

Moses to the Law (Exodus 1-24)

The sons of Israel were squarely under Egypt's watchful eye, and they survived the tragedy of the famine thanks to Joseph's wisdom. After Joseph, with his generation, died, another Pharaoh came to power who did not know Joseph. The sons of Israel were multiplying, and this concerned Pharaoh, so he forced the Israelites into slavery. Yet the more Pharaoh afflicted them, the more they multiplied and spread out. The Israelites' lives were made hard and bitter, and Pharaoh even attempted to have all the male sons put to death as they were born. Because of midwives who feared the Lord more than Pharaoh, this plan failed.

Under these difficult circumstances, a boy was born to a Levite father. The boy's mother, to save his life, put him in a basket and set him on the Nile (Heb. 11:23). The daughter of Pharaoh shortly found him, while the boy's sister looked on. The boy was named Moses, and his sister offered to find a nurse for him. Consequently, Moses' own mother became his nurse.

Moses became as a son to Pharaoh's daughter. He learned from the Egyptians (Acts 7:21-22), but he also became aware of his Hebrew background. When Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, he killed the Egyptian. Later, he saw two Hebrews fighting and he tried to make peace. Their



answer indicated to Moses that his killing of the Egyptian was known, so he fled to Midian, where he would stay for several years, marry, and have children.

While Moses was pasturing flocks, the angel of the Lord appeared to him from a burning bush at Horeb (Exodus 3). God revealed that Moses had been chosen to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Moses was reluctant, but God showed Moses how He would be with him, and even indicated that Moses' brother, Aaron, would help him. Finally, Moses, with Aaron, went back to Egypt. The Great "I AM" was with them.

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh to tell him to let God's people go. Pharaoh responded, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and besides, I will not let Israel go" (Exod. 5:2). Because Pharaoh had a hard heart, a series of ten plagues were unleashed on Egypt to show God's power and superiority over the false gods of the Egyptians (Exod. 12:12).

Pharaoh increased the labor of the Hebrews, but God reassured Moses that Israel would be delivered "with an outstretched arm and with great judgments" (Exod. 6:6). The plagues began to wear on Pharaoh, and he would agree to let the people go if the plague was removed. Then he would change his mind and make them stay after the plague was gone.

Israel did not suffer as the Egyptians. In the death of the firstborn plague, God instituted the feast of the Passover for them. They were to take blood and put it on their doorposts so that their houses would be passed over by death. Then they were to hurriedly eat, prepared to leave the land. The last plague meant Pharaoh's firstborn son died, so he finally drove the people away.

They were led out to the Red sea, and the Egyptians pursued only to die. God separated the waters for Israel, but closed them back in on the Egyptian army. Further, God indicated His presence among them by going before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 14-15).

From there, they traveled to the Sinai Peninsula, where they received the Law. God continued His care for them, though they often complained. He gave them water and manna from heaven during this time. God's mighty works were sufficient to show them, and all generations since, how powerful God is, and how much He loves His people.

The covenant God made with His people was founded on this promise: "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The people responded by saying, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:4-6). It was a good start. Sadly, the situation would quickly deteriorate.

Israel stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai as it smoked and quaked violently. God answered with thunder, and the people were frightened. Moses, also trembling, went up

the mountain to receive the commandments, and there stayed forty days. These Ten Commandments were engraved in stone, written by the finger of God. They served as the foundation for the covenant that God had with Israel.

The Ten Commandments are elaborated upon through several chapters and books of Scripture. They show the importance of loving both God (1-4) and fellow human beings (5-10). Jesus said the Law and the Prophets hang on the two greatest commands: love God with all the heart, soul, strength, and mind, and love neighbor as self (Matt. 22:36-40). This was the Torah, and the Torah was their instruction for life.

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