

# Exodus 1-3: 22

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## INTRODUCTION

There can hardly be a greater contrast than between the first book of Moses called Genesis, and the second called Exodus. For the former is the book of beginnings, and hence exhibits the most striking variety, so as to present the germs of almost all the truths or topics expounded in other books of scripture-creation, relationship with God and one with another, temptation and fall of man, revelation of grace and the enemy's defeat, sacrifice, and sonship in faith and without it, the world, etc. It is needless to pursue here what is manifest, and fully explained in its own place.

But in the abundance of Genesis one vast truth is not included, redemption. It is the characteristic subject which fills the book of Exodus: first, the evil and wretched state of God's people which called for it from God; second, the accomplishment of it, as far as the type went; and, third, the blessed consequence of it in God's dwelling in the midst of the redeemed.

In the earlier chapters we are told of the oppression which befell Israel at the hand of Egypt, ever harder as they grew and multiplied (Ex. 1). God meets the faith of the parents of Moses, and preserves

the life of the destined deliverer, when exposed, by the daughter of the king who was bent on their destruction. But even Moses must learn to wait on God for His time and way when his own energy proved abortive (Ex. 2); yet, even then faith is proved superior to providence which gave what looking to God gave up. And Moses learned in the desert what the wisdom of Egypt could not teach. There appeared to him Jehovah's angel in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bramble bush, and announced His coming down through him to deliver His people out of Egypt (Ex. 3). As distrustful now as before bold, Moses receives the signs of the serpent-rod, the leprous hand, and the river's water become blood, as his signs of divine commission, with Aaron as mouthpiece, and gets Jethro's consent for his return to Egypt with his wife and sons (Ex. 4). But Pharaoh vents his pride and unbelief in the rudest rejection of Jehovah's demand through His envoys; and the oppression is made cruelly heavier: no straw now, yet the tale of bricks undiminished, so that they were worse off than ever (Ex. 5). On the remonstrance of Moses, the God-Almighty of the fathers reveals Himself by His covenant name of Jehovah to their sons, though they listened not through anguish; and Moses confesses his despair (Ex. 6).

Pharaoh's obdurate heart was made harder still, and the plagues begin. Their boasted river and waters everywhere are turned into blood (Ex. 7). The frogs emerge from the smitten waters and cover the land and their dwellings everywhere (Ex. 8). But the respite given only hardens the king more. And Jehovah turns the dust under the staff of Moses into gnats on man and beast, so that the scribes own the finger of God; but Pharaoh still rebels. Then dog-flies sent everywhere save in Goshen become a yet plainer judgment, and Pharaoh yields for the moment, but hardened his heart when the pressure was withdrawn. Next was sent (Ex. 9) the grievous murrain on Egypt's cattle, not on Goshen's; but Pharaoh's heart was stubborn, and he did not let the people go. Then the dread boil with blains fell on man as well as cattle throughout Egypt, yet in vain. Next came such a violent hail and lightning and thunder as Egypt had never known, yet none befell Goshen. Pharaoh owned his wrong, but only for the moment. After this were sent locusts beyond precedent, so that Pharaoh's bondmen entreated, and himself called Moses and Aaron in haste to ask forgiveness. But darkness to be felt for three days in Egypt, while Israel had light in their dwellings followed his impenitence (Ex. 10), and one more plague must come, the death of every firstborn of man and cattle (Ex. 11) from Pharaoh to his meanest slave.

But this night of passover had quite another character for Israel. It was the foundation of their redemption through the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their two doorposts and the upper lintel. Within these they feasted on its body roast with fire and unleavened bread, eaten in haste with loins girt, sandals on feet, and staff in hand, on the month of Abib, once the seventh of the year, now the first of the sacred reckoning for Israel. It was an ordinance for ever on the fourteenth day at evening, with a feast till the one and twentieth, which forbade leaven on peril of cutting off. At midnight Jehovah executed judgment on man and beast and the gods of Egypt; and a great cry arose, for there was not a house in which there was not one dead (Ex. 12). And Pharaoh and the Egyptians rose to bid Israel depart, long since, as now, laden by the favour of their neighbours with raiment, and silver and gold utensils abundantly. Then most impressively did Jehovah lay it on Israel to remember that day of death for Egypt's firstborn, and therefore sacrificing to Him every firstling of males, breaking the ass's neck, unless ransomed with a lamb, and ransoming their own firstborn (Ex. 13).

Yet God led His people about lest they should be discouraged; and Jehovah went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, so that they could go day and night. Not even then did Pharaoh bend to God. Redemption would have its type of power in the final destruction of the foe, as well as by atoning blood which is the deepest for the soul before God. This was not for the Egyptians but for Israel. It was a question for sin before Him; and the lamb's blood alone secured him that was within the blood-sprinkled door. If they partook of a lamb's body, it was eaten with bitter herbs and

with unleavened bread. Self was judged. Repentance accompanied faith. Jehovah saw the blood, and passed over according to His estimate of its worth which is perfect for each, as ours could not be: we rest therefore on His value for it, which is the essence of faith.

Exodus 14 typifies not Christ's blood sprinkled for Jehovah's eye on the night of judgment, but His death and resurrection for the deliverance of the redeemed, who now sing of His salvation and the destruction of His foes. Thenceforward is the proper journey of His own across the desert for the mountain of His inheritance, the place that Jehovah has made His dwelling, who shall reign for ever and ever, but guided already to the abode of His holiness, the fruit of redemption. Yet they prove the trials and the mercies of the way, three days without water, and the water, even when found, too bitter to drink; but the wood cast in by Jehovah's direction makes it sweet; and is followed by the ample refreshment of twelve wells and seventy palm trees (Ex. 15). In Ex. 16 the bread from above is shown to precede and mark the sabbath; as in Ex. 17 the living waters from the smitten rock strengthen for conflict with Amalek, wherein the victory depends on the uplifted hand of the mediator. Grace meets every fault, which at other times called for judgments. This closes in Ex. 18 with the picture of divine government which is only realised when Messiah reigns.

All changes in Ex. 19. where the people, heedless of such grace and confiding in their fidelity, accept the condition of law to their ruin, whilst its terrors begin with darkness, and lightning, thunder, trumpet, and the voice more terrible than all to the sinner. And God spoke His ten words (Ex. 20), and set out His judgments (Ex. 21-23) not without better things in type. Yet in Ex. 24 the legal covenant with death as the penalty was sealed with the sprinkled blood; and the elders ate and drank before Him. But Moses draws into higher access to see the pattern of the sanctuary, pledges too of the good things to come. After the heave-offering of the material, we have the ark with the mercy-seat prescribed, the table, and the lampstand, and their appurtenances in Ex. 25; the tabernacle itself with its curtains, loops and clasps, its coverings of goat's hair and of ram's skins, the boards too and the bars, with the veil of the innermost and the entrance curtain (Ex. 26). But we may remark for our profit that Ex. 27 closes this portion with the great altar of burnt-offering and the court around it, and the command to bring oil for the lamps continually.

Then follows in Ex. 28, 29 the order of consecration of the priesthood, Aaron and his sons; and only then in Ex. 30 the golden altar of incense figuring Christ in His sweet savour in the light of the Spirit manifested perpetually, and the people identified by redemption with it, though unable to enter the holiest as we can; and next the laver for purification if there was failure, the washing of water by the word; the holy anointing oil, and the fragrant drugs for the sanctuary. These were all associated with the priesthood for maintaining feeble man in accordance with His relationship to God; whereas the types preceding the order for consecrating the priesthood were to manifest God in Christ for man's blessing in the knowledge of Him.

In Ex. 31 we have Jehovah calling and qualifying men for the work; and the sabbath anew associated with it; and the tables of stone given to Moses. But who can adequately tell the horror of Israel's departure from God in Ex. 32! who the guilty weakness of Aaron, saint of Jehovah, or the anguish of Moses! The broken tables declare it, and the avenging sword of Levi's sons, and the intercession of Moses, willing to be blotted out for Israel. Nor will he let Him go (Ex. 33) without His presence; as he had already pitched the tent outside the camp and called it the Tent of meeting whither every one that sought Jehovah went outside the camp. And Jehovah asked for fresh tables (Ex. 34), and came down before Moses' face, revealing Himself as Jehovah governmentally in mercy and long-suffering but by no means clearing the guilty, under this mediation of Moses, and not under law simply as such. How much goodness was here added! Yet this is what 2 Cor. 3 treats as the ministry of death

and condemnation! Privileges of divine goodness aggravate our guilt if we are under law but cannot deliver us from its curse.

In Ex. 35 the sabbath is again enjoined; and the work goes forward in Ex. 36-39, till on the first day of the first month (in Ex. 40) all is set up in order, and in every part of it, and Moses did all "As Jehovah had commanded Moses." The oil anointed it wholly. It was thus not only the fruit of redemption but in the power of the Holy Spirit, and in figure God's habitation.

"And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went forward in all their journeys. But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day when it was taken up. For the cloud of Jehovah was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys."

It is a redeemed people's privilege and responsibility to look up for, and act under, the guidance of God in their walk through the wilderness.

## **CHAPTER 1.**

### ***ISRAEL IN EGYPT***

#### **Ex. 1: 1-7**

It was a wondrous act of grace when the God of glory called Abram in Ur of the Chaldees to Himself. The fathers of the chosen race no less than the accursed of Canaan then "served other gods:" a then new and destructive evil, striking directly at God's truth and honour, of which we never hear in scripture till after the deluge. In the early days of Seth, particularly from the birth of his son whom he called Enosh with a due sense of what man is now, frail and mortal, we know that people began to call on the name of Jehovah. Eminent among those who believed later were Enoch and Noah; but all these walked with God where they were. Their spirit was separate to Him whom they knew by His word and Spirit, and they looked onward in confiding hope for Him, the mysterious Seed of the woman who should crush the enemy of God and man. They, or some, called on Jehovah's name with a reality which a new nature alone gives.

But idolatry as an open affront to God could be met by nothing less than His call to open separation unto Himself, not only from the nearest ties of kin and nature but also from the providential order He had Himself lately set up in tongues, countries, and nations. His call was sovereign grace but imperative and paramount, with promises to an earthly seed and to a spiritual, only to be fully accomplished in Christ's day above and below. Oh how feebly realised meanwhile by faith!

As Abram went down into Egypt under natural pressure, so he was given to know in prophetic vision with a smoking furnace and a flaming fire, that his seed should be a sojourner in a land not theirs, and be in bondage and affliction four centuries, to emerge with great property and divine judgment on their oppressive masters, when the time approached to deal with Amorite iniquity (Gen. 15). Having come down under the prestige of Egypt's greatest governor and the warmest royal favour, Israel might have looked for nothing but ease and honour, settled as they were in the best of the land, in Goshen, the extreme province of Egypt toward the south frontier of Palestine. But spite of appearances Egypt in Jehovah's eyes betokened servitude and affliction; and so it came to pass when Joseph's bulwark no longer subsisted. The word of God abides, and cannot fail, whatever the weakness of man,

or the pride of unbelief. For the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, and His word is the proof of His goodness toward man, and of counsels of grace and glory unfailing when man comes to the end of his folly and sin, and the divine judgment is proved as sure as is His grace.

"And these are the names of the sons of Israel who came into Egypt: with Jacob came they, the man and his household, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; Dan and Naphthali; Gad and Asher. And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls; and Joseph was in Egypt [already]. And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful and swarmed and multiplied and became exceeding strong; and the land was filled with them" (vers. 1-7).

Egypt was the providential nursery provided for the chosen race whilst growing up from a great patriarchal family, the sons and sons' sons of one father, into a people for their destined inheritance. They were sheltered mercifully for a season, that they might grow all the more under adversity when it came, as it must, under man's antipathy to any who claimed relationship with the true God, not without dread as we shall soon find.

Let none deem it carping or unkind criticism, if I cite the words of so excellent a Christian as M. Henry in order to save souls from following him where he shows his utter ignorance of God's church, which he confounds, one while with the saints before or during or since Israel, and as here with Israel as such. This is to ignore all the N.T. light on what is found exclusively there, and impossible to exist alongside of Israel, which supposes the middle wall of partition to have God's sanction; whereas He took it down as an essential act for the being of the church, wherein is neither Jew nor Greek, but Christ is all and in all. The family of faith again was a fact throughout the world's history, and independent of it with increasing degrees of light from God. But the church of God was a wholly new thing, which only began with the Jew's rejection of the Christ, whom God raised and exalted to His right hand, and then and there gave Him to be Head over all things to the church which is His body.

Judge then the profound lack of intelligence in these words which open his Exposition of Exodus, "Moses . . . , having in the first book of his history preserved and transmitted the records of the *church* (!), while it existed in private families, comes in this second book to give us an account of its growth into a great *nation* (!!); and as the former furnishes us with the best Economics, so this with the best Politics." It is not that other divines of any school are more reliable: they all agree in the display of the same misconception. Nor is it a question of an idea or a theory. The truth of the church is bound up with Christ's glory in heavenly places, and immediately acts on our judgment and our affections; because this is what God is now occupied with, along with the gospel sent to all the creation. Now we, without right understanding of our church relation and of God's revealed will as to it, cannot but drift helplessly from what is of the deepest importance to His glory and the blessing of all concerned. The misunderstanding is through the like Judaising that was the earliest and widest spread of all the forms of unbelief with which the apostle Paul had his life-conflict. It is no less persistent and ensnaring today, blinding not a few of the excellent of the earth against our highest privileges.

Here we have exclusively the sons of Israel brought before us under circumstances favouring an extremely rapid increase to which ver. 7 directs our special attention. There is not the most distant allusion to the church throughout.

## CHAPTER 2.

### ***ISRAEL MADE TO SERVE WITH RIGOUR.***

#### **Ex. 1: 8-14.**

So rapid an increase in the population of Israel did not fail to arouse the attention and the fears of the Egyptians, when the memory of Joseph and of his services had passed away.

"And there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said to his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel [are] more numerous and stronger than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that, if war occur, they take side also with our enemies and fight against us, and go up out of the land. And they set over them task-masters to oppress them with their burdens. And they built store-cities for Pharaoh, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and spread; and they were distressed because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigour; and they embittered their life with hard labour in clay and bricks, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service with which they made them serve [was] with rigour" (vers. 8-14).

The wisdom of the world over-reaches and defeats itself. It was bad policy for the Egyptians to live in idleness and luxury, and to leave their works of hard toil and skill as an oppressive burden on their servants. It was a good apprenticeship for those who were to be mighty as well as populous, and to possess the gate of their enemies. In any case the righteous Lord loves righteousness, and is indifferent to injustice nowhere, least of all when done to the family of "the friend of God." None shall prosper who are unfair or cruel to his seed. "I will bless them that bless thee," said Jehovah to Abram, "and curse him that curseth thee."

In the present case it was a breach of the friendly understanding which set Israel and his sons in Goshen. There had never been hostility. The sons of Israel were in no way prisoners of war or captives in any way. They had given no reason for suspicion of seeking dominion over Egypt. They had never abandoned the hope of returning to Canaan as their land of promise. The burial of Jacob proclaimed this loudly; the unburied coffin of Joseph, still more loudly. Yet did the king who knew not Joseph dread the increasing number and strength of a people which served now as if due for a long while. Nor this only. Come, said he, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that, if war occur, they take side also with our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land. Was this in any degree just? And is an unjust policy "wise" in the long run, or in itself justifiable?

No doubt it is so that the kingdoms of the world have ever acted. God is not in their thoughts, even if He be on the lips of any. Selfishness reigns publicly as it governs individually. So it was increasingly when kings ruled over Israel and Judah with a slight exception. So it was when Babylon followed and the other world-kingdoms of Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. So it will not be when He comes whose right it is beyond every other ruler. But before that King reigns in righteousness and princes rule in judgment, a dark page of prophecy must be fulfilled not in blood only but in burning fuel for fire, and such overturning of things above and below as the world has never known. Out of that hurly-burly Israel shall emerge as Jehovah's people, His Son reigning in Zion, and they shall dwell in the land that He gave to His servant Jacob, when He shall have executed judgments on all those that despised or spoiled them near and far off, and they all shall know that He is Jehovah their God.

Meanwhile man's will had its way; as Israel built store-cities for Pharaoh, Pithom, and Raamses

(or Rameses). But God's providence acted also; for the more the Egyptians afflicted the Israelites, the more these multiplied and spread. Therefore were their masters vexed with fear and horror, and hardship was added to their bondage. The Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigour; or as is so graphically described in the text, "they embittered their life with hard labour in clay and bricks, and in all their manner of labour in the field: all their labour with which they made them serve was with rigour." It was quite different from the conditions of slavery once in the West Indies, and later still in the Southern States of America, where such malice was the exception, yet with a race never in honour but degraded grievously. But the face of Jehovah is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth, even in a day when the moral foundations are out of course. His eyes are upon the righteous, and His ears unto their cry. But the furnace became hotter still, and the divine intervention took a more definite and impressive shape.

## **CHAPTER 3.**

### ***PHARAOH'S MALICE AND GOD'S BLESSING.***

#### **Ex. 1: 15-22.**

We have seen from ver. 13 that it was not only a new king who regarded the rising strength of Israel with fear and jealousy: "the Egyptians made the sons of Israel serve with rigour, and embittered their lives with hard labour," in town and country. It was not merely service but harsh bondage, as complete a contradiction to their original tenure of Goshen as could be.

The oppression became more cruel still, and stopped not short of plans of the most cowardly kind and in a crafty and perfidious way.

"And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one [was] Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah; and he said, When ye do the office of a midwife [or, help in bearing] to the Hebrew women, and see [them] upon the birth-stool, if a son, then ye shall kill him; but if a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. And the king of Egypt called the midwives, and said to them, Why have ye done this, and saved the male-children alive? And the midwives said to Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women [are] not as the Egyptian women; for they are strong, and they have borne before the midwife cometh to them. And God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. And it came to pass because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses. And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, but every daughter ye shall save alive" (vers. 15- 22).

Such an instance as this, and as Herod's in dread of Messiah's birth, could so exceed the ordinary evil ways of man as to remind one of the hidden wicked one, the old Serpent and the Devil, and his enmity to the woman's Seed from first to last of man's day; whose blindness becomes the deeper because he ignores the secret power that works behind the scenes of the world's sad history. How little its rulers, any more than its classes and masses, believe that he is the spring that actuates the sons of disobedience, slaves of a mightier rebel than themselves! For here is a conflict unceasing between the arch-enemy instigating to destruction the first man against the Second and those dear to Him, till the last war whether above to clear the heavenly places (Rev. 12), or the earth enters for the displayed kingdom (Rev. 19), or the final judgment and eternity (Rev. 20, Rev. 21: 1-8). All other wars generally

are petty in comparison, springing from ambition, revenge, or other depraved lusts. We may except such as may have typified on a small scale those immensely momentous events for the deliverance of man and the creation from Satan's thralldom, for God's glory in His purpose of exalting the Christ and all that are His in the heavens and on the earth in the highest, largest, and richest way, and alas! too in the destructive punishment of all His enemies.

Here it is but a dastardly and diabolical effort to thwart what God was doing with the sons of Israel, even through the midwives for the male-children. But it was frustrated by the fear of God in the midwives, whom God established in their houses, as they refused the perfidy and the murder the wicked king commanded.

## CHAPTER 4.

### ***MOSES BORN UNDER INTERDICT.***

#### **Ex. 2: 1-10.**

Man proposes, God disposes. It appears from the facts stated, that, just after Pharaoh's edict for exterminating the sons of Israel, God ordered the birth of their deliverer. For Aaron was born three years before Moses, and was untouched, Miriam being several years his senior, as the history even here implies.

"And a man of the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived and bore a son. And she saw him that he was fair, and hid him three months. And when she could no longer hide him, she took for him an ark of paper reeds, and cemented it with bitumen and pitch, and put the child in it, and laid [it] in the sedge, on the bank of the river. And his sister stood afar off to see what would happen to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to bathe in the river; and her maids walked along by the river side. And she saw the ark in the midst of the sedge, and sent her handmaid to fetch it. And she opened [it] and saw the child, and, behold, the boy wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is [one] of the Hebrews' children. And his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call thee a wet-nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the damsel went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give [thee] thy wages. And the woman took the child and nursed it. And when the child was grown, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses\* and said, Because I drew him out of the water " (vers. 1-10).

\*Josephus (Ant. ii. 9. b), accounts thus for the Greek analogue in the Sept., Μωυ>σης "for the Egyptians call the water 'Mo' and those who are rescued from the water 'uses'."

The mother's heart regarded the beauty of the babe as a sign from God to preserve him from the murderous fate intended by the king. But there was more than natural feeling. "*By faith*" Moses when born was hid three months by his parents, because they saw the child fair; and they did not fear the injunction of the king (Heb. 11: 23). A deliverer was ever before those who believed, not only the woman's Seed, but Abraham's Seed also. To have taken absolutely that life was a Satanic attack on God's counsels. At the risk of life perhaps they preserved their child three months. We are not told more of the circumstances, why it was impossible to hide the child longer. But obviously he who devised the death of every male child would use means too for due inquisition to ascertain from time to

time that his decree was carried out. It is legitimate to infer that the moment was at hand when their concealment could last no longer, the child must be committed to the Nile, and themselves punished also for their contumacy.

Hence the mother was led by a wisdom above her own to commit the baby to an ark of papyrus reeds, well plastered with bitumen and pitch, and to await divine interference. The sister, who was afterwards known as not Miriam only but the "prophetess," watched at a distance, but near enough to see how her little brother would fare on the bank of the river. And who should be the first to come down to bathe near the ark but Pharaoh's daughter, she and her maids? She in God's providence saw the ark, and sent her handmaid to fetch it, and opened it and saw the child. Here again God wrought; for, "behold, the babe wept." His tears, to say nothing of his beauty, touched the heart of the princess. "She had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children."

Miriam had now joined herself at the critical moment to the group; and with wit quickened by affection availed herself of the evident compassion to say to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrews, that she may suckle the child for thee?" What could the princess say to so sensible and timely a suggestion, but "Go"? "And the damsel went and fetched the child's mother [her own too]; and Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give [thee] thy wages."

This was no miracle, any more than the preservation of the child. But it was the living God's working in the various persons concerned, to rescue from a watery grave the one who was to rescue His people from a bondage to many more bitter than death in the Nile: the type of the Deliverer from sin and wrath, not for Israel but for every believer; the prophet too and mediator of God's law, like but beyond other men, though immeasurably inferior to Him through Whom grace and truth came, the manifestation of God's light and love as none but Himself.

"And the woman took the child and nursed it." Say not, believe not, that God gives the believer divine life only, to feel his sins, or pardon through His mercy in forgiving them. Here it was not yet the divine Saviour. But what a joy to the parents to have the doom so simply and surely set aside! and the child brought up where it ought to be rather than anywhere else in the world. Even then it was capable of forming impressions which grace would strengthen and deepen another day, to fortify against the unholy influence of a heathen court, whatever the kindness personally of the princess. "And the child grew, and she (the mother) brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water." How vain to faith what cavillers say in this day or any other! This was the childhood of him whom God inspired in due time, among other great things, to write the Pentateuch, greater than all his great deeds for God and for man. And it abides as a divine monument in face of all the vain efforts of unbelieving detractors, who really possess no more weight than noisy boys blowing against a mountain; but they cannot shake off the guilt of unbelief.

## **CHAPTER 5.**

### ***MOSES QUILS EGYPT AND FLEES TO MIDIAN.***

#### **Ex. 2: 11-25.**

We have seen faith blessed in the saving of Moses, and providence at work in the king's daughter,

who made his own mother his nurse, and adopted him as her son and had him instructed, as Stephen said, in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, mighty as he was too in his deeds and words.

Now we are about to hear of his own faith, rising above the elevation which providence gave him at the court of Pharaoh, and enabling him to sacrifice all to God's glory and His promises to Israel in their most despised and distressful circumstances.

"And it came to pass in those days when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he turned this way and that way, and when he saw that [there was] no man, he smote the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. And he went out the second day, and, behold, two Hebrew men were quarrelling; and he said to him that was in the wrong, Why art thou smiting thy neighbour? And he said, Who made thee ruler and judge over us? Dost thou intend [say] to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared and said, Surely, the matter is known. And Pharaoh heard of this matter and sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from before Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian. And he sat by the well. And the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came and drew [water], and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses rose and helped them, and watered their flock. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, Why are ye come so soon today? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew abundantly for us, and watered the flock. And he said to his daughters, And where [is] he? Why then have ye left the man behind? Call him that he may eat bread. And Moses consented to stay with the man; and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter. And she bore a son, and he called his name Gershom [a sojourner there]; for he said, I have been a sojourner in a foreign land.

"And it came to pass during these many days, that the king of Egypt died. And the children of Israel sighed because of the bondage, and cried; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. And God heard their groaning; and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God took notice" (vers. 11-25.).

It was characteristic of Moses' faith, that he believed God's love to His people because they were His, however deplorable their state through their unbelief and the world's oppression and contempt. The providential circumstances which had lifted him above the low estate of his parents and set him, distinguished by his abilities, his acquirements, and his character in the nearest position to the royal family, gave him the stronger reason to treat all as nought compared with identifying himself with down-trodden Israel. Natural gratitude might plead her claim who had under God's hand delivered him from death. Reason would not fail to argue the prudence of using his nearness at court to gain and seize opportunities for its favour toward his suffering kinsfolk. In the face of all adverse appearances the faith of Moses rested on two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, His promise and His oath to the father of the faithful, that of Abraham's seed He would make a great nation, and that in his Seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Moses was no enthusiastic stripling, but then, as Stephen lets us know, a man about forty years of age. His words, his deeds, his mind, his affection, all point him out as one of the leading spirits for all time. But by faith he deliberately turned his back on Egypt's ease, power, and honour, to take his place among the chosen people of Jehovah, slaves though they then were and strangers in a land not their own. He knew from what we read in Gen. 15 that the end of their affliction must come ere long; for had not Jehovah said hundreds of years before, that He would judge the nation after it had reduced them to servitude? and was not the fourth generation arrived, when they should quit their oppression for the land of promise? "By faith Moses, when become great, refused to be called son of Pharaoh's daughter,

choosing rather to suffer affliction *with* the people of God than to have temporary pleasure of sin, esteeming the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked off to the recompense" (Heb. 11: 24-26.).

The history gives the facts as they occurred. His brethren under their burdens lay on the heart of Moses; and as he looked, he saw an Egyptian smite one of them. Roused to indignation, "he looked this way and that way," and seeing no witness, he took the law into his hand and slew the offender, hiding the body in the sand. The love to his brethren was a right and holy feeling; but his inflicting death on the Egyptian was unjustifiable, and led to his long exile to escape the king's resentment. He acted on the impulse of his heart, and in no way as consulting God or obeying Him. Had he looked to Him, he would not have "looked this way or that way." He tarnished his testimony for God by his efforts to escape any witness of the deed or of his concealing of the corpse, and the consequences.

The very day after, he had to bear the keen wound indicted not by an Egyptian nor the king but by an unworthy brother. For when he reproved the sad quarrelling of Hebrew with Hebrew, he that did the wrong was the one to raise the insulting cry, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge"? and to clench it with the stab, "Intendest thou to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian yesterday?" The conscience of Moses was bad: "surely the matter is known." The king too was roused by his act; and Moses fled from his vengeance into the land of Midian. Moses was not brought to nothingness in his own eyes. He was playing the hero rather than the saint who waits on God, not only for the revealed end, but for each step of the way. Hence we walk by faith, not by sight. It is a path of constant dependence on God, guided by His word. And Moses had as it were to unlearn for as many years in Midian as he had been learning the wisdom of the Egyptians. What a change from the court of Pharaoh to lead Reuel or Jethro's sheep "in the back end of the desert," not far from "the mount of God." To this discipline the solitude of the wilderness and the lowly life of a shepherd gave the needed sphere, that his impetuous spirit might be broken down, and himself become "very meek, above all men that were upon the face of the earth."

As he sat by the well, came the seven daughters of Reuel with their father's flock. But the shepherds drove them away from the troughs they sought to fill for watering the sheep. Moses interposed, and so helped the maidens that they returned soon enough to excite their father's inquiry how it came to pass, and a message sent that the stranger should partake of his hospitality. The gift of his daughter as wife followed, and the birth in due time of a son, whose name expressed the father's sense of strangership in a foreign land, in striking contrast with Joseph's forgetfulness of all his toil and all his father's house, under similar circumstances.

During those "many days" died the king of Egypt. But no relaxation of the cruel strain as yet appeared for the sons of Israel. Their bondage drew out sighs and cries. But their cry, as we are told with touching simplicity "came up to God because of the bondage; and God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob; and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God took notice." O ye that boast of Herodotus and Thucydides, of Livy and Tacitus, produce any sentence from those classic historians, or from any since down to our day, for words approaching these for tenderness, soon to be rendered into undying facts, now for everlasting principles of truth and righteousness in earthly things which test the soul whether we care for the living God or are in heart His enemies!

## CHAPTER 6.

### *THE BURNING BUT UNCONSUMED BRAMBLE.*

#### **Ex. 3: 1-5.**

The moment so long desired by Moses came. The term, however considerable, of learning the wisdom of the Egyptians did not accomplish it; and an equal length in the desert for unlearning must as it were run out before God gave him the effectual call.

"And Moses tended the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock behind the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, to Horeb. And the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bramble; and he looked and behold, the bramble burned with fire, and the bramble was not consumed. And Moses said, Let me now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bramble is not burnt. And Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, and God called to him out of the midst of the bramble, and said, Moses, Moses! And he said, Here [am] I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither; loose thy sandals from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (vers. 1- 5).

There had been significant tokens of the divine ways at great crises vouchsafed by God from the beginning. What more solemn than that which closed paradise to the disobedient pair, from whom the fallen race was to spring? A bad conscience led them to hide themselves from Him who had surrounded them with nothing but good, before He "drove out the man"; and the race thenceforward is by nature in exile from the garden of delights. Cherubim proclaimed God's rights and made re-entrance into Adam's paradise impossible. Innocence once gone is irreparable. Yet God's grace cannot fail in the Second man, the bruised Bruiser of the old serpent, held out to all that believe even before the guilty were expelled.

Again, when the post-diluvian earth began, and Noah offered to Jehovah his burnt-offerings of every clean beast and every clean fowl, so that all should stand on sacrifice, God (Elohim), for this was the right word in each case, set His bow in the cloud, as the token that a deluge of such destruction should never again destroy all flesh.

Further, when Jehovah pledged Himself to childless Abram in Gen. 15 to make his seed numberless as the stars, not only were special sacrifices prescribed, but a deep sleep and horror of darkness fell on the patriarch, and at sunset a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed, to his vision, between the divided animals as they lay slain: the sign of affliction and service to befall his seed before they should enter the promised land.

It was fitting that there should be given now to Moses with his commission a suited sign. And can any be conceived so meet for the deliverer to see as this great sight when he led the flock of Jethro behind an intervening wilderness, and came to what is significantly called "the mountain of God." It was the precisely significant mark of Israel under the covenant of law, utterly failing yet not destroyed. "For I am Jehovah, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3: 6). The law given through Moses they presumed to obey, forgetting God's promises to the fathers, which Jehovah never forgot. Spite of their self-confidence, the bramble-bush went on burning, but unconsumed, because He, the Eternal, had promised. And they remain still insensible to their real state and its cause. For they in every way broke the first covenant and added to that sin, for which they were led captive to Babylon, the still worse sin of the returned remnant in rejecting the Messiah, even to the death of the

cross, and were scattered by the Romans as they remain to this day, as indicated by Isaiah the prophet.

Even when there shall be a future righteous remnant repenting of all their sins and unbelief, the mass or "the many" as Daniel calls the apostate Jews, by compact with the Roman Beast will strive to set up the nation as Jehovah's people and their lawless king in the land (Dan. 11: 36, etc ). But Jehovah will come, as Isaiah says (Isa. 66: 15, 16), "with fire and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will Jehovah plead with all flesh, and the slain of Jehovah shall be many." Such will be the return of the Lord Jesus when He takes up again His ancient people, and deals with the enemies, Jewish or Gentile. Hence it essentially differs from what Moses saw to encourage him then, though there is the common principle that God's judgment of evil is ever unsparing; and privilege is vainly pleaded, either by Judaism or by Christendom, on behalf of their iniquities.

Here Jehovah manifests Himself as judge of evil in Israel who shall be sustained because of what He is to them, and in no way for their deserts: a greater fact than its wondrous sign. "And God," the Supreme, "called to Moses out of the midst of the bramble, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here [am] I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither; loose thy sandals from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest [is] holy ground." His presence is the true power of sanctification. Forms He could and did use under the law, in tabernacle and temple. But He Himself is more than any or all. What a support for Moses in going in to Pharaoh, and in leading His people out, and bearing their frowardness in the wilderness where all perished save the two witnesses, Joshua and Caleb; yet Israel remained unconsumed to enter the land in the generation to come.

## **CHAPTER 7.**

### ***THE DIVINE COMMISSION TO MOSES.***

#### **Ex. 3: 6-22.**

But definite words were added to the sight.

"And he said, I [am] the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. And Jehovah said, Seeing (or, Surely) I have seen the affliction of my people that [are] in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good and large land, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. And now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me, and I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt. And Moses said unto God, Who [am] I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this [shall be] the token to thee that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. And Moses said to God, Behold [when] I come to the children of Israel, and shall say to them, The God of your fathers hath sent me to you; and they shall say to me, What [is] his name? what shall I say to them? And God said to Moses, I AM WHAT I AM; and he said, Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me to you. And God said moreover to Moses, Thus shalt thou say

to the children of Israel, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me to you; this [is] my name for ever, and this my memorial to all generations. Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, hath appeared to me, saying, Visiting (or, Surely) I have visited you and [seen] that which is done to you in Egypt; and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey. And they shall hearken to thy voice; and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and ye shall say to him, Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us; and now let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Jehovah our God. And I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will put forth my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof; and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty; but every woman shall ask her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; and ye shall put [them] upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians" (vers. 6-22).

It was a blessed intervention of Jehovah on behalf of His enslaved and cruelly oppressed people. The name He gave Himself was not new in the sense of never having been heard before. But now He was about to act on its reality and present value. There was to be accomplishment up to a certain and evident point, and not promise only. Hence stress is laid on "the God of thy fathers," and this expounded as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses realised the fact and hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. Most reassuring were the words, "And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows: and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land into a good land and large, into a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. And now behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt" (vers. 7-10).

Yet would it be partial and temporary; for what could be more that depended on the first man, a people in the flesh? The fulfilment for everlasting can only be when man truly renounces self, owns his ruin before God, and has Christ, the Second man, as the present and abiding ground of blessing. There was to be shortly a typical redemption; and a typical entrance into the land of abundance, not of corn and fruit only, but flowing with milk and honey. Nothing abides for ever but God, and God now has wrought for sinful man in the gift of life eternal and everlasting redemption. So it will be really for Israel when they have their own Messiah present and reigning over them. Till then it could be no more than provisional for Israel, who must learn what it is, after sowing to the flesh, to reap corruption.

Moses is as distrustful now, as he was confident in Egypt; he asks "Who am I" to go unto Pharaoh and bring out Israel? But Jehovah vouchsafes His presence and gives the token of serving God "on this mountain." Then, to Moses asking a specific name of His presence, He says, "I AM WHAT I AM," His essential and abiding being; and bids Moses say to Israel, "I AM hath sent me to you." All else was but creature. He was the only and ever existing One. But he was also to say, The Jehovah God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, had sent him to them. "This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial to all generations." A wondrous declaration to be infallibly

verified, when the Lord Jesus vindicates His every word.

God therefore calls on Moses (ver. 16) to "Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, hath appeared unto me saying, I have surely visited you and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanite and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey. And they shall hearken to thy voice; and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say to him, Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us: and now let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Jehovah our God. And I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will put forth my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: but every woman shall ask her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put [them] upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians" (vers. 16- 22).

He was to ask at first leave to go "three days' journey into the wilderness," but would ask more as the obduracy of the king appeared; and God lets Moses know the king's sure defiance, tells of His wonders to be done in reproof, and directs His people not to go empty after their long unrequited labour, and that every woman should (not, 'borrow,' but) ask for jewels of silver and of gold, and thus spoil them, as it was righteous retribution. The word "borrow" is only a secondary sense, and here misappropriate. "Ask" is the direct and primary sense, and therefore right to be preserved.

*[Thus far only had the Author written when he passed away.]*