of God's care and miracles the people quickly turned away and complained.

In Chapter 18 when Moses' father in law visits him we learn that the people enquired about God's will to Moses, and how much of a burden this was to him to attend to all of their requests. Therefore Jethro requests that Moses appoints rulers to deal with smaller matters who would then report larger matters to him.

God gives His laws

Read Exodus 19-24. After God has miraculously rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt He gathers them to the Wilderness of Sinai and gives His commandments to Moses.

Notice the conditions that God gives Moses first before giving him the laws:

1 *In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai.*

2 *For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain.*

3 *And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, **"Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:***

4 *'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.*

5 *'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.*

6 *'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."*

Exodus 19:1-6 (NKJV)

A covenant is a solemn agreement that is binding for both parties. Therefore He is asking the people to obey the laws and in turn He will consider them as a "special treasure" and a "holy nation". Notice how God is using this covenant to both instruct and reward the people of Israel for their obedience.

Since the disobedience of Adam and Eve and the expulsion from paradise people lived with the knowledge of good and evil, and as a result of this the people of the world lived in evil and darkness without the knowledge and presence of God, which Adam and Eve had experienced. However due to the faith of Abraham, God promised to rise up a nation from him through which all the nations of the earth would be blessed. This covenant is a direct result of God's plans and purposes that He revealed to Abraham, and is the beginning of the fulfilment of the promises, which were made in Genesis 17. Therefore God is giving the people of Israel a chance to obey Him and change their deeds from evil to good.

Read the commandments again in Exodus 20. Notice how God identifies himself to the people. *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."* He reminded them of the great demonstration of His power, which was used to free them from slavery in Egypt. Then He commands them to worship no other god. It is important to remember that the time the Israelites spent in Egypt they would have seen and possibly partaken in the worship of the Egyptian gods. He demonstrated their lack of power with His plagues, showing that the priests of these false gods were powerless to prevent them. Therefore God asks the people to only serve Him and not to continue the traditions and religious practices of the Egyptians.

The commandments that God gave are directly linked to His promise of the land to be given to the people. It is important to consider that He has seen their deeds and found them to be unsatisfactory. Therefore the commandments directly address these specific problems and forbid their practice. Consider the following:

"You shall have no other gods before Me.

4 *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;*

5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.

11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

13 "You shall not murder.

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

15 "You shall not steal.

16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

Exodus 20:3-17 (NKJV)

Notice in verses 5 and 6 that God reveals the consequences of breaking His commandments. He mentions that those who hate Him will be punished and also their subsequent generations. Compare this to God's commandment in Genesis. When He commanded Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were told that they would die and indeed this did take place because mankind began to practice evil and as a result God turned away from them and they were banished from Eden. After the liberation of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, God gave the people a chance for redemption through obedience of His commandments, and promising that they would have a promised land and a special purpose by becoming "a royal priesthood and a holy nation". On this occasion God provided the people with a choice. Obey and receive your promises or disobey and receive the consequences for yourselves and your future generations.

Read Exodus 21. Here God gives implicit instructions for how the people of Israel should morally conduct themselves in specific situations. In this chapter it is apparent that God is giving very specific guidance to the people for how He expects them to live. Further examples of this can be found in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Please study these books if you wish to gain further understanding.

The people turn away

In Exodus 24 God commands Moses to go to the mountain to receive the commandments written on stone. Whilst he is collecting these, and being instructed by God, the people begin to turn away.

Read Exodus 32-34. Notice how in Moses prolonged absence the people begin to doubt God's promises and instructions. In their insecurity they create the golden calf. This act directly violated the commandments but God was merciful to the people, and did not destroy them, after Moses pleaded with Him. However they did receive their punishment as promised.

Unfortunately this is mankind's pattern of behaviour. Many times we have doubted and fallen short of God's expectations. However He does persevere and guide the people of Israel to the promised land whilst testing, refining, and teaching them. The people turn away from God's will many times and He causes them to be conquered and removed from the land of Israel to refine, teach, and correct them further. For the purpose of our study we will not study these books. If you wish to learn more please continue reading the books of the Old Testament including Exodus.