

**Exodus:**

The Redemption of God's People,  
a Covenant with God's People,  
the Renewal of the Covenant for God's people,  
and the Worship Center of God's People.

IV. Comment on the Writing

A. The Redemption of God's People, 1:1-18:27

1. The situation in Egypt, 1:1-22
  - a. The background, vv. 1-7
  - b. The oppression, vv. 8-22
2. The deliverer of Israel from Egypt, 2:1-4:31

These chapters introduce the reader to the deliverer of the nation, his miraculous preservation and calling. I.M. Haldeman has a wonderful summary of Moses' life. "The life of Moses presents a series of striking antitheses. He was the child of a slave, and the son of a queen. He was born in a hut and lived in a palace. He inherited poverty and enjoyed unlimited wealth. He was the leader of armies, and the keeper of flocks. He was the mightiest of warriors, and the meekest of men. He was educated in the court and dwelt in the desert. He had the wisdom of Egypt, and the faith of a child. He was fitted for the city and wandered in the wilderness. He was tempted with the pleasures of sin and endured the hardships of virtue. He was backward in speech and talked with God. He had the rod of a shepherd, and the power of the Infinite. He was a fugitive from Pharaoh, and an ambassador from heaven. He was the giver of the Law, and the forerunner of grace. He died alone on Mount Moab and appeared with Christ in Judea. No man assisted at his funeral, yet God buried him."

- a. The birth of the deliverer, 2:1-10

The function of the narration is to indicate and authenticate the calling of Moses to lead the people. If Moses was eighty at the time of the Exodus, the year of birth would be ca. 1465. He was born under Thutmose I, his only legitimate offspring being a daughter, Hatsephsut. Here is the story of how God used four women saved a

child from death: a mother, a sister, a slave girl, and a princess (an original mother and an adopting one).

1) The birth and hiding of a son, vv. 1-4

In the darkest of times, God remained faithful to His people. The couple refused to kill their son. His father was Amram, a son of the Levite Kohath, and his mother was Jochebed, a sister of Kohath. Amram married his father's sister (6:20)! The child is nameless. According to Hebrews 11:23, the child's parents acted in great faith to protect their son.

1) The discovery of the child, vv. 5-6



Hatshepsut

God performed a miracle in his deliverance. He was found and protected through the kindness of Hatshepsut (a princess/queen and later co-regent). She was the daughter of Thutmose I. Her brother Thutmose II reigned briefly, died under mysterious circumstances, and his son, Thutmose III, who was quite young, succeeded as co-regent. Hatshepsut reigned (1503-1483) after her father's death, though Thutmose III (1504-1445), the son of a concubine, was the legitimate successor. Thutmose III married a half-sister, the daughter of Hatshepsut. The data that we know of Hatshepsut fits well with the biblical narrative; she was not only a kind person, but she also had courage to defy a decree of the legitimate heir to the throne for twenty years, Thutmose III being a youth. He waited for the opportunity and then seized the throne from Hatshepsut. Thutmose III proved at powerful pharaoh executing sixteen campaigns into Palestine. This would be the

pharaoh who would threaten Moses' life following the murder of the Egyptian causing his flight to Midian.

This would account for the pharaoh's hostility to Moses (2:15) since he would have viewed Moses as a claimant to his throne through Hatshepsut.

Moses was brought to the place of death by drowning, but was preserved in an "ark (the word only occurs elsewhere in the flood narrative)." The "ark" that saved Moses is a picture of Christ who saved us from spiritual death from drowning in our sins.

The actions of Jochebed and Miriam indicates that the family was involved in the protection of the child. We know that Aaron was three years older than Moses, and Miriam the eldest among the siblings.

The picture created here is one of a royal entourage coming down to the edge of a tributary of the river. While the princess was bathing, her female attendants were walking along the edge of the water out of the way of her. To bath in the Nile, being perceived as being sacred, implied being intimate with the gods.

The child is described in some translations as "fine" or beautiful; his cries further inspired her motherly instincts.

The action of placing the child among the reeds of the Nile does appear to be premeditated so that the child might be discovered by a member of the royal family. It was a way to provide protection when their home became unable to safeguard the child. In an ironic twist, Jochebed did as commanded of Hebrew males; she put him in the Nile (1:22)!

3) The nursing of the child, vv. 7-9

This was quite a miracle. The child was put where he could be found; Miriam watched (the word "Miriam" is not found in the text. The word translated "Miriam" is means a young female of marriageable age, a teenager. The translators interpreted the

word “sister,” as indeed she was). His mother received the child back, nurses the child, and was paid for the service! No respectable Egyptian women of this period would nurse a foreigner’s baby, especially a Jewish one. The verb describing Hatshepsut’s reaction upon seeing the child is quite strong (to have compassion, to pity, to spare). The child was beautiful according to Acts 7:20.

The word for the calling of Jochebed to nurse Moses is the same word that the pharaoh will use when summoning Moses in the context of the plagues. Pharaoh summoned Moses to an accounting and decreed the Jewish male to death; this princess calls a Jewish mother to nourish and spare her own son.

1) The education and naming of the child, v. 10

Pharaoh’s palace was in the northern, or Delta, region of Egypt near the location of the Israelites in Goshen, also Pithom and Raamses. This makes more sense of Moses’ frequent confrontation with the pharaoh.

The child was educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians and groomed for political office (Acts 7:21-22). Hatshepsut named her son Moses, meaning one “drawn out.” His Egyptian name is derived from her father, Thutmose I (his name means “born of a god,” a claim to deity).

Moses remained in Hatshepsut’s care for some years though it does not seem to have been in a harmonious family relationship (surmised by Pharaoh’s reaction to an Egyptian’s murder and by Moses’ fear of being found out by him).

...Pharaoh’s daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son. And Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians.... (Acts 7:21-22).

*Several things are ironic in the book thus far.*

1. *Pharaoh’s means of destruction, the Nile, becomes the means for saving Moses.*

2. *A daughter, Miriam, allowed to live, thwarts the plan of the pharaoh to destroy her brother.*
  3. *A mother saved a son by pharaoh's concession.*
  4. *A member of pharaoh's household saved a male child that would deliver his people.*
  5. *An Egyptian princess heeded the advice of a Hebrew child.*
  6. *A mother is paid to save her own son out of pharaoh's treasury.*
  7. *Moses is trained to become Israel's leader by the leader of Israel's enemy.*
  8. *What an Egyptian princess did for Moses, he will do for his people.*
4. The flight to Midian, 2:11-25
- The story leaps forward several years; Moses has grown to adulthood (Acts 7:23 indicates that he was forty.)
- a. The murder of an Egyptian, 2:11-15
- The consensus of commentators is that Moses' act of killing a man accosting a fellow Israeli (likely an Egyptian taskmaster) was a claim to be the deliverer of his people. Most argue that Moses was right in the claim, but wrong in the timing (God had far more for him to learn before leading his people). Stephen interpreted this incident (Acts 7:25-29) as the failure of Israel to follow, not Moses' misleading (Stephen was making the point in his reply to the Jewish leadership that Israel has been disobedient through history sighting this incident as an example.). Further, according to the writer of the book of Hebrews, Moses made a conscious choice to forsake the benefits of Egypt to suffer with his people (11:25). In Thutmose III's view, Moses was claiming his throne, as had his stepmother; in the view of the Jews, Moses was claiming to be their deliverer. Both parties reject the claim! Under Thutmose III, Moses attempted to lead at forty, but the people's refusal, and of course God's plan to mature Moses to be their leader, put off their deliverance for forty more years. Moses' shepherding sheep for forty years must have made him wonder how he missed the leading of God.
- The years under the care of Jochebed and Amram (the length of the weaning of a child in OT times, the parallel example is Hannah's weaning of Samuel before he was

presented to Eli, was between 18 months and 5 years). *This seems evidence that the earliest years of a child's life are crucial in shaping their values. Moses never forgot his heritage despite his Egyptian education and the benefits of extreme opportunities.* Perhaps the best commentary on the influence of parental training in those earliest years comes to us from the writer of the Hebrews who tells us that Moses made a conscious choice to identify with his people of birth rather than of his upbringing. Moses “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater than the riches of Egypt” (11:26).

- Seeing his people mistreated in their abject condition (“...their hard labors,” “beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren”), Moses reacted in pity and revenge. Clearly, he was acting as a deliverer, but he met rejection by a Hebrew the next day (vv. 13-14). This made him aware that his act of killing an Egyptian did not go unnoticed.
- The killing not only became known to his brethren; Thutmose became aware of it. Was it that an Egyptian was killed or was there other issues such as Moses’ threat of succession through Hatshepsut, his “mother?” Was it because Moses favored the Hebrews by protecting them?
- Moses was not ready to lead the people of God; God had much more for him to learn. It would take another forty years! From the palace, he learned the desert and how to live in it. There he encountered the Lord turning him into a fearless leader; he learned to fear God more than a pharaoh; he learned to walk in the strength of God. He had to leave Egypt to find the presence of God!
- Moses was simply not authorized to take the matter of deliverance from oppression into his own doing at this time. The claim that Moses was casting himself as a deliverer is evident by the v. 14 (“Who made you a ruler and judge over us?”).

b. The sojourn with the Midianites, 2:16-22

After killing an Egyptian, Moses fled Thutmose III to the wilderness in 1486 (“west side” suggests the location of Mount

Sinai, 3:1; three days journey from Egypt [3:1, 12]) where he became a shepherd of Reuel, “friend of God” (also named Jethro [Exodus 3:1]), a Midianite, married into the family, and began a family of his own. He became a shepherd in the land where he would lead his own people. There he was called of God to be their deliverer (the Midianites were a Semitic people being sons of Abraham through his second wife, Keturah, so there was an interconnection with the Israelites), ironically at a place where he would lead them, Mount Sinai.

Reuel or Jethro is described as a “priest of Midian” (2:18). He is also called a Kenite, a clan of the Midianites. He was a descendant of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:1-2).

1) The episode at the well, vv. 16-19

It is difficult to locate Midian since the Midianites were nomadic. It seems they ranged from Sinai to the Arabian Peninsula (called west and east lands respectively).

Our text indicates hostility between the Midianite shepherds and shepherdesses over water access. Also, the theme of meeting a lady at a well would have reminded the original readers of Jacob’s meeting at a well in Paddan-aram (Gen. 29). That connection would suggest continuity with the promise made to the patriarchs.

2) The invitation to dinner, v. 20

Here is a case of Near Eastern hospitality.

3) The marriage to Zipporah, vv. 21-22

Gershom’s name, the first of the two sons, reflects Moses’ negative perceptions, “an alien, a sojourner.” Zipporah means “warbler,” a small bird of the wilderness. Moses was a nomad for forty years. Eliezer the second son is not mentioned until 18:3, though Moses is said to have “sons” in 4:20. His names means “God is my helper (is Moses growing in spiritual maturity in the desert?)”

c. The circumstances in Egypt, 2:23-25

These verses serve as a transition to the call of Moses in the next chapter. It shows God’s response to the plight of His people and

the foundation of that response yet to unfold, the promise to Abraham.

Things in Egypt continued to degenerate during Moses' time in Midian. However, God took account of their afflictions and remembered His covenant with the patriarchs. A key is the phrase, "God remembered His covenant."

What is a covenant? It is a formal bond that ties two people, or two nations—any two parties—together. Perhaps the best illustration of a bilateral covenant is marriage. Two people fall in love and want to spend their lives with each other. There is a deep, personal attachment between them. In a sense, nothing can add to, or take away from that relationship. But it is important to cement the personal relationship with a formal, binding commitment—which is why we have the marriage ceremony. Once a couple is married, the relationship is different. The love and personal commitment are the same, but it now operates within the security of a public commitment. The marriage commitment is there as a public witness as the mutuality of love grows and matures. In the same way, God has bound himself in covenant to his people. He loves his people; he has a personal attachment to them. But he has formalized that attachment by making a public pledge to them in Abraham (Gen. 17:7-8). This is the great theme that runs through the entire Bible. Jesus is the true mediator, superior to Moses, who has bound us to Himself in a new, superior covenant (Heb. 12:24) as His "bride."

#### Applications:

1. God's providence is manifested in unexpected ways and is recognized retrospectively. In a dark time, parents wisely hide their son. When the son was about to be discovered, his infant demeanor captures the heart of a princess. Can you not gather from this story that God cares and protects his people, often in ways that we could have never imagined? Can you see the hand of God in your life, the life of your family? Think of instances when God



has demonstrated His providential care in your life? Based on His past mercies, are you willing trust God for the uncertainties of tomorrow?

2. God is a master at timing. Just think, a child is placed in a basket to float in reeds near the Nile while a sister waits to ensure its safety. Hatshepsut comes for a bath and finds a “son.” While we are ignorant of the ways of our God, often questioning His inactivity on our behalf, He is never negligent or slack. We may not see His provisions for us because circumstances overwhelm us, but God is not inactive on our behalf. What are some of the instances that you have marvel ay God’s unexpected provision for you?
3. The instincts of a mother are something of a marvel. Without a protective, loving parent, Israel would not have a Moses. She revealed her devotion to God in sheltering her child; she revealed her wisdom by developing an alternative plan when her home was no longer secure; she revealed her cunning by placing her child in place she knew would be discovered by the right people; and she sacrificed her privilege in allowing her son to be the “son” of another. Though we know little of Jochebed, she appears a wise mother of Israel. When you reflect on your mother, did she exhibit some of these traits? What traits in your mother are you seeking to inculcate in your children?
4. Human kindness and compassion are not an exclusive Christian characteristic. Like pharaoh’s daughter, there are many we encounter who reflect care. God’s provision for society is common grace, not special grace, as it evident by the fact that strong societies and solid families are certainly not restricted to Christians (even among them it is often not the case). Have you met the exude Christian qualities yet do not possess affection for God as reveal in Christ? Have you learned from them? Do you have friends that know not Christ but are good role models?
5. When times are the darkest in our life-experiences, we must not despair thinking that God is inactive, not involved in our deliverance. Just think of our passage. A powerfully oppressive foe ordered the demise of male offspring, but God intervened through a series of circumstances, several quite unlikely. Our God can deliver us in whatever straights we may find ourselves, our families, our friends when in faith we take refuge in His mercies, expressed in obedience. Where do you turn when your day grows dark with disappointment, pain, and weariness?
6. There are times when we think our lives are being wasted, but those are often of preparation for future usefulness. Moses understood that God was calling

him to be the answer for God's oppressed people to bring them relief, but he was not prepared personally fearing the political establishment. He needed to mature before he was ready to be the leader (there is never a time when leaders have the full understanding of those they are called to lead). The forty years in the wilderness was his training period where God matured the man causing him to learn to fear God more than people. Have you had that experience in your life? In retrospect, how has God led you to be a more trusting, confident servant? What is He teaching you now to grow you?

7. God sees the affliction of His people and is moved by it. When we think in our pain and disappointment an accompanying sense of abandonment, we must realize that such is a human reaction; it is not a divine reality. We have a God that is truly aware of our circumstances, and though relief may not be immediate for reasons that only God's knows at the time, we must find relief in the fact that God truly does care. What disappointment comes do you focus on the disappointment, or do you look up in trust that God knows and cares for you?
8. Like Moses, we often feel like aliens. He was raised in the circumstance of privilege, but he sensed that his real identity was someplace else. He strove to help his people only to be rejected and spurned for his efforts only to find himself in a wilderness. Is this not a description of you and me at times, well-meaning but misunderstood? Who do you turn to in those circumstances?
9. God will never forget His promises to His people though He may delay in fulfilling them. Not only do we fail to see God's hand in delivering us from affliction, rejecting unappreciated help, but we feel that if God does not come to us with solace and help immediately that He will not come at all. God works in ways that we cannot grasp toward us who are blinded by circumstance and too weak to trust. Do you cling to God's promise when it seems that He is inactive on our behalf?
10. There are times that we cast the care of our children upon the Lord and trust Him to provide for them. When our resources come to an end, we are hardly at the end of our resources. Perhaps we are only at the beginning! While we can generally provide and care for our children, there will be times when we must give them over to the Lord casting them into His care with care and forethought (illnesses, when our children obtain skills and opportunity without wisdom or experience, dating, college). Jochebed trusted but also planned. We are not to take a passive stand when our children are threatened yet think and trust.

