

READ The BIBLE Together



**EXODUS Part I
(1:1 - 13:16)**

19th July - 26th September 2015

**SHALOM CHURCH, SINGAPORE
(Upholding the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith)**

Days 1-3 **A Brief Introduction**

Who wrote EXODUS?

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Moses is the main human author of **EXODUS**. How do we know?

- God told him to write

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." (EXODUS 17:14)*

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." (EXODUS 34:27)*

- Moses wrote

*So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the Lord has said we will do." And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. (EXODUS 24:3-4)*

- Jesus attributed **EXODUS** to Moses

*For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' (MARK 7:10)*

The quotations are from **EXODUS 20:12** and **EXODUS 21:17**.

*But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? (MARK 12:26)*

The burning bush passage is reference to **EXODUS 3**

While *Moses* is the main human author, God is the Ultimate Divine Author. **EXODUS** is part of the **PENTATEUCH** (the first five books of the Old Testament: **GENESIS-DEUTERONOMY**) and the **PENTATEUCH** is part of the Old Testament Scriptures, the Word of God. As such, **II TIMOTHY 3:16-17** applied to **EXODUS** means:

***EXODUS** is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

As we read **EXODUS** together, we must remember that we are not just reading the words of a mere man named *Moses*, but we are reading the Word of God. If we reject what **EXODUS** teaches, we are ultimately rejecting the Word of God!

As we read **EXODUS** together, we must consciously ask how the passage before us is 'profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness'. In simple words, we must come to **EXODUS** expecting the Word of God to teach and change our beliefs, to challenge and transform our lives.

How can we express this expectation in a practical way? By beginning each Bible reading with prayer asking God to teach you and transform your life through the passage of Scripture before you!

### **When did EXODUS take place?**

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There are debates even amongst evangelical scholars as to whether the events of **EXODUS** took place in the 13th century (around 1267 B.C.) or the mid-15th century (around 1445 B.C.). For details of the debate, please consult:

- i) **Exodus: A Mentor Commentary** by *John L. Mackay*, pages 13-30 '**Historical Background**'.
- ii) **Exodus: Saved for God's Glory** by *Philip Graham Ryken*, pages 33-41 '**The Exodus In History**'

For our RTBT series, we will adopt the 1445 B.C. date, taking **I KINGS 6:1** literally:

And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.

It is generally accepted that *Solomon* started to reign in 971 B.C. (plus or minus 2-3 years either way). The fourth year of his reign would be 968 B.C., and so 480 years ago from that date would bring us to 1447 B.C. (plus or minus 2-3 years either way). An approximate figure of 1445 B.C. is often used.

While we cannot be dogmatic as to when **EXODUS** took place, we can be very sure that it did! There is no doubt that *Moses* is a real, historical person, though we can never be absolutely certain as to exact identity of the Pharaoh(s) mentioned in **EXODUS**.

If we doubt the historicity of **EXODUS** and *Moses*, then we are actually questioning the truthfulness of Jesus Christ! **Do you know why?**

How should we divide EXODUS?

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Following *John L. Mackay*, we can divide **EXODUS** into six major sections:

- I. Redemption from Egypt (**1:1-15:21**)
  - (a) Israel in Egypt (**1:1-22**)
  - (b) Moses' birth and early years (**2:1-25**)
  - (c) The call of Moses (**3:1-4:31**)
  - (d) Confronting Pharaoh (**5:1-7:7**)
  - (e) Egypt Defeated (**7:8-13:16**)
  - (f) Crossing the Red Sea (**13:17-15:21**)
  
- II. Testing in the Wilderness (**15:22-18:27**)
  
- III. Covenant at Sinai (**19:1-24:18**)
  - (a) Covenant Declaration (**19:1-20:21**)
  - (b) The Book of the Covenant (**20:22-23:33**)
  - (c) Covenant Ratification (**24:1-18**)
  
- IV. Instructions for Worship (**25:1-31:18**)
  - (a) The Tabernacle, Courtyard and Furnishings (**25:1-27:21**)
  - (b) The Priestly Ministry (**28:1-30:38**)
  - (c) Further Instructions (**31:1-18**)
  
- V. Rebellion and Its Consequences (**32:1-34:35**)
  
- VI. Obedience and Worship (**35:1-40:38**)

For most of us, **chapters 1-18** (*birth of Moses, ten plagues, crossing the Red Sea*) excite us more than **chapters 19-40** (*Ten Commandments, covenant, instructions to construct the tabernacle and institution of priests*). Yet it seems that *Moses* is more interested in the second part, since he devoted more time and space to talking about it. **What do you think is the reason for this?**

## How should we read EXODUS?

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EXODUS is the Word of God and should be read as such!

It is the Word of God about God!

While *Moses* is very much at the centre of **EXODUS**, **EXODUS** is not about *Moses*. Nor is **EXODUS** about Israel, although **EXODUS** tells us very much about their deliverance from the house of bondage as well as their depravity after leaving Egypt. As Philip Ryken puts it, "*The book of Exodus presents the Israelites as a grumbling, complaining, idol-worshipping people. It does not encourage us to praise the Israelites themselves . . .*" **EXODUS** is not about the Israelites. They are not the heroes.

EXODUS is about God. Let's hear Philip Ryken again: "*As we study the Biblical history in the book of Exodus, we discover that the real hero of the story is God. God is the one who reveals himself to Moses as the Great I AM. God is the one who hears the cries of his people in bondage and takes pity on their suffering, raising up a deliverer to save them. God is the one who visits the plagues on Egypt, who divides the sea, and who drowns Pharaoh's army. God is the one who provides bread from Heaven and water from the rock. God is the one who gives the law-covenant on the mountain and fills the tabernacle with his glory. From beginning to end Exodus is a God-centered book, a theological history.*"

Hence, as we read **EXODUS** together, we must not be too caught up with the human characters and interesting events. Instead, we must consciously ask, "*What does this passage teach me about God (who He is and what He has done) and how should my life change as a result?*"

EXODUS is the Word of God about Christ!

The whole Bible is about Jesus Christ. The theme of the Old Testament is the Savior to come, while the theme of the New Testament is the Savior who has come and who is coming again. After His resurrection, Jesus talked with His disciples on the road to Emmaus "*and beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*" (**LUKE 24:27**) If Jesus began with Moses, surely He must have said something about the exodus! In short, the exodus finds its ultimate meaning and final interpretation in the person and work of God the Son.

As we work our way through **EXODUS**, we shall see how this book of *Moses* speaks of Christ. At this point, we just need to remind ourselves that if Christ is missing in our reading of **EXODUS**, then we have misread **EXODUS!**

EXODUS is the Word of God to change us!

This is true for all Scriptures (**II TIMOTHY 3:16**) and hence it must be true of **EXODUS**. God did not give us His Word just to increase our head knowledge, but because He wants to change us to be more and more like His Son.

As we read a passage in **EXODUS**, we must first ask, "*What does this mean?*" and then secondly we must ask, "*What does this mean to me?*"

We should be applying ourselves in these ways:

Now that I've understood its message, what must I do / stop doing?

What area of thinking must change and how can I do it?

Which aspect(s) of my attitude needs to change?

Be the blessed reader of Scripture as portrayed by **JAMES 1:22-25!**

Day 4 Read **EXODUS 1**

EXODUS 1 can easily be divided into two parts: Israel prospered (**1:1-7**) and Israel persecuted (**1:8-22**).

Israel prospered (**1:1-7**)

1. (a) How many people went down with Jacob to Egypt? (**Verse 5**)

(b) How many people can be counted as children of Israel (Jacob) in **verse 7**?

(c) How should this numerical growth be viewed? (**GENESIS 12:2, 17:2, 46:3**)

2. **Verse 7** (NKJV) reads: "*But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them . . .*"

This reminds us of **GENESIS 1:28** and **9:1, 7**. In depicting the numerical growth of the Israelites using such vivid language, *Moses* was saying two things:

(i) Israel was obeying the Creation Mandate

(ii) God was blessing Israel

When we read later that Pharaoh sought to restrict and reduce Israel's numerical growth, it could only mean that Pharaoh was anti-God!

3. In Hebrew, **verse 1** begins with the word 'and' and the first seven words are an exact replica of **GENESIS 46:8**. This tells us that **EXODUS** is a sequel to **GENESIS**.

What do you think are some of the main themes of **GENESIS** that we need to bear in mind to help us better grasp the message of **EXODUS**?

(Recall that **GENESIS** RTBT was done in 2014. Refer back to those notes, if needed)

Days 5-6 Read **EXODUS 1**

EXODUS 1 can easily be divided into two parts: Israel prospered (**1:1-7**) and Israel persecuted (**1:8-22**).

Israel persecuted (**1:8-22**)

1. (a) What reason(s) did Pharaoh give to begin his persecution of Israel?

 (b) Do you find his reason(s) reasonable or absurd? Elaborate.

2. In **verses 11-14**, we read of the first wave of persecution Pharaoh launched against the Israelites. What was it and what was the outcome?

3. In **verses 15-21**, we read of the second wave of persecution Pharaoh launched against the Israelites. What was it and what was the outcome?

4. In **verse 22**, we read of the third wave of persecution Pharaoh launched against the Israelites.
 - (a) What was it?

(b) A similar event took place in the New Testament. What was it?

(c) How successful was this third wave of persecution against the Israelites?

5. Come back to **verses 15-21**. While we know that the one who ordered the infanticide was Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, he was never named. So we actually do not know which Pharaoh exactly was the perpetrator of this horrible crime. On the other hand, the two midwives who disobeyed Pharaoh were named: *Puah* and *Shiphrah*.

Why do you think *Moses* provided us with the names of the two midwives but not that of the Egyptian king?

Day 7 Read **EXODUS 1**

1. Imagine yourself as an Israelite living in Egypt then.

(a) What would you do, and how would you pray, while experiencing Pharaoh's first wave of persecution?

(b) Somehow you've learnt of Pharaoh's secret decree to the midwives to kill all male Israelite babies. What would be your next course of action?

(c) You are living inside **verse 22**. As you witness/learn of some male Israelite babies being cast into the Nile, how will you feel and what will you be saying?

2. After experiencing the first two waves and now being in the middle of the third wave of persecution from Pharaoh, a fellow Israelite says to you, "*Why should we bother to pray to YAHWEH, the God of our fathers anymore? Either He is dead or He is blind. Here we are, facing all these afflictions and He has done nothing to help us!*"

(a) What will you say to him?

(b) How would **GENESIS 15:13** help you and him face these afflictions?

3. Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached a number of sermons on **EXODUS**. Concerning the afflictions that Israel had to endure from the Egyptians, and the possible reasons as to why God allowed it, he said:

"In all probability, if they had been left to themselves, they would have been melted and absorbed into the Egyptian race, and lost their identity as God's special people. They were content to be in Egypt, and they were quite willing to be Egyptianized. To a large degree, they began to adopt the superstitions, and idolatries, and iniquities of Egypt; and these things clung to them, in after years, to such a terrible extent that we can easily imagine that their heart must have turned aside very much towards the sins of Egypt. Yet, all the while, God was resolved to bring them out of that evil connection. They must be a separated people; they could not be Egyptians, nor yet live permanently like Egyptians, for Jehovah had chosen them for himself, and he meant to make an abiding difference between Israel and Egypt."

"In order to cut loose the bonds that bound them to Egypt, the sharp knife of affliction must be used; and Pharaoh though he knew it not, was God's instrument in weaning them from the Egyptian world, and helping them as his church to take up their separate place in the wilderness, and receive the portion which God had appointed for them . . . The whip of persecution is helpful, because it makes us learn that this is the house of bondage, and moves us to long after and seek for the land of liberty — the land of joy."

(a) In your own words, state the main points of Spurgeon's argument above.

(b) Do you agree with Spurgeon? Elaborate.

Week 2

[26th July – 1st August 2015]

Days 1-2 Read **EXODUS 2**

“The focus of chapter 2 narrows from that of the situation of the Israelites in Egypt. Now we are introduced to an Israelite family whose quiet but determined reaction to the quandary they face opens the way forward towards the LORD’s deliverance.

Still there had been no mighty divine intervention, and we soon learn that eighty years of seeming divine inaction remain. But working in ways that humanly seem improbable, the hand of God is using the weak to shame the strong. Events have consequences that he wants, and thwart the decree of the human tyrant. The chapter relates three incidents in the early life of Moses.

First, there is his birth and divinely ordained survival so that he can become the deliverer of Israel (verses 1-10).

Next there is an incident that occurred when Moses was nearly forty years old and attempted to rescue one of his fellow countrymen from Egyptian oppression (verses 11-15). Even Moses, who will eventually become the deliverer of God’s people, has to learn that he cannot force events forward at his own pace.

The final event is Moses’ arrival in Midian and the help he extends to Jethro’s daughters, which leads to his marriage and settlement in that land (verses 16-25). Liberation for God’s people seems even more remote because their deliverer is in exile far from the scene of their plight. But God is providentially controlling matters so that in his good time all will fall into place to the glory of his name.”

John. L. Mackay

We will focus on **verses 1-10** today.

In **verse 1**, we read of a Levite man who married a Levite woman. We know from **EXODUS 6:20** that the man was *Amram* and his wife *Jochebed*. We know that they must have been married for some time by then, because they already had a girl (*Miriam* -- **2:4, 15:20**) and a boy (*Aaron* - **6:20**).

In **verse 2**, we read of the birth of *Moses*. His conception and birth took place at the time when Pharaoh's decree to kill all male Hebrew babies was in force (**1:22**).

1. Imagine that you were an Israelite living in Egypt as a slave then.

- (a) Would Pharaoh's decree be a strong enough factor to make you shun marriage? Elaborate.
- (b) Would Pharaoh's decree be a strong enough factor to deter you from having any children? Why or why not?
2. Despite Pharaoh's decree, *Moses'* mum hid him in the home for three months.
- (a) According to **verse 2**, the reason why she disobeyed Pharaoh was because she '*saw that he was a beautiful child*'. What does this mean? (Hint: In Hebrew, this is the same as **GENESIS 1:10,12,18** -- *God saw that it was good.*)
- (b) **HEBREWS 11:23** says that it was by faith that *Moses'* parents disobeyed Pharaoh and hid Moses. How was their action one of faith?
3. (a) When *Jochebed* could no longer keep *Moses* hidden, what did she do? (**Verse 3**)

Note that the word "ark" (Hebrew: *tebha*) is the same word used in **GENESIS 6:14** of *Noah's* ark.

- (b) What did *Miriam* do in **verse 4**? Why?
4. **Verses 5-10** narrates how a Levite boy became an Egyptian prince. The four main human characters were females. Who were they?

Note that this is the second time God used women to thwart Pharaoh's evil designs. The previous time involved the midwives in **EXODUS 1**.

5. Philip Graham Ryken has some very insightful comments to make on these ten verses. Take some time to read it:

"At the very darkest moment of Israel's captivity — when evil was rampant and the tyrant seemed to triumph — at that very moment God was working in history to save his people. His plan called for a little child to be born in secret and then floated down the river right to Pharaoh's doorstep. In his triumph over evil, God displays his divine sense of humor. Peter Enns comments, "Ironically, this child, once doomed to death by Pharaoh's decree, will become the very instrument of Pharaoh's destruction and the means through which all Israel escapes not only Pharaoh's decree, but Egypt itself." Pharaoh was foiled again!

Moses is spared by being cast onto the very Nile that was to drown him, is treated with maternal kindness by the daughter of the very king who had condemned him and to whose descendants he would become a nemesis, and is assigned as a responsibility with pay to the one woman in all the world who most wanted the best for him, his own mother. Who else but God could accomplish such a great salvation? There are divine fingerprints all over the narrative."

Day 3 Read **EXODUS 2:11-15** and **ACTS 7:23-28**

In **EXODUS 2:11-15**, we read of how *Moses* went from being a prince in Egypt to become a refugee in Midian.

1. (a) What did *Moses* do in **verse 12**?

(b) Why did he do it?

(c) Do you think it was right of *Moses* to do this? Elaborate.

2. (a) What did *Moses* try to do in **verse 14**?

(b) What was the outcome?

(c) Put yourself in the shoes of *Moses* at this time. What thoughts and feelings would you have?

Humanly speaking, *Moses* the Egyptian prince was more likely to be Israel's deliverer than *Moses* the refugee in Midian. Yet God's ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts higher than our thoughts. As we shall soon see, *Moses* in Midian was God's next step in preparing him to be Israel's deliverer.

Days 4-5 Read **EXODUS 2:16-25**

1. We see *Moses* standing up to help the seven daughters of Reuel when the shepherds bullied them. This is significant when we remember the rejection he received in Egypt, resulting in him having to flee for his life (**2:11-15**). Imagine yourself in the shoes of *Moses* in **verse 17**.

(a) Would you stand up to help the bullied women, or would you turn your face and look away?

(b) List the reason(s) behind your action in (a) above.

2. *Moses* married Zipporah, and they had a son named Gershom (meaning "*I have been a stranger in a foreign land*"). What do you think *Moses* was seeking to convey by naming his son in his way?

3. In response to Israel's groaning, God _____, God _____, God _____ and God _____. What do you think is the message here?

Day 6 Review **EXODUS 1 & 2**

1. Recall that **EXODUS** is about God (Week 1 Day 1-3). So what does **EXODUS 1-2** teach me about God (who He is and what He has done) and how should my life change as a result?

2. Recall that **EXODUS** is about Christ (Week 1 Day 1-3). So how can we see Christ from **EXODUS 1-2**?

Day 7 Read **EXODUS 3 & 4**

After reading these two chapters in one sitting . . .

1. Write down your first impression(s) and any questions you might have.

2. God met and called *Moses* to go back to Egypt and deliver Israel from bondage. *Moses'* response was to give a number of excuses. How many excuses did he give, and what were they?

Days 1-2 Read **EXODUS 3:1-10**

1. What was *Moses* doing when God met and called him? (**Verse 1**)

2. What caught the attention of *Moses* was a burning bush.
 - (a) How could a bush be burning with fire and yet not be consumed? (**Verses 2-3**)

 - (b) What do you think is symbolized by this burning bush?

3.
 - (a) In **verse 2**, it was said that the Angel of the LORD appeared to *Moses* from the burning bush. Who do you think is the Angel of the LORD?

 - (b) In **verse 4**, it was said that the LORD spoke to *Moses* from the burning bush, and identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (**verse 6**).

So who appeared and spoke to *Moses* from the burning bush -- the Angel of the LORD or the LORD? Explain your answer.

4. In **verse 5**, *Moses* was told not to go any nearer to the burning bush, and to take off his sandals, for the place where he was standing was holy ground.
 - (a) What does 'holy' mean?

(b) Why is that place holy? How can a place be holy?

(c) After taking off his sandals, do you think *Moses* was allowed to move nearer to the burning bush? Explain your answer.

5. God said that He had seen the oppression of the Israelites, heard their cry, knew their sorrows, and that He was coming '*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.*'

How will God carry out His pledge to deliver Israel? (**Verse 10**)

6. (a) How can we see the Gospel in **EXODUS 3:1-10**?

(b) What lessons for the Christian Life can we learn from **EXODUS 3:1-10**?

Day 3 Read **EXODUS 3:11-12**

1. **Verse 11** records *Moses'* first excuse for rejecting God's call. What was it? (Answer using your own words)

2. (a) What was God's reply? (**Verse 12a**)

(b) How was God's reply in **verse 12a** an answer to *Moses'* objection?

3. To assure *Moses* that he will succeed, God gave him a sign – “*When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.*” (**12b-c**).

“What is strange about this sign is that it points to the future. In this respect, it is not unlike the sign Isaiah gave when he prophesied the birth of Christ: ‘Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel’ (Isa. 7:14). In the case of Moses, the sign would not be confirmed until he led God’s people out of Egypt and brought them back to God’s holy mountain. Only then would God’s promise be vindicated. So the question is, how did the sign help? If it would not come true until sometime in the future, how could it reassure Moses in the present?”

“Some scholars have tried to solve this problem by saying that the words ‘this sign’ actually refer to the burning bush. It is true that the bush was a sign. As we have seen, it pointed to eternal truths about God’s character. The trouble is that this solution does not work very well grammatically. It is much more natural to take the sign the way the New International Version takes it, as referring to Moses’ return to the very same mountain. Moses would not see the sign before he undertook his mission but after, because the success of his mission was the sign.

What this means is that the sign could only be received by faith. Its validity depended on God’s ability to deliver on his promise. If Moses needed to be reassured that he was the right man for the job and that God would be with him, he simply had to take God’s word for it, moving forward in faith.”

Philip Graham Ryken

Days 4-5 Read **EXODUS 3:13-22**

God called *Moses* to go back to Egypt and bring Israel out of the house of bondage. *Moses* rejected that call – “*Who am I that I can accomplish such a deliverance?*” In reply, God said to *Moses* that the critical issue was not “*who is Moses*” but “*who is God*”, for God would be with *Moses*. The exodus does not depend on the competence of *Moses* but on the presence of God!

Verse 13 is *Moses'* reply: *Who are You? I don't know what to say to the children of Israel, if they ask me for Your identity (assuming I am going to Egypt)!*

God's reply to this second objection from *Moses* was to tell *Moses* His name (**verses 14-15**).

1. What is God's name, as revealed in **verses 14-15**?

2. How would this revelation of God's name answer *Moses'* "concern and reservation" in accepting God's call?

3. Besides telling *Moses* His Name, God said three other things in His reply to *Moses'* second excuse.
 - (a) What was the *first* thing (**verses 16-18**), and how was it meant to encourage *Moses*?

 - (b) What was the *second* thing (**verses 19-20**), and how was it meant to encourage *Moses*?

 - (c) What was the *third* thing (**verses 21-22**), and how was it meant to encourage *Moses*?

Day 6 *"Three-days' journey" and "Plunder the Egyptians"*

1. In **3:18**, we read that *Moses* and the Israelite elders were to ask Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go on a three-days journey to sacrifice to the LORD. However, we know from **3:8** that *Moses* was commissioned to bring Israel out of Egypt (with no intention of returning) and bring them up to Canaan.

How should we understand this "discrepancy" here? Was deceit involved? Consider the answer given by Philip Graham Ryken:

"There are a number of ways to respond to this objection, which must be answered if God's honesty is to be preserved. One is to point out that strictly speaking, the elders did not say anything false. They simply asked to make a three-day journey initially,

without saying anything about when they would come back. If what they said was misleading, it was only because Pharaoh had no right to know the truth. Keeping God's people enslaved was an act of aggression, and asking for three days' leave was a ruse de guerre—a justifiable stratagem in time of war.

Other possible solutions to the problem of the three-day journey are based on ancient customs. There is evidence that the phrase 'three-day journey' was used to refer to any long journey of indefinite duration. It also helps to remember that this was the opening move in a lengthy diplomatic process between Moses and Pharaoh, a process governed by Oriental customs for bartering. It is obvious from their subsequent bargaining that Pharaoh was not deceived and that Moses did not intend to deceive him. Both men were used to this style of discourse, and as they negotiated Israel's withdrawal, they both understood that once the Hebrews departed, they would never return.

These solutions have some merit, but there is another answer that brings out the true spiritual intention of the elders' request. What was more important than the journey's length was its purpose. What the Israelites were requesting was permission to go out and meet their God. In particular, they needed to worship him, to restore their covenant relationship with him by offering sacrifices for their sins. Remember that from the very beginning, the exodus was for the glory of God. Thus the real question was not how long the Israelites would be gone, but whether or not Pharaoh was willing to let them glorify God at all. Ultimately God intended to lead his people out of Egypt altogether; but by beginning with a more modest request, he was able to expose Pharaoh's deep hostility to his glory. Even if it would have been unreasonable to expect the king of Egypt to let his entire labor force leave the country, it was hardly unreasonable to ask for a few days of religious freedom. Yet Pharaoh was unwilling to give God even three days of glory. He wanted to keep all the glory to himself, and he knew that if he granted even this one simple request, it would show that the glory did not really belong to him at all."

What questions and/or comments do you have, after reading the answer above?

2. How should we understand the plunder of the Egyptians (**verse 22**)?

The Israelites have served the Egyptians for more than 400 years. It is right and just that they should be paid for their centuries of labor. Hence, this plundering of the Egyptians can be understood, first of all, as the children of Israel receiving their just repayment. Note that later on in the Mosaic laws, when a slave has completed his years of service and was released, the children of Israel are commanded to supply him liberally from their flock, threshing floor and winepress (**DEUTERONOMY 15:12-15**).

This plundering of the Egyptians also demonstrates the faithfulness of God, in that He keeps His promise. In **GENESIS 15:14**, God has promised Abraham that his descendants will come out of their captivity with great possessions.

Finally, this plundering is another way of shaming the Egyptians for their opposition to God. Normally, it is the soldiers of the victorious nation who plunder the defeated nation; here, defeated Egypt shall be plundered, not by Israelite warriors, but Israelite women! It is a most shameful thing for Egypt! Moreover, much of the gold and silver would later become the materials used for the construction of the tabernacle. Thus, in the final analysis, the Egyptians were plundered for the glory of God!

Day 7 Read **EXODUS 4:1-9**

1. **Verse 1** records *Moses'* third excuse for rejecting God's call. What was it? (Answer using your own words)

2. In response to his objections, God gave him three signs.
 - (a) What was the *first* sign (**verses 2-5**)?

 - (b) What was the *second* sign (**verses 6-8**)?

 - (c) What was the *third* sign (**verse 9**)?

3. How would those three signs show the Israelites that *Moses* was indeed sent by God to be their deliverer?

4. In giving *Moses* those three signs, God has shown tremendous patience with *Moses*. In **3:18**, God has already told *Moses* that the elders of Israel will heed his voice and even go with him to see Pharaoh. Yet in giving his third excuse, *Moses* was flatly rejecting God's word of promise. This is nothing but unbelief! Yet instead of rebuke, God graciously accommodated *Moses* by giving him three signs!

(a) Can you think of an incident in your life when God was very patient with you? Write it down:

(b) Can you think of a recent incident in your life when you were very impatient with a loved one? Write it down:

(c) The fruit of the Spirit is *patience*. Growing in patience is one aspect of growing in godliness. Take some time to pray for a fuller flowering of this fruit in your life, and think of one step you can take to develop patience in you. Write it down:

Week 4

[9th - 15th August 2015]

Day 1 Read **EXODUS 4:10-12**

1. **Verse 10** records *Moses'* fourth excuse for rejecting God's call. What was it? (Answer using your own words)

2. God's reply consisted of two parts: **verse 11** and **verse 12**.

(a) What is God saying in **verse 11**, and why do you think He gave such a reply to *Moses*?

(b) How is God's reply in **verse 12** an answer to *Moses*' excuse?

Note: The man who claimed to be '*not eloquent*' was actually having a debate at this time with the Almighty God!

Day 2 Read **EXODUS 4:13-17**

1. Why was God angry with *Moses* at his *fifth* excuse?

2. What was God's reply to this last excuse of *Moses*?

3. (a) What was the last thing God said to *Moses*? (**Verse 17**)

(b) What's the message here?

Days 3-4 Read **EXODUS 4:18-31**

These 14 verses can be divided into three parts:

(i) *Moses*' departure (**verses 18-23**)

(ii) The mysterious incident at the encampment (**verses 24-26**)

(iii) *Moses*' meeting with Aaron and their initial contact with the Israelites (**verses 27-31**).

Verses 18-23

1. What do you think of *Moses*' stated reason to Jethro his father-in-law concerning his proposed return to Egypt? (**Verse 18**)
2. God told *Moses* to return to Egypt for all the men who sought his life are dead (**verse 19**). What is so significant about the fact that they are all dead?

Verses 24-26

This event is filled with mystery, and we need to be humble to admit that we do not fully know all that had transpired. However, the major outline is clear:

- God was angry with *Moses*
- The reason was most likely to be because he failed to circumcise his son
- *Zipporah*'s circumcision of her son appeased God's wrath, and hence *Moses* lived.

From **3:11-4:17**, *Moses* gave excuses after excuses why he cannot accept God's call, and we saw the Lord dealing most patiently with him. Yet now, a single failure (failing to circumcise his son) nearly caused *Moses* to lose his life! This shows that God (at that time) held the rite of circumcision as very important, so the failure to circumcise was met with swift punishment.

- (a) Why do you think is circumcision so important in the Old Testament?
- (b) What would be the New Testament equivalent/fulfillment of circumcision?

Verses 27-31

1. How can we see the power of God at work in these verses?

2. Why did the children of Israel bow their heads and worship?

Days 5-6 A brief look at Pharaoh's hard heart

In **3:19-20** we read these words:

But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go.

Among other things, here in these two verses, we know that Pharaoh will harden his heart and reject God's command to free Israel – *He will not let Israel go.*

In **4:21** we read these words:

And the Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.

Here, we are told that God will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will not let Israel go.

So who hardened Pharaoh's heart – Pharaoh himself or God? The answer is both --- *Pharaoh hardened his heart and God hardened Pharaoh's heart!*

The first part of the answer emphasizes the responsibility of Pharaoh in this whole matter – he did it, he chose to do it, and hence he was accountable for it!

The second part of the answer underlines God's sovereignty, as summarized by the 2nd London Confession of Faith Chapter 3 Paragraph 1:

God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, ALL THINGS, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree.

The Lord Jesus Christ said the same when it comes to the treacherous act of Judas Iscariot: *"The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."* (**MATTHEW 26:24**)

Judas did what he did, because he chose to do it, and he was fully accountable for it! At the same time, God was not surprised by his evil deed, for it has already been written that a close companion would betray the Messiah!

Let us admit that we cannot fully comprehend this tension between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. We might even have to confess that sometimes it makes us uncomfortable! However uncomfortable we may feel from time to time, we must remember that the Biblical writers do not seem to share that feeling of discomfort. Although the issue is mysterious, it is not presented as a burden in the Bible.

The apostle *Paul* engaged the issue in **ROMANS 9-11** (take time to read it slowly, if you have never done so). For *Paul*, the end result of any such internal struggle with this tension is praise (**ROMANS 11:33-36**). For *Job* who suffered tremendously, it ends with humility (**JOB 42:1-6**). That God is sovereign is a blessing rather than a burden, especially for a child of God! Consider how **ISAIAH 64:8** puts it:

*But now, O Lord, You are our Father;
We are the clay, and You our potter;
And all we are the work of Your hand.*

The idea that God is the Potter and we are the clay in His hands can be frightening and somewhat discomfoting for some people. Yet we must not miss the first line of the verse whereby the Potter is our Father! Yes, God is sovereign and He does all things in this world and in our life, according to His good pleasure. At the same time, this sovereign God is our loving, heavenly Father, the One who sent His only begotten Son to die for us on the cross!

At the end of the day, this tension also serves to underline a basic, unchanging truth: *God is God and we are not! We are creatures, not the Creator. As God, His thoughts are not our thoughts, and as the Creator, His ways are higher than the ways of the creatures. Objection against this revealed truth of God's sovereignty is ultimately an expression of our rebellion against Him – we want to pull Him down from His throne and take His seat!*

Friends, don't go down this road! Rather, take your place as His creature and recognize that He is God. He has the right to do as He pleases, and in all that He does, He does no sin.

Day 7 Christ in **EXODUS 3 & 4**

Recall that **EXODUS** is the Word of God about Christ! If Christ is missing in our reading of **EXODUS**, then we have misread **EXODUS!**

We have spent the past two weeks reading **EXODUS 3 & 4**. How can we see Christ in these two chapters? Here are two possible ways:

- [1] Throughout **EXODUS 3-4**, we come face to face with *Moses' reluctance to be Israel's deliverer*. In some ways, we can understand his reluctance when we remember how he was rejected by Israel previously. What could/would happen to *Moses*, if he accepted the mission that God called him to do? Hardship and heartbreak, rejection and unjust accusations, less family time . . .

In **HEBREWS 10:7**, we hear *Jesus* saying these words:

*Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.*

In contrast to *Moses*, *Jesus* gladly accepted His God-assigned role to be the Savior of His people. As the Savior of His people, what can *Jesus* expect? In addition to what *Moses* was likely to experience (see above), *Jesus* would ultimately have to die on the cruel cross and experience the hellish experience of being forsaken by His Father!

Hence, *Jesus* stands in sharp contrast to *Moses*, and *Jesus* must be adored and praised for all eternity for what He experienced and did, on our behalf:

*Man of Sorrows, what a Name!
For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim,
Hallelujah! What a Savior!*

- [2] In **EXODUS 4:22**, the LORD said, "*Israel is My son, My firstborn.*" This underlines the close relationship God has with Israel, assuring Israel of the Father's provision and protection, and at the same time highlighting Israel's responsibility to be faithful and obedient to God.

We know that in the rest of the Old Testament, Israel was not the faithful and obedient son. Time and again, Israel grieved and provoked the Father. Finally, Israel was sent into exile as punishment for their sins. Yet Israel did not remain in exile forever. God restored them after 70 years of exile.

In the New Testament, *Jesus* is God's Son. In **MATTHEW 3:17**, God announced publicly from heaven, at *Jesus'* baptism: *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*. Nowhere in the New Testament do we read of this Son grieving the Father. No, He is the faithful Son, the obedient Son, the sinless Son. Yet this faithful, obedient and sinless Son was nailed to the cross, bearing the full brunt of God's anger! Why? Not for His own sins (for He had none) but for the sins of His people!

Viewed from the lens of "sonship", we will have to say that *Jesus* is the true Israel! What Old Testament Israel was meant to accomplish, *Jesus* had done it all in the New Testament. And because believers of Christ are said to be '*in Christ*', the

Scripture now calls us '*sons of God*' (**MATTHEW 5:9, ROMANS 8:14**). This is why the apostle *Paul* can call the church '*the Israel of God*' (**GALATIANS 6:16**).

So our focus today should not be on the nation of Israel. Rather, it should rightly be put on Jesus – the true Israel, and on the church – the Israel of God in and through Jesus Christ!

Week 5

[16th – 22nd August 2015]

Day 1 Read **EXODUS 5:1-21**

After reading these 21 verses, write down your *first* impressions and any questions you might have:

Days 2-3 Read **EXODUS 5:1-21**

1. Throughout these 21 verses, Pharaoh was hostile and defiant towards God.

(a) How can we see that from this passage? Give at least two examples.



(b) What other examples did you RTBT group members come up with?

2. Beside his defiance towards God, Pharaoh also sought to sow discord between *Moses* and the Israelites. How did he do it?

3. Compare **5:21** with **4:31**.

(a) Account for the different behaviors of the Israelites.

(b) What lessons can we learn from this?

4. How can we see Jesus in these 21 verses?

Days 4-5 Review and Summary of **EXODUS 5:1-21**

If these 21 verses are missing in the Bible, then we will have a very wrong idea of our walk with God and our service to Him!

At the end of **EXODUS 4**, it is fair to say that both *Moses* and the Israelites were brimming with confidence. God had spoken, had promised to be with them, and would act to bring Israel out of the house of bondage. Most of us would expect the end to come soon – surely *Moses* will speak to Pharaoh, God will move Pharaoh's heart to agree, and the Israelites will be marching out of Egypt the next day. **BUT IT DID NOT TURN OUT THAT WAY!**

EXODUS 5:1-21 brings a sense of realism into our Christian life and service. There are people in this world who are hostile to God. They will oppose God and His people, and God sometimes allows them to get their way! The fact that God is with us does not mean that our Christian life is a bed of roses, and that our Christian service is one straight road!

At the end of these 21 verses, the Israelites were upset and bitter at how things had turned out – instead of better, it had gotten worse! And it is also fair to say that *Moses* was caught off guard by how things turned out. It wasn't what he expected, and I am sure most of us have had similar experiences. At this juncture, it is important to remind ourselves that God is God and we are not. At such times, we need to remember **ISAIAH 55:8-9**. Look up these two verses, copy them out in the space provided below, and take time to memorize them:

Unexpected twists in providence leading to great disappointments are common experiences for many of God's people. God is love, and He loves us – that's certain. What is also certain is that, as creatures, we do not always understand His ways. In times like this, we need to affirm our faith in Him, that whatever God ordains, it is right. Perhaps this hymn by Samuel Rodigast can be of some help to us:

*Whate'er my God ordains is right: His holy will abideth;
I will be still whate'er He doth; And follow where He guideth;
He is my God; though dark my road, He holds me that I shall not fall:
And so to Him I leave it all, He holds me that I shall not fall.*

*Whate'er my God ordains is right: He never will deceive me;
He leads me by the proper path: I know He will not leave me.
I take, content, what He hath sent; His hand can turn my griefs away,
And patiently I wait His day, His hand can turn my griefs away.*

*Whate'er my God ordains is right, though now this cup, I'm drinking,
May bitter seem to my faint heart, I take it all, unshrinking.
My God is true; each morn anew, sweet comfort yet shall fill my heart,
And pain and sorrow shall depart, sweet comfort yet shall fill my heart.*

*Whate'er my God ordains is right, here shall my stand be taken.
Though sorrow, need, or death be mine, yet I am not forsaken.
My Father's care is round me there, He holds me that I shall not fall,
And so to Him I leave it all, He holds me that I shall not fall.*

You can hear and learn to sing this hymn by typing <http://bit.ly/shalomhymns> into your browser.

Days 6-7 Read **EXODUS 5:22-6:9**

1. In response to the words of the Israelites in **verse 21**, what did *Moses* do?
2. God's reply to *Moses* consists of two parts: **6:1** and **6:2-8**
 - **6:1** is God's reassurance to *Moses* that He will act to compel Pharaoh to release the Israelites. At the end of the day, Pharaoh will not only allow the Israelites to leave; he will actually drive them out of Egypt!
 - **6:2-8** is the second part of God's reply to *Moses*.

- (a) God begins and ends His reply here using the same four words. What are they?
- (b) In the past, God has revealed Himself to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) as God Almighty. That is, He told them that that was His Name and let them experience His character as God Almighty. Although they also knew Him as LORD, they had not really experienced His character as LORD. Through the exodus experience, Israel would fully experience His character as LORD. [This is how **verse 3** should be understood]
- (c) God has established a covenant with the patriarchs and now He is going to carry out His promises to them (**verse 4-5**).
- (d) From **verses 6-8**, God outlines how He is going to carry out His promises, using the “I will . . .” formula. What will He do?
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- By using this formula, it is clear that it is not what *Moses* will do, or what Israel will do, that will result in their freedom from slavery. Rather, their liberation is solely the work of God!
- (e) What is God’s aim in carrying out this great deliverance for Israel? (**Verse 7b**)

3. Having received God's reassurances, *Moses* embraced them and then conveyed the reassurances to the Israelites.

(a) What was their response? Why?

(b) Have you ever responded in the same way as the Israelites did here? If yes, what was/were the reason(s) for responding in this way?

(c) Put yourselves in the shoes of *Moses* in **verse 9**. Seeing the response of the Israelites, what would you say/do next? Why?

Week 6

[23rd – 29th August 2015]

Days 1-2 Read **EXODUS 6:10-7:7**

The children of Israel have rejected God's reassurances (**6:9**). What was God's response? He re-commissioned *Moses* and repeated His call to him to go back to Pharaoh and demand Israel's release (**6:10-11**).

1. What was *Moses*' response to this re-commissioning from God? (**6:12**)

Note that **6:28-30** is a repeated record of what transpired here.

2. Concerning *Moses*' objection, what was God's reply? (**6:13**)

3. **7:1-5** is an elaboration of what God has said in **6:13**.

(a) What does it mean by "*Moses is God to Pharaoh*"? (**7:1**)

(b) What does it mean by “*Aaron shall be Moses’ prophet*”? (7:1)

(c) Put yourselves in the shoes of *Moses* here. You’ve just heard God said to you, “*Go, preach to Pharaoh, but he will not heed your preaching!*”

What questions will you ask God at this point?

What will you do next?

[Note that 7:6 tells us that *Moses* and *Aaron* did just as the LORD had commanded them.]

(d) God says that He is going to lay/stretch out His hand on Egypt and bring great judgments on them (7:4-5).

What is God’s aim in doing this? (7:5)

4. According to 7:7 *Moses* was eighty years old and *Aaron* was eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh.

What do you think is the purpose for this information being given here?

5. 6:14-27 contain a genealogy that “disrupts” the flow of the narrative. Why was it inserted after 6:13?

First of all, we note that the genealogy was to highlight the fact that both *Moses* and *Aaron* were Levites. Since both of these men were God’s instruments to deliver Israel from Egypt, it is understandable that the author of **EXODUS** would disrupt the narrative at this point to “properly introduce” the two human deliverers, before the deliverance starts.

Secondly, the genealogy puts the spotlight on *Aaron* more than *Moses*. Why? Before the genealogy, we read in **6:13** that God included *Aaron* in the “deliver Israel from Egypt” mission, after *Moses* repeated his objection of “uncircumcised lips” in **6:12**. The author of **EXODUS** repeated *Moses*’ objection immediately after the genealogy (**6:28-30**), and then elaborated on *Aaron*’s inclusion in **7:1-6**.

Once we grasp the structure of the passage, it becomes clear why the genealogy was inserted, and why the spotlight was on *Aaron*. It was to “introduce” *Aaron* – the man whom God will now include as part of His team to bring about Israel’s deliverance. This *Aaron* will serve as *Moses*’ mouthpiece (since *Moses* complained about his faltering lips and used that as a reason why he could not go and speak to Pharaoh!)

Day 3 Read **EXODUS 7:8-13**

“The supernatural dimension of the struggle between Moses and Pharaoh becomes explicit in the story of the staff that swallowed the snakes. This brief episode serves as a preview of the plagues. It introduces nearly all the main themes of the next five chapters of Exodus: the obedience of Moses and Aaron; the counterfeit miracles of Satan and his servants; the superior power of God and his rod; and the perpetual hardening of Pharaoh’s heart. Already in this prologue, God announces his ultimate triumph. Just as Pharaoh’s snakes are “swallowed” by Aaron’s staff (Exod. 7:12), so Pharaoh’s army will be “swallowed” by the sea (Exod. 15:12). The same word is used in both verses to establish the thematic connection.”

Philip Graham Ryken

1. *Aaron*’s rod, when cast to the ground, became a serpent (**verse 10**).

(a) How did it happen?

(b) Why did it happen? (**Verse 9**)

(c) This rod-became-serpent incident happened before. Can you recall when?



2. *The Egyptian magicians' rods, when cast to the ground, also turned into serpents (verses 11-12).*

(a) How did it happen?

(b) What happened to these serpents finally?

3. (a) What was Pharaoh's response to this event? (**Verse 13**)

(b) Contrast his response to that of the Israelite elders in **4:30-31**. Both saw/experience the same miracle, yet each gave a very different response. What does this teach us?

Note: The Egyptians fear snakes. Yet despite their fear of snakes, the ancient Egyptians were drawn to worship them. Serpent worship was particularly strong in the Nile Delta, where the Hebrews lived. There the Egyptians built a temple in honor of the snake-goddess Wadjet, who was represented by the hieroglyphic sign of the cobra. Some of the Pharaohs believed that the snake-goddess Wadjet had brought them to the throne and invested them with her divine powers. This is why the diadem on Pharaoh's head has a cobra, for it symbolized all the power, sovereignty, and magic with which the gods endued the king.

Hence, when *Aaron* cast his rod in front of Pharaoh, he was taking the symbol of the king's majesty and making it crawl in the dust. This was a direct assault on Pharaoh's sovereignty; indeed, it was an attack on Egypt's entire belief system. When *Aaron's* rod-serpent swallowed up all the rod-serpents of the Egyptian magicians, *Aaron's* rod was not simply destroying their power and authority but was claiming that all their power and authority belonged to God. The obvious implication was that the God of Israel was also the Lord of Egypt!

Days 4-7 Read **EXODUS 7:14-8:19**

EXODUS 7:14-8:19 narrate the first three plagues that came upon stubborn Pharaoh and Egypt. After reading the passage, summarize the three plagues:

Plague #1: _____

Aaron's/Moses' rod was involved:	T/F
Egyptian magicians can duplicate the plague:	T/F
Magicians/Egyptians/Pharaoh begs for mercy:	T/F
Warning given before the plague:	T/F
Different treatment towards Egyptians and Israelites:	T/F
Pharaoh's final response: _____	

Plague #2: _____

Aaron's/Moses' rod was involved:	T/F
Egyptian magicians can duplicate the plague:	T/F
Magicians/Egyptians/Pharaoh begs for mercy:	T/F
Warning given before the plague:	T/F
Different treatment towards Egyptians and Israelites:	T/F
Pharaoh's final response: _____	

Plague #3: _____

Aaron's/Moses' rod was involved:	T/F
Egyptian magicians can duplicate the plague:	T/F
Magicians/Egyptians/Pharaoh begs for mercy:	T/F
Warning given before the plague:	T/F
Different treatment towards Egyptians and Israelites:	T/F
Pharaoh's final response: _____	

Ponder the *first* plague (**EXODUS 7:14-25**) . . .

1. What do you think is the significance of the “waters of Nile turning into blood”? (Hint: There could be more than one factor to consider)

2. What is God's ultimate purpose in sending this plague upon Egypt? (**Verse 17a**)

Ponder the *second* plague (**EXODUS 8:1-15**) . . .

1. What did God demand of Pharaoh? (**Verse 1**)

Note that this was the same demand placed on Pharaoh before the first plague (7:16). The way God dealt with Pharaoh shows that his demands are nonnegotiable. Every time Pharaoh encountered God, he was confronted with the same God making the same demand. God never changed his terms or issued a counteroffer.

What was true for Pharaoh during the exodus is true for sinners in salvation. God's terms remain unchanged. What God demands today is the same thing He demanded in the time of the apostles. When people asked what they had to do to be saved, the apostles said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (ACTS 16:31).

God still requires sinners to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ. We should not expect him to make us another offer. Jesus Christ is God's best and only bargain for eternity. Friends, have you submitted yourself to God's demand, or are you still conducting yourself like Pharaoh?

2. What is the significance of this second plague?

Here's a possible answer: *The Egyptians worship the goddess Heqet, who was always pictured with the head and body of a frog. In the Egyptian pantheon, the frog-goddess Heqet was the spouse of the creator-god Khnum. The Egyptians believed that Khnum fashioned human bodies on his potter's wheel, and then Heqet breathed into them the breath of life. She was the agent of life-giving power and also the symbol of fertility.*

The frog-goddess Heqet has the responsibility to assist women in childbirth. Since she was the spirit who breathed life into the body, women turned to her for help when they were in the pains of labor. This suggests that there may be a connection between the second plague and Pharaoh's sin against the Hebrew midwives. Remember that the book of Exodus began with attempted infanticide.

It seems significant that God's first two plagues struck blows against the gods of Egypt's river and the goddess of Egypt's midwives. It was a matter of strict justice: God was punishing the Egyptians for their sins. The very river that Pharaoh used as an instrument of genocide was turned to blood, and the first goddess to be humiliated was the one who governed labor and delivery. There was a connection between Pharaoh's crime and God's punishment.

Since Heqet was embodied in the frog, the frog was sacred in Egypt. It could not be killed, and consequently there was nothing the Egyptians could do about this horrible and ironic proliferation of the goddess. They were forced to loathe the symbols of their depraved worship, but they could not kill them!

3. (a) What did Pharaoh do in **verse 8**?

(b) What do you think is the significance of this act of Pharaoh's?

4. (a) What did *Moses* offer to do in **verse 9**?

(b) Why do you think Pharaoh wanted relief from the frogs only on the next day?

Note that in this second plague, God did not only demonstrate His power in causing the frogs to come, but also in deciding when the frogs would go! Like how *Moses* put it, "*There is no one like the LORD our God!*"

Ponder the *third* plague (**EXODUS 8:16-19**) . . .

"The third plague may have been intended to humiliate the earth-god Geb. By turning the dust into bugs, God was claiming authority over the very soil of Egypt and thus over the god of the ground. God's strategy for gaining glory over the gods of Egypt was to defeat them one at a time by demonstrating his control over the creatures that the Egyptians worshiped."

Philip Graham Ryken

1. Where did the lice come from? (**Verse 16-17**)

2. On whom did the lice fall? (**Verse 18**)

3. (a) What was the response of the magicians to this *third* plague?

(b) What was the response of Pharaoh to this *third* plague?

How can we see the Gospel from these three plagues?

Week 7

[30th August - 5th September 2015]

Day 1 Read **EXODUS 8:20-32**

1. (a) What was the fourth plague?

(b) In what way was this fourth plague similar to the first plague?

(c) There was a “new” element in this fourth plague that was not found in the earlier three plagues. What was it? (**Verses 22-23**)

(d) What was the result of this plague? (**Verse 24**)

(e) What was God’s ultimate aim in sending this plague? (**Verse 22**)

2. In **verse 25**, we read of Pharaoh’s response whereby He permitted the Israelites to take a break from their work and worship the LORD.

(a) If you were *Moses*, would you accept Pharaoh’s answer? Explain.

(b) Why did *Moses* reject Pharaoh's answer?

3. (a) Why did *Moses* agree to intercede for Pharaoh and ask the LORD to remove the flies?

(b) When the flies were all removed, what was Pharaoh's response? (**Verse 32**)

Day 2 Some notes on **EXODUS 8:20-32**

Pharaoh's "compromise"

Verses 25-27 record an interesting conversation between Pharaoh and *Moses*. Initially, it looked as if Pharaoh has backed down, and agreed to let the Israelites go: "*Go, sacrifice to your God in the land.*" However, a careful examination of what Pharaoh said in **verse 25** reveals that it was a very clever political ploy by Pharaoh, and we could even say, a very evil plot!

If *Moses* accepts this solution from Pharaoh, then he would be clearly disobedient to God! God has said most clearly to *Moses* that he was to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, and then go to Sinai to worship Him. What Pharaoh was suggesting was that Israel be allowed to worship God, but remain slaves in Egypt. To accept Pharaoh's solution was to reject God's command!

In addition, when the Israelites worshipped God, they would have to offer animal sacrifices. The fact was that most of the animals they would use in their sacrificial worship were animals that the Egyptians considered as sacred. To offer a bull as a sacrifice to the LORD during worship and to do it in Egypt, would be like someone today eating a beef burger in a Hindu temple or roasted pork in a mosque! A riot would most definitely ensue, and lives would be lost! Was that what Pharaoh was aiming at, to get the Egyptians so disgusted that they would riot and kill the Israelites?

On how to understand *Moses'* reply in **verses 26-27**, Peter Enns gave this very interesting explanation:

It is best to see that Moses is sparring with Pharaoh here, that he is matching Pharaoh's cleverness. In verse 25, Pharaoh slyly gives the impression that he is giving in, but then slips into the deal a clause in fine print restricting them to the land of

Egypt. In this light, Moses' response is to point out the foolishness of Pharaoh's own proposed solution; he would be causing the offense for his own religion.

In other words, rather than doing a polite political dance with Pharaoh, Moses is saying: "Don't even try it, Pharaoh. You know as well as I that if we even tried to sacrifice to our God on Egyptian soil, which you believe is home to your gods, the Egyptians will stone us to death. We're a little more clever than that! You think you can give the appearance of letting us have our way, but the end result plays right into your hands! Forget it! No deal! We're leaving just as we said we were. It's all or nothing."

Pharaoh's "progress"

In **5:2**, we hear Pharaoh saying these defiant words: *"Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go."*

Now, four plagues later, we see that Pharaoh appeared to have changed. How?

- (i) He was prepared to *"let Israel go and sacrifice to their God"* (**verse 25**).
- (ii) He was no longer calling his magicians to counter *Moses*. He knew they were useless!
- (iii) He recognized that God was the One who sent this plague, and that only He could remove it. So he asked *Moses* to intercede for him!

While we can/should be encouraged to see such "progress" in Pharaoh's spiritual understanding, yet we must still say that it is NOT GOOD ENOUGH! We recognize that there is "improvement", but at the end of the day, nothing has changed. He remains hostile to God, and when relief comes, Pharaoh is back to his original defiant stance (**verse 32**)!

Review/Ponder: What is the most important lesson you've learnt from this passage?

Day 3 Read **EXODUS 9:1-7**

1. (a) What did God want Pharaoh to do (**verse 1**)? Note that this demand is the same since **EXODUS 5**.

(b) What did God threaten to do, if Pharaoh refused to heed His demand? (**Verses 2-3**)

(c) Did God's threat come to pass? (**Verse 6**)

2. What was the significance of God setting the time for when this plague would come upon Egypt? (**Verse 5**)

3. (a) In what way was this fifth plague similar to the fourth plague?

(b) In what way was this fifth plague different from the earlier four plagues?

4. (a) What did Pharaoh do in **verse 7**?

(b) Why do you think he did this?

(c) After he learnt of what happened (**verse 7b**), what was his response (**verse 7c**)?

5. Take some time to read Philip Ryken's comment on Pharaoh's investigation:

"There is a time and a place for investigating God. Before anyone can make a decision about following Jesus Christ, one has to answer some hard questions about who he is and what he has done. Can the Bible be trusted? What about the incarnation — was Jesus divine, or was he merely human? What about the crucifixion? When Jesus of Nazareth was crucified — as the historical records prove that he was — did he suffer the full price for sin? And what about the resurrection? Did Jesus rise from the dead on the third day, or was it all a hoax?"

No one can make an honest appraisal of Christianity without answering these questions. However, there comes a time to stop investigating and start believing. Once someone has begun to consider that what the Bible says about Jesus Christ is true, then the only thing keeping that person from God is hardness of heart. Why is it that some people refuse to embrace Jesus Christ at the emotional level — even after they are convinced at the intellectual level that he is the true God and only Savior? The Bible answers, “They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts” (Eph. 4:18). What separates them from God is the same thing that prevented Pharaoh from doing God’s will: hardness of heart.”

May God have mercy on us, so that after we investigate, we will embrace Christ, not walk away from Him!

Days 4-5 “*All the livestock died*”?

In the fifth plague, a very severe pestilence afflicted the livestock of the Egyptians (**verse 3**). As a result, all the livestock of the Egyptians died. (**verse 6**).

Later in **9:20-21**, we read that some of the Egyptians brought their livestock into the houses, to escape the seventh plague! If all the Egyptian livestock died in the fifth plague, how do we account for the Egyptian livestock in **9:20-21**?

Please investigate this matter, and share your answers with your RTBT group:

Day 6 Read **EXODUS 9:8-12**

1. (a) What was the sixth plague?

- (b) In what way was this plague similar to the third plague?

- (c) There was a “new” element in this sixth plague that was not found in the earlier plagues. What was it?

2. What do you think was the significance of this sixth plague?

3. What were the outcomes of this sixth plague?

Verse 11:

Verse 12:

Day 7 4th – 6th Plagues

1. What can we learn about God from these three plagues?

2. How can we see the Gospel from these three plagues?

Week 8

[6th – 12th September 2015]

Days 1-6 Read **EXODUS 9:13-10:29**

EXODUS 9:13-10:29 narrate the 7th-9th plagues that came upon stubborn Pharaoh and Egypt. After reading the passage, summarize the three plagues:

Plague #7: _____

Aaron's/Moses' rod was involved: T/F

Egyptians/Pharaoh begs for mercy: T/F

Warning given before the plague: T/F

Different treatment towards Egyptians and Israelites: T/F

Pharaoh's final response: _____

Plague #8: _____

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Aaron's/Moses' rod was involved: | T/F |
| Egyptians/Pharaoh begs for mercy: | T/F |
| Warning given before the plague: | T/F |
| Different treatment towards Egyptians and Israelites: | T/F |
| Pharaoh's final response: _____ | |

Plague #9: _____

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Aaron's/Moses' rod was involved: | T/F |
| Egyptians/Pharaoh begs for mercy: | T/F |
| Warning given before the plague: | T/F |
| Different treatment towards Egyptians and Israelites: | T/F |
| Pharaoh's final response: _____ | |

Ponder the *seventh* plague (**EXODUS 9:13-35**) ...

1. In these twenty-three verses, God gave three purpose statements for the plagues.

(a) The *first* purpose was found in **verse 14**: *that you may know* _____
_____!

Who is the 'you'?

(b) The *second* purpose was found in **verse 16**: *that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.*

Besides the children of Israel themselves (**DEUTERONOMY 6:21, 22**), who else came to know the name (fame) of God through these plagues?

JOSHUA 9:9 ~

I SAMUEL 4:7b-8 ~

We note that these plagues made God famous!

(c) The *third* purpose was found in **verse 29**: *that you may know* _____
_____!

What do you think is the significance of this?

2. Before the seventh plague descended on Egypt, God warned Pharaoh (**verse 18**) and even “proposed” to him what the Egyptians should be doing so they would not bear the full brunt of the plague (**verse 19**)!
 - (a) Why do you think God gave Pharaoh that “proposal”?

 - (b) Some Egyptians took up God’s “proposal” while others ignored it. What was the outcome for each group?

3. Imagine yourself living inside **verses 22-26**, experiencing the thunder, hail and fire from heaven.
 - (a) Would you see this as a judgment from God, or just bad luck that you should experience this natural disaster? Elaborate.

 - (b) What thoughts would come to your mind when you saw that the Israelites in Goshen were not affected by this hailstorm?

 - (c) What do you think is the message of **verse 24**?

4. For the first time, we hear Pharaoh making a confession that he has sinned (**verses 27-28**)! Is this a true confession, or a fake one? Explain your answer.

Ponder the *eighth* plague (**EXODUS 10:1-20**) . . .

1. **Verses 1-2** gives us yet another purposeful statement for the plagues: *that you may know* _____!

Who is the 'you'?

2. The plagues are part of the exodus story. The exodus story is not just a story to be told to the next generation of Israelites. It is the story that shaped the Israelites into the people of God. It answered these questions for the Israelites:

Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What is the meaning and purpose of life? Is there God and if there is, how can I know Him and what does He want from me?

What story defines you?

3. (a) What question did God ask Pharaoh? (**Verse 3**)

(b) What was the one thing God demanded from Pharaoh? (**Verse 3**)

(c) What did God threaten to do if Pharaoh continued his stubborn defiance against God? (**Verses 4-6**)

(d) What question did Pharaoh's servants ask Pharaoh? (**Verse 7**)

4. Look at Pharaoh in **verses 8-11**. What do you think he was trying to do?

5. In **NUMBERS 33:4**, we read: *“For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the Lord had killed among them. Also on their gods the Lord had executed judgments.”*

The plagues that befell Egypt were also God’s judgment upon the Egyptians gods. For this locust plague, the Egyptian gods Min (patron of the crops), Isis (goddess of life who prepared flax for clothing), Nepri (god of grains), Anubis (guardian of the fields) and Senehem (divine protector against pests) were all humiliated! They were shown to be powerless in the face of the LORD God Almighty!! (Of course, the Egyptians gods were not true gods, but just the invention of the Egyptians themselves!)

Our God has not stopped doing the same thing today. There are times when God will cause our world to crash, in order to show us the impotency of the gods we are trusting in. His aim is to lead us to repentance!

Ponder the *ninth* plague (**EXODUS 10:21-29**) . . .

1. Like many of the previous plagues, this “darkness” plague was also a judgment upon the Egyptian gods. Take some time to find out which Egyptian gods were being humiliated here.

2. Peter Enns, in his commentary on **EXODUS**, said this concerning this plague of darkness:

More significant, especially in light of the plague narrative as a whole, is the connection between this plague and creation. Darkness is a “chaos” word. It was the first thing God brought under control by introducing light in Genesis 1:3. A reintroduction of darkness brings creation back to its chaotic beginnings, which is a signal to the Egyptians of what awaits them at the sea.

But this creation reversal does not affect the Israelites (v. 23). Once again, creation does not work against the Israelites but for them. The phrase “there was light” (lit.) at the end of verse 23 is an almost unmistakable echo of Genesis 1:3, “Let there be light.” Inasmuch as darkness represents chaos, it also represents death (see 1 Sam. 2:9; Job 15:30; 17:13; 18:18; Ps. 88:12, 18; 143:3), in which case the ninth plague serves to anticipate the next two acts of destruction, both of which bring death to the

Egyptians.

What are your thoughts, after reading the above commentary from Peter Enns?

Day 7 7th – 9th Plagues

1. What can we learn about God from these three plagues?
2. How can we see the Gospel from these three plagues?

Week 9

[13th – 19th September 2015]

Days 1-2 Read **EXODUS 11:1-13:16**

As you read **EXODUS 11:1-13:16**, fill in the blanks in the Structural Outline below:

11:1-10 *Announcement of the tenth plague*

12:1-28 _____

12:29-30 *Execution of the tenth plague*

12:31-42 _____ *of the tenth plague*

12:43-51 *Regulations for* _____

13:1-2 *God's right over the firstborn asserted*

13:3-10 *Regulations for* _____

13:11-16 _____

It is significant that *Moses* would weave the narrative portion (announcement and execution of the tenth plague) and the regulative portion (laws on the two feasts and

the firstborn) together. It shows that these regulations are integrally related to the tenth plague!

Days 3-4 Read **EXODUS 11:1-10**

In **10:28-29**, we read these words:

Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!" So Moses said, "You have spoken well. I will never see your face again."

At this point, we may think that *Moses* left Pharaoh and never saw/talked with him anymore from this point onwards. That would be a mistake, since **11:4-8** shows clearly that *Moses* spoke to Pharaoh, announcing the tenth plague. In fact, the last line of **verse 8** says that it is only after *Moses'* announcement of the tenth plague that '*he went out from Pharaoh in great anger*'.

In view of this, we should see **EXODUS 11** in this way:

11:1-3 A reiteration of what God has already revealed to *Moses* in **3:21-22**, **4:21-23**. The NIV would translate **11:1** as "*Now the LORD has said to Moses . . .*"

"The NIV translation is feasible, and fits with the more natural sequence of events that the message was given at some point prior to the meeting with Pharaoh in conjunction with the ninth plague, and is introduced here as a necessary explanation of what is to be related next.

The mention of 'one more plague' informs Moses for the first time that the impositions of divine judgments were coming to an end. Earlier passages such as 7:3, 'though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt' (see also 3:19; 9:14), had shown that a series would be involved, but not how many. He has known what the final plague would be (4:23), and so had Pharaoh – but Pharaoh refused to believe it would happen.

Further the heightened nature of the final plague is probably indicated by the use of a different word for 'plague' here. It is a word for 'blow' or 'stroke', which is used only here in Exodus. Though the word occurs frequently in Leviticus, where it is translated 'disease', that is not its significance here (see on 11:5). This is the culminating intervention of God against the powers of Egypt."

John L. Mackay

11:4-8 Announcement of the tenth plague

11:9-10 A summary of what has transpired thus far. Again, the NIV translation is helpful: *The Lord had said to Moses, “Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you—so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt.” Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.*

Focusing on **11:4-8** . . .

1. What was the tenth plague?
2. What would be the outcome of this tenth plague, according to **verse 8**?
3. What was the significance of this tenth plague?

Think along two lines: (i) Retribution for Pharaoh’s/Egypt’s sin against Israel
(ii) The Egyptian gods that were being defeated

4. Is this tenth plague too drastic/harsh? Explain your answer, and then discuss it with your RTBT group members.

Days 5-6 Read **EXODUS 12:1-28**

1. Imagine that you were the head of an Israelite household living in Egypt then. Based on the instructions given in **12:1-10** and **12:1-28**, write down (using your own words) what you were supposed to do concerning the Passover:
2. Concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread (**12:14-20**) . . .

- (a) How long would this feast last?
 - (b) Who could participate in this feast?
 - (c) What were they to do on the first day of the feast?
 - (d) What were they to do on the last day of the feast?
 - (e) What do you think is the meaning/significance of this feast?
3. (a) What would happen on the night of the Passover (**verse 12**)?
- (b) How would any first-born son escape from this plague (**verse 13**)?

Day 7 Review **EXODUS 12:1-28**

How can we see the gospel from . . .

- (a) The Passover
- (b) The Feast of the Unleavened Bread
- (c) The tenth plague

Days 1-2 Read **EXODUS 12:29-42**

The execution of the tenth plague (12:29-30) cf. 11:5-7

1. At what time did the tenth plague begin?
2. Who was affected by this plague?
3. Can we explain what happened by natural causes? Defend your answer.

The result of the tenth plague (12:31-42) cf. 11:1, 8

1. What was Pharaoh's response to this tenth plague? (**Verses 31-32**)
2. (a) Why did the Egyptians urge the Israelites to leave Egypt? (**Verse 33**)

(b) Why did the Egyptians pass to the Israelites articles of gold and silver? (**Verses 35-36**)
3. (a) Who left Egypt that night? (**Verses 37-38**)

(b) How did the Israelites leave Egypt? (**Verses 34, 39**)

(c) How long had the Israelites sojourned in Egypt? (**Verses 40-41**)

(d) Why do you think the Israelites were called “*all the armies of the LORD*” in **verses 41**?

Day 3 Read **EXODUS 12:43-51**

These eight verses turn our attention back to the Passover. While **12:1-10** and **12:21-28** focus on ‘*what was be done during the Passover*’, here in **12:43-51**, the focus is on ‘*who may participate in the Passover*’.

1. (a) Who is allowed to participate in the Passover? Why?

(b) Who is NOT allowed to participate in the Passover? Why?

2. What are the relevance of these eight verses to the Christian Church today?

Day 4 Read **EXODUS 13:3-10**

These eight verses give regulations concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread, like those in **12:16-20**. However, it is not repetition, but has its own emphasis and nuances.

What extra information/teaching is given in these eight verses concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread that is not found in **12:16-20**?

Days 5-6 Read **EXODUS 13:1-2, 11-16**

1. (a) What right did the LORD assert here? (**Verse 2**)

(b) On what grounds did the LORD assert this right? (**Verses 14-15**)

2. **Verse 13** deals with two exceptional situations in applying the divine right. What was it and how was it handled?



3. (a) When must Israel 'officially' start to practice this first-born law? (**Verses 11-12**)

(b) What is the significance of this?

4. How can we see the gospel from this law of the first-born?

Day 7 Review **EXODUS 1:1-13:16**

Write down the most important lesson you have learnt from **EXODUS** thus far:

Acknowledgement

Whatever the weaknesses of this Read-The-Bible-Together guide, they would have been far greater without the kind help of sister Sarah SOH, sister Jemimah WEI and a dear sister who rather not be named in giving their time and energy to review the entire guide, asking questions all the way and giving many valuable suggestions.

Thank you, sisters!

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another! (Proverbs 27:17, ESV)

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Questions or comments concerning this RTBT guide?
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