



FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM | *The Story of Israel*
the books of EXODUS & LEVITICUS & NUMBERS

CLASS INSTRUCTIONS

Every Class will have Biblical reading for preparation. However, *we will not read the whole text in classes.* Please **pre-read** before the class. *Take Home Review Sheets* for notes will be provided on a weekly basis.

Regarding Health and Safety, we will sit in comfortable distanced seating during class – and it is recommended that masks be worn to your seat and as you leave.

#FALL 2020

LESSON SCHEDULE

1.	9/8	Introduction to the Class and the Exodus of Israel
2.	9/15	Bondage and the Rise of the Deliverer Exodus 1-2
3.	9/22	The Call of the Deliverer Exodus 3:1-4:23
4.	9/29	Liberation Begins Exodus 5:1-6:30
5.	10/6	The Prophet and The Power of God Exodus 7:1-11:10
6.	10/13	The Prophet and The Power of God (2) Exodus 7:1-11:10
7.	10/20	The Passover* and Feast of Unleavened Bread Exodus 12-13 with Leviticus 23:4-8
8.	10/27	The March to Freedom Exodus 14-15
9.	11/3	The Journey of Complaint and the Testing of the People Exodus 16-17
10.	11/10	Jethro and Moses, the Law Giver Exodus 18-19
11.	11/17	Covenant Is Made with Ten Commandments: The Moral Code Exodus 20
12.	12/1	Covenant Ordinances (Ex. 21:1): Obedience and Disobedience (Lev. 26:14-46 with Deuteronomy 28-30) and Capital Crimes (Exodus 21)..
13.	12/8	Covenant Ordinances: Holiness (Ex. 22:31; Lev. 19:1-3; 20:7, 26): <i>"You must be holy" involves many things, including respect, Sabbath and the Tithe</i> (Ex. 22:29-30; 23:19; Lev. 27:30-34).
14.	12/15	The Covenant Calendar Special days of the Tabernacle (Ex. 23:14-17; 31:12-17; 34:18, 21-26; 35:1-3; Lev. 16:1-34; 19:30; 23:1-44; 25:1-24; 26:2): The Sabbath Day (Ex. 31:12-17; 34:21; 35:1-3; Lev. 19:30; 23:1-3; 26:2); The Sabbath Year (Lev. 25:1-7). The Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-24); *The Passover (Lev. 23:4-5); The Festival of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 34:18; Lev. 23:6-8); The Festival of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:9-14); The Festival of Harvest (Lev. 23:15-22); The Festival of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25); The Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-34; 23:26-32); The Festival of Tabernacles (Shelters) (Lev. 23:33-44).

Lesson 3**The Call of the Deliverer | Exodus 3:1-4:23**

When we began the book, Israel was free – and then enslaved. Then, the Deliverer is born – and then he flees. Moses' reluctance and feelings of inadequacy for the task of delivering the Israelites from the oppression of the Egyptians will manifest itself since he had failed earlier. Rejected and rebuked by his fellow-Israelite, and with a death warrant on him from Pharaoh (chapter 2), Moses hardly looked like the best Leader. His consequent 40-year sojourn in the land of Midian, where he married, had two children, and tended the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, we would hope would settle him to his call. At 40, he was not ready. At 80, however, his same reluctance will be evident.

Chapter 3 introduces a monumental development in the Exodus story. God steps in. Previously, God has acted providentially in the lives of Israel's progeny for the most part. But now, we see God's direct intervention through Moses and the miracles performed he performs. We move from God's silence over the past 400 years to God's speaking directly to Moses from the bush, and later on, from the same mountain. It begins with the revelation of God to Moses from the middle of the burning bush and moves Moses to Egypt to confront Pharaoh and to deliver God's people from their oppression and bondage. It ends with the beginnings of Moses' reticence and resistance toward the task which God has given him.

God in the Bush (3:1-3). After forty years of sheep tending (cf. Acts 7:30) Moses' life had likely become all too predictable. From grazing places to water holes etched in his schedule, the burning bush of Exodus 3 will be the single most life-altering event for Moses. The Burning bush is a crucial turning point in the history of the nation Israel. It marks the beginning of God's direct intervention into the affairs of history – namely Israel's; it is the beginning of the end of Egyptian oppression; it is the beginning of the nation; and it is the beginning of God's unveiling of His plans to bring the Ultimate Deliverer.

The burning bush not only profoundly impacted Moses and the nation Israel, it also continues to serve as one of those key events in history—the significance of which was not lost on Israel in the generations which followed. The account of the “burning bush” was so central to the thinking of the gospel writers, Mark and Luke, that they (perhaps like most men in their day) came to call this section of Scripture “the bush” portion (Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37).

Looking for richer pasture, Moses led his father-in-law's flock to the west or back side of the wilderness, to Mt. Horeb. In the distance, something burning caught the keen eye of Moses and snapped him out of his thoughts. It burned but did not burn up. The closer he got to the bush, the more incredible the scene became. It was a miracle call to a work of miracles God would work through him. Moses himself says that the “angel of the Lord” was manifested in the burning bush. Verses 4-15 contain a description of the God of the burning bush.

The basis for Moses' faith and obedience is God's character (1-14): He is holy but in the bush as a unending fire, He is an object of fear and reverence. Twice Yahweh called Moses by name and he replied, “Here I am.” God then warned Moses not to come any closer and instructed him to take off his sandals because the ground on which he stood was “holy” (v. 5). Moses hid his face, knowing that looking at God could cost him his life (cf. Gen. 32:30; Exod. 33:20; Judg. 6:22-23; 13:21-22). When the Law is given on Mt. Sinai, God's holiness is the basis for Israel's conduct, which the Law prescribed – and here, it is the basis of Moses' obedience (and later ours – 1Peter 1:14-21).

God further identifies Himself as the covenant-making, covenant-keeping God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In verse 6, God identified Himself to Moses in this way: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exod. 3:6). He is the the God of the patriarchs, Israel's God. There is no new plan, but simply the outworking of the old plan, revealed to Abraham in Genesis 15:12b-16, 18-21). And He is compassionate: “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering...” (Exod. 3:7-8a).

The narrative in verses 11-15, where God responds to two questions raised by Moses, shows the challenge placed before Moses will be the same for the people: (1) “Who am I?” (v. 11), and (2) “Who are You?” (v. 13). God’s response to these questions serves to clarify His character even further. Verses 14 and 15 are two of the most crucial verses in the Old Testament, for they contain one of the central truths concerning the nature and character of God.

The first question, “Who am I?,” is easy to understand. 40 years before, Moses determined that he was an Israelite, and not a Egyptian – and not the son of Pharaoh’s daughter (cf. Heb. 11:24-26). Stephen recounts that Moses then assumed Israel knew he was assigned to be their deliverer when he slayed the Egyptian who was oppressing a fellow Israelite. When Moses then tried to intervene in a dispute between two Hebrews, the guilty party hurled these stinging words at him, “Who made you ruler and judge over us?” (Exod. 2:14). Moses had assumed authority which had not yet been given him. Moses had 40 years to ponder his presumption, and its consequences. And now, when God commissions him to deliver the Israelites, Moses asks who am I?

God’s answer seeks to refocus Moses’ attention from looking at the sendee (Moses) to the Sender (God). What is important is not the instrument in God’s hand, but the One whose hand is holding the instrument for His purpose. God therefore promises Moses that His presence will go with him as he obeys his calling: “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain” (Exod. 3:12). From this statement we learn that Moses’ authority is wrapped up in the presence of God which is assured when he is obedient to God’s command.

It is interesting that the sign which God promises Moses in verse 12 is one that will occur *after* Moses has acted in faith, rather than before (Exod. 3:12). The first “you” in this statement is singular; the second is plural. God is not promising Moses a permanent and private worship retreat on Mt. Sinai. He is saying that the “sign” to Moses will be when the nation which he leads out of Egypt worships God at Mt. Sinai, which they did (cf. Exod. 19ff.). We would tend to think that God would have first performed a sign, then and there, and then have expected Moses to obey. This God did. The signs were (1) the burning bush (Exod. 3:1-3); (2) the rod which became a serpent (4:2-4); and (3) the leprous hand (Exod. 4:6-7) But the sign which is promised in verse 12 **will only be given after Moses acts on what God has already revealed.**

The second question Moses asked was, “Who are you?” “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” (Exod. 3:13). How could Moses possibly ask God’s name when God has already revealed His identity so clearly in His previous statements to Moses? First, due to their worship of other (Egyptian) gods (cf. Josh. 24:14), they may wonder which of their gods is answering their prayers. The second reason is that one’s name is a description of one’s character. If Moses’ authority is wrapped up in the God who has called and commissioned him to lead Israel out of Egypt, then he may need to be able to describe the character of this God to assure them of God’s willingness and ability to lead them into the land of blessings. **The name by which God chooses to identify Himself would capture the essence of His character and being for generations and be the covenant name between Israel and Him.**

Recognizing the importance of these two verses, the scholars have spent a great deal of effort to determine the exact meaning of the expression “I am who I am.” Predictably, they do not all agree. “I am who I am,” is rendered by the NIV, ESV and NASB, and seems the best rendering. The “I AM” is the God who is, that is, **the God who exists**. There were many “no gods” in both Egypt and Canaan, which were worshipped, but in contrast to all of these “gods” was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the God who is, the only true God. The “I AM” is the God who **exists independently**. God is the Creator but has no creator. He exists apart from any dependence on anything or anyone. The “I AM” is the God who exists independently **and unchangeably**. As the “I AM,” God is not the God who was anything, in the sense that He changes. Whatever He was, He continues to be, and He will be forever. How can Moses and the people of Israel be assured that God will deliver them from Egyptian bondage and will lead them into the promised land? Their confidence is well placed in the God whose nature and character is that of the “I AM”. This is the point of this passage.

Moses' Marching Orders (3:16-22). (1) Moses was commanded to assemble the elders of Israel to reassure them of God's covenant promises, and to convey God's plan for delivering His people from their bondage, and to bring them into the land of Canaan (Exod. 3:16-17). In effect, Moses was to repeat the words which God had spoken to him from the burning bush. And, (2) Moses was told to go to Pharaoh with the elders of Israel and to request a three-day "leave" to worship God in the desert (Exod. 3:18-20). This request would be denied, and only by compulsion (the plagues) would the king of Egypt release the Israelites. It is important to observe that the resistance of Pharaoh was foretold, thus preparing Moses for the hard times ahead. The release from Egypt would not come quickly or easily, but it would come. And (3) Finally, God instructed Moses to "collect," as it were, the wages the Israelites had earned in Egypt (Exod. 3:21-22). This was to be accomplished by asking the Egyptian women for articles of silver and gold and putting them on their children.

Moses and the God of the Bush (3:11–4:17).

While Israel gathered straw, Moses grasped at straws for a reason not to be the Deliverer. Here are the five points of Moses, as he seeks to prove that he is not the man for the task which God has given him. The essence of Moses' argument is: "Here am I, send someone else!" Moses responds to the commission of God five times. The first two responses have already been discussed but relisted for their part of the whole:

(1) Who am I? (Exod. 3:11). Moses, we are told in Scripture, was the "meekest man on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). To the degree that Moses' question reveals true humility, it is legitimate. But in this instance, his humility is out of bounds. The issue here is not who Moses is, but who he does not want to be. God has sent him, and it is God who will be with him (Exod. 3:12).

(2) Who are you? (Exod. 3:13). If Moses' authority is wrapped up in the God who has called and commissioned him, then it is surely worthwhile for him to inquire as to the nature and character of God. If it were not for the other three responses of Moses (the last two are protests, not inquiries), we might find this question altogether acceptable. I think Moses already knew.

(3) What if they do not believe me or listen to me? (Exod. 4:1). Moses is asking the same question of God for the third time. This time, it is even more inappropriate. In the past, Moses doubted his calling; now he is doubting the Word of God, for the Lord has just told him, "The elders of Israel will listen to you" (Exod. 4:18). From the words which follow this assurance, we know that Moses was not only told that the leaders of Israel will accept his leadership, but that it will all work out, just as God has said. Yet, God still graciously deals with the weakness of Moses here. In response, God grants Moses the ability to perform three signs. The first two Moses performs on the spot, at God's instruction, so as to assure him. The final sign (turning water from the Nile to blood) has to wait until the raw materials (Nile water) are available.

First, for the Israelites these signs were visible evidence that God had appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Would they refuse to believe the account of the burning bush? Let them see a shepherd's staff turned into a serpent, and then transformed once again to the staff. Let them see a hand turned leprous, and then restored. A burning bush is no harder to believe than these phenomena.

Second, for the Pharaoh and the Egyptians, these signs were evidence of the "finger of God" (cf. Exod. 8:19). Not only did they emphatically prove the existence of the God of the Hebrews, but they gave evidence of His superior power. More than this, these three signs were of a similar kind. At the word of Moses, a staff could become a serpent, leprosy could be inflicted, and water contaminated. In other words, Moses had the power to inflict injury and to destroy.

(4) But I am not eloquent! (Exod. 4:10; cf. 6:12,30). From here on, it is all down hill—fast. Moses is still hung up about his inability. Rather than acting on the basis of who the God is who commissioned him, Moses is now retreating on the pretext that he is not a gifted communicator. This is indeed a piece of false humility. Look at what Stephen has to say about Moses' abilities: "Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and **was powerful in speech and action**" (Acts 7:21-22, emphasis mine). Moses did not have a speech problem, as some might suppose. Neither was he ungifted in speech. Moses was eloquent. But Moses was being unfaithful and disobedient.

(5) **Please send somebody else** (Exod. 4:13). Moses does not want to go. It is not that he lacks the assurance or the authority; he simply lacks the desire to be courageous and act. No reason is stated here as to why God should send someone else, because Moses is all out of excuses. And so Moses pleads with God for someone else to go. God has been longsuffering and patient, but now He is angry. I do not know precisely what physical manifestations evidenced the anger which Moses mentions in verse 14, but my own impression is that if I had been there, I would have been scared witless. Can you imagine making God mad and then having to stand there faced with His anger? If Moses was afraid of the presence of God in the burning bush before (Exod. 4:6), one can hardly imagine the fear which Moses had at this point.

God's anger was not only reflected in some visible way (did the burning bush suddenly flare up?), but it was evident in the answer which God gave to Moses (vv. 14-17). Aaron could speak fluently, so let him speak for Moses. As later events will indicate, the presence of Aaron was a burden for Moses and a stumbling block for others. Among other things, Aaron fashioned the "golden calf" and led Israel in false worship (Exod. 32:1-6). Aaron was, at best, a mixed blessing.

Moses' Request to Return (4:18-20). Clutching his staff, Moses set out to ask Jethro's permission to leave, along with his wife and two sons. It would seem that such permission was required (cf. Gen. 31, esp. vss. 26-30). Moses' request was evasive: "Let me go back to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive" (Exod. 4:18). Perhaps, Moses avoids telling Jethro of God's appearance in the burning bush and of the commission he had been given because he is still not believing himself – or he doubts that Jethro will believe. Jethro, who seems to be a wise and gracious man, grants Moses' request, wishing him well (v. 18). And so it was that Moses set out on his way back to Egypt, taking along his wife and two sons. Moses, we are told, took the "staff of God" in his hand (v. 20). How he must have studied that stick, which he had carried so long, and which now was an instrument of God.

Matters Between Fathers and Sons (4:21-26). (1) God as the Father of Israel, His firstborn son (vv. 22-23a); (2) Pharaoh and his firstborn son (v. 23b); and (3) Moses and his son (firstborn?—cf. fn. 17) (vv. 24-26). Here, for the first time, the nation Israel is referred to as the firstborn son of God (Exod. 4:22-23). Because Pharaoh would not release Israel, God's firstborn son, to worship Him in the desert, God would have Moses tell Pharaoh that He will kill his firstborn. Why we are told this is best understood as the backdrop for the strange incident described in verses 24-26 between Moses and Zipporah. The Lord met Moses at their lodging place and seemed intent to kill him. This action on God's part seems so unusual and so harsh that some question it. Yet for Moses, it is not only God that offers him grace from his stubbornness; it is also from his wife, Zipporah. She took a flint knife (cf. Josh. 5:2-3), circumcised her son (Gen. 17:9-14), and touched Moses with the foreskin, with the rebuke, "Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me." Because of her actions, God let Moses alone. Moses included this, I believe, so we could see where he knew he was at that moment. He was not riding high in faith – he was struggling to arrive at the place where God needed him to be. Moses' wife rightly perceived the problem and spared the life of her husband by her prompt action. The great man Moses was saved by his wife's keen perception and decisive measures. Her rebuke was well-deserved, and Moses was man enough to record it for posterity.

Family Reunion (4:27-31). By divine revelation God instructed Aaron to meet Moses in the wilderness (4:27). They met on the holy mountain of God. What a happy reunion that must have been. At least 40 years would seem to have passed since they had seen each other. Most of all, Moses had to share the most recent events of his life, especially his encounter with God at the burning bush, the commission he had been given to deliver Israel, and the part which Aaron was to play in it all. One can only surmise what Aaron's response to this might have been.

Together Moses and Aaron went back to Egypt and met with the elders of the Israelites, telling them all that God had said to Moses and performing all the signs which God had given Moses (4:29-30). Both the elders of Israel and the people **believed Moses** and bowed down to worship the God of their fathers (4:31). This brief account of Israel's belief and worship underscores the fact that all of Moses' fears were unfounded.

Next Week | 9/29 | Liberation Begins | Exodus 5:1-6:30