

Lesson 9: Moses and the Exodus from Egypt

Reading Preparation:

- Exodus 1-15

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Lesson Notes:

[1. Joseph's Blessing](#)

Prior to his death, presumably at a family gathering, Joseph told his brothers of the great blessings that would come through their ancestors. These thirteen verses found between Genesis 50:24 and 25 in the King James Bible were restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. These verses are found in the Joseph Smith Inspired translation. They are also found in the appendix on page 799-800, as Genesis 50:24-38 in the LDS edition of the King James Bible.

JST, Genesis 50:29, 34

29 And I will make him great in mine eyes, for he shall do my work; and he shall be great like unto him whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel, out of the land of Egypt; for a seer will I raise up to deliver my people out of the land of Egypt; and he shall be called Moses. And by this name he shall know that he is of thy house; for he shall be nursed by the king's daughter, and shall be called her son.

34 And the Lord sware unto Joseph that he would preserve his seed forever, saying, I will raise up Moses, and a rod shall be in his hand, and he shall gather together my people, and he shall lead them as a flock, and he shall smite the waters of the Red Sea with his rod.

While to some it may seem unusual that the name of Moses and his responsibility as a deliverer would be known many years prior to his birth. To others whose faith it is God knows all, even the beginning to the end, it is understandable He would also know the name of His prophet who would deliver his children from Egypt!

[2. A New King Over Egypt](#)

While the use of the word, "king," in place of the term, "Pharaoh," seems unusual, one can only assume the terms are similar and can be used separately or together without loss of meaning or under the new reign the leader was referred to as king.

Exodus 5:4-5

**4 And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye,
Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works?...
5 And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now
are many,...**

PD's [unidentified respondent] response to David Hunter states,

"... the person who ruled Egypt was the "King". When the term "Pharaoh" is used, it seems that the Bible is referring to the office/system, rather than the person. Calling the person who ruled Egypt "the King" would be analogous to calling the person who runs the United States "the President", whereas using the term "the Pharaoh" would be analogous to using the term "Washington" or "the White House" to refer to the system of people who are running the United States." (<http://sernabibleblog.blogspot.com/2006/09/terms.html> and <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pharaoh>)

Exodus 1:6-8

**6 And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that
generation.
7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased
abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty;
and the land was filled with them.
8 Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew
not Joseph.**

The significance of Joseph's death and the fact that the ruler of the land no longer knew of Joseph, meant that the protection which Joseph's position with the Pharaoh had provided to the children of Israel was no longer present.

John M. Lundquist notes,

"It is also widely accepted by scholars that Joseph's rise to power in Egypt must have been associated with the rise to power in Egypt of the Hyksos, the Semitic rulers who probably originated in Palestine, who ruled Egypt from the eastern Delta region during the Second Intermediate Period, or between about 1750 and 1550 B.C." ("The Exodus" in Studies in Scripture, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 113).

Once the rule of the Hyksos had been overthrown, the reigning government no longer provided favors or consideration to the Israelites. The new government was concerned regarding the increasing numbers of the Israelites.

Robert L. Millet states,

"...the leaders of the country [may] have feared that the people of Israel—a power to be reckoned with—might choose to join themselves to the enemies of Egypt. It was determined by the Egyptians that life should be made more difficult for the Israelites, that perhaps the birthrate might decline thereby." ("The Call of Moses and the Deliverance of Israel," in Studies in Scripture, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 95).

If one chooses to decrease a large number of an undesirable people, certainly a means has to be found to decrease their birthrate. But, how do you accomplish this task?

Ellis T. Rasmussen observed,

"The first means of control adopted was enslavement. It doubtless seemed a doubly beneficial system, as the host could not only hold the sojourners under control by setting taskmasters over them but also could profit by their labors in building projects... The second measure the government tried was to command the midwives to put to death all male babies of the Hebrews, a measure which would obviously reduce the numbers and the potential military ability of future Israelite manpower... The third edict of the program against Israel was more efficient in accomplishing the desired end. Pharaoh 'charged all his people' that they must cast every son born to the Israelites into the river." (Patriarchs of the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1964, 149-150).

Another reason for putting to death all the Israelite male children, similar to the response of King Herod at the time of Christ's birth, may have been due to the following belief of the Pharaoh as recorded in the Complete Works of Josephus, the Jewish Historian.

Flavius Josephus notes,

2 ... One of those sacred scribes, who was very sagacious in foretelling future events truly, told the king, that about this time there would be a child born to the Israelites, who, if he were reared, would bring the Egyptian dominion low, and would raise the Israelites; that he would excel all men in virtue, and obtain a glory that would be remembered through

all ages. Which thing was so feared by the king, that, according to this man's opinion, he commanded that they should cast every male child, which was born to the Israelites, into the river, and destroy it;... But no one can be too hard for the purpose of God, though he contrived ten thousand subtle devices for that end; for this child, whom the sacred scribe foretold, was brought up and concealed from the observers appointed by the king..." (The Complete Works of Josephus, Trans. Wm. Whiston. "Antiquities of the Jews, Book II, Chapter 9:2," Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1960, 55-56).

3. Moses Life: Pharaoh's Court

The life of Moses may be divided into three distinct phases, each approximately forty years in length. They are as follows: I. Moses Life: Pharaoh's Court; II. Moses Life: Deseret Era, and III. Moses as Prophet and Deliver. It is the atypical riches to rags story with a tutoring phase in between. Moses as an individual had it all, and then lost it, but what happened to him in the process made his life extraordinary. In fact it was so unique that Cecil B. DeMille remade the original film version into an epic movie in 1956 entitled, "The Ten Commandments."

3.1. Moses Life Preserved

Moses was born during the time period of the Pharaoh's edict that all Israelite male babies were to be put to death. His parents, were Amram and Jochebed. They had two other children, Aaron and Miriam. Desperate to save their baby, even if it meant giving him up to another, his parents took the only step available to them.

Ellis T. Rasmussen states,

"With courage, and some evident ingenuity, [his parents]... hid their baby, Moses, as long as they could, and then cast him into the river indeed-but in a cleverly contrived little bark of bulrushes water-proofed with clay and pitch, and covered over, that he might float in safety and some comfort among the reeds of the shallow waters of the languid delta-spent Nile. The place was the very same where the daughter of Pharaoh came to bathe." (Patriarchs of the Old Testament, Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1964, 153).

How blessed the parents were for God was also watching over this Israelite infant even from his birth. The small boat that saved Moses from drowning in the Nile, was guided to the protected area where Pharaoh's daughter was present.

Flavius Josephus states,

"When the Pharaoh's daughter found him, she called him Mouses-Mo=water, Uses=are saved out of it" (The Complete Works of Josephus. Trans. by Wm. Wiston. Book II. Antiquities of the Jews, 9:5-6, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1960, 56-57).

Ellis T. Rasmussen observed,

"She knew it was a Hebrew baby, and knew her father's orders, but chose on her own urge for good to act as her feelings dictated. It is hardly to be supposed that she would not have guessed that Miriam, the little Hebrew baby-sitter, so conveniently at hand to suggest a nurse, was involved with the baby—or for that matter that the nursing mother whose services were accordingly engaged was in fact the baby's own mother. And who is to say that was not a bit of divine inspiration at the proper moment that made her incline to act as she did." (Patriarchs of the Old Testament, Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1964, 154).

Moses' life is preserved based upon his parents ingenuity and divine intervention guiding him to the court of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Jochebed, his mother, is also invited to the courthouse by Pharaoh's daughter to serve as Moses nursemaid and caretaker.

3.2. Raised in Pharaoh's Court

Moses spent approximately forty years in the Royal Courts of the Pharaoh. As the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he will be given all the privileges and education accorded the grandson of the Pharaoh. The opportunities which Moses was given were only to be dreamed by the Israelite slaves. Moses will receive all that one of the ruling class would be entitled by their position in society.

Acts 7:22

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

Tutoring under the Royal Court would certainly include military training and preparation. To be a leader of a nation, one must be able to also be a leader on the battlefield.

Flavius Josephus states,

"...when Moses was nourished in the king's palace, he was appointed general of the army against the Ethiopians, and conquered them, when he married that king's daughter; because out of her affection for him, she delivered up

the city to him.” (The Complete Works of Josephus. Trans. Wm. Whiston. Book II, “Antiquities of the Jews, Chapter X, footnote. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1960, 58)

Ellis T. Rasmussen states,

“This could be the marriage [the one to an Ethiopian princess] for which his sister and brother later found fault with him (Numbers 12:1-8).” (Patriarchs of the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1964, 154).

3.3. Kills An Egyptian

It is understandable that living in the Royal Court of the Pharaoh during this extended period of time and removed from close contact with the Israelites would have caused Moses to forget his real identity. This was not true for Moses. He continued to see them as his brethren.

Exodus 2:11-12

**11 And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.
12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.**

Why does Moses kill the Egyptian? With the power he had as the grandson of the Pharaoh over life and death, there must have been other options available to him, than to take a man's life,

Mark E. Peterson states,

“Although the Bible mentions that Moses killed an Egyptian for ‘smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren,’ no further detail is given. (Exodus 2:11). However, the historian Eusebius says that the slaying was the result of a court intrigue in which certain men plotted to assassinate Moses. In the encounter it is said that Moses successfully ward off the attacker and killed him (Eusebius IX:27). In the Midrash Rabbah, the traditional Jewish commentary on the Old Testament, it is asserted that Moses with his bare fists, killed an Egyptian taskmaster who was in the act of seducing a Hebrew woman. This is confirmed in the Koran. Certainly there must have been a good reason for Moses’ act, as most assuredly the Lord would not have called a murderer to the high office of prophet and liberator of his people Israel.” (Moses. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1977, 42).

Moses did not find support or protection for his action even among the Hebrews as they said,

Exodus 2:14-15

**14 And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.
15 Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian:...**

Is it any wonder that Moses would escape to the desert? Those whom he had considered his brethren did not protect him, and the Pharaoh sought to slay him! There was no other option open to him to preserve his own life.

4. Moses Life: Desert Era

4.1. Fugitive In the Desert

Where was the land of Midian?

Ellis T. Rasmussen states,

“...he took refuge beyond the gulf of Suez, in the high, forbidding plateaus and sparse wadies near the granite peaks of Sinai.” (Patriarchs of the Old Testament. Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1964, 154-155).

This must have been a land that was so barren and harsh that he felt he was safe from his enemies. No one would bother to search for him in this area which was only sparsely populated by nomadic tribes. He must have thought that he could find acceptance by one of these groups who did not care about his Egyptian connection and would befriend him so his life could be preserved.

4.2. At the Well

Where better to meet nomadic tribesmen than at the place where they came to water their flocks.

Exodus 2:16-17

16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

17 And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

How long Moses lingered at the well is not known, but he was rewarded as seven daughters who were in charge of their father's sheep came to water their flock. The need for water, essential for survival of both animals and man, also brought trouble as others drove away the daughter's sheep. Moses took a position of protection regarding the daughters and using his own skills, first drove away the intruders and then watered their sheep. This action was reported to the daughter's father. When he learned of Moses actions, he stated,

Exodus 2:20-21

20 ...call him, that he may eat bread.

21 And Moses was content to live with the man:....

Moses has secured for himself a place to live where he could feel protected from the harsh elements of the desert that surrounded him. It can be assumed that as time passed Moses contributed to the well-being of the family and won the trust and confidence of Reuel, (Ex.2:18) and his family.

Exodus 2: 21

21 ...and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

The LDS Bible Dictionary states,

"Jethro is also called Jether and Reuel, a prince and priest of Midian who gave Moses a home after his flight from Egypt, and afterward became his father-in-law" (LDS Bible Dictionary in Holy Bible. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1979, Jethro, 713).

[4.3. Tutorage from Jethro](#)

Robert L. Millet states,

"Moses father-in-law Jethro (Reuel) was a descendant of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:1-4). Moses married Jethro's daughter, Zipporah, had two sons—Gershom and Eliezer, and settled in the area for the next forty years of his life (Ex. 2:16-22; 18:3; Acts 7:29-30). We suppose that it was in Midian that Moses began to be taught the true gospel and to be introduced to the teachings of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for we know by modern revelation (D&C 84:6), that Moses received the higher priesthood from Jethro." ("The Call of Moses and the Deliverance of Israel," in Studies in Scripture, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 97).

One would have to have a great deal of faith to believe that of all the watering spots in this vast Desert peninsula, that it was by chance that Moses came on his own to the well frequented by the daughters of Jethro. Jethro is only one of a few individuals upon the earth at this time who held the higher priesthood and was qualified to tutor Moses regarding the teachings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. While the scriptures are brief regarding this forty year period of Moses life, one can be assured they were preparatory years during which time Moses was taught eternal truths by Jethro and well as heavenly tutors. Moses is not an ordinary individual. He is being prepared to be a prophet of God and the deliverer of God's covenant people.

[4.4. Three Visitations by Jehovah](#)

Who is Jehovah?

Exodus 6:2-3

2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord:

3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

The Joseph Smith translation states,

JST, Exodus 6:3

3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, I am the Lord God Almighty, the Lord JEHOVAH. And was not my name known unto them?

It is the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that Jehovah of the Old Testament is Jesus Christ of the New Testament. Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten son in the flesh of Our Heavenly Father. He

appeared in His Spirit body to the prophets of the Old Testament and, under the direction of His Father, directed their work upon the earth.

We know of three major visitations that Moses had with Jehovah prior to his returning to Egypt. They are: (1) The Burning Bush; (2) Vision on a High Mountain (PGP, Moses 1-6), and (3) Desert near Midian. We should not assume that these visitations were the only experiences when Jehovah tutored Moses, in fact there were probably many more, but it is important to address what we do know from these three experiences with deity.

4.4.1. Burning Bush

The time was drawing near. Moses was not in the Sinai peninsula to spend his remaining years on earth as a shepherd. His mission is much greater. In fact, it is as Moses is tending the flocks of his father-in-law at the base of Mount Horeb (Sinai, Exodus 3:12; 19:11) that he has an extraordinary experience. He saw a bush that appeared to be on fire but was not consumed!

JST, Exodus 3:2

2 And again, the presence of the Lord appeared unto him, in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

Here was a manifestation to Moses of the Lord's divine nature, an evidence of his glory and power. After Moses had turned away, the Lord called to him and then in response to His divine nature instructed Moses to take off his shoes. Why was Moses to remove his shoes?

Exodus 3:5

5 ...put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

The Lord Jehovah introduced himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He has come to tutor Moses regarding his prophetic calling.

A single verse found in the Pearl of Great Price, contains a vision Moses received, after his experience at the burning bush and prior to his leading the children of Israel, we read the following.

PGP, Moses 1:17

17 And he also gave me commandments when he called me out of the burning bush, saying: Call upon God in the name of mine Only Begotten, and worship me.

The true manner of prayer is essential to Moses calling. He is to pray to God the Eternal Father in the Name of Jesus Christ, His Son. As he offers his petition unto God, he may be assured that his righteous desires will be heard and answered according to the direction of the Lord. It is not surprising that this basic principle would be given to Moses as he is tutored by the Lord Himself. It is during this time that the Lord reveals to Moses His purpose for bringing Moses to the desert. It is so he could "bring forth...the children of Israel out of Egypt."

Exodus 3:8-10

8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey;...

9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

"Bringing forth...the children of Israel out of Egypt," is no small task. They have been slaves to the Egyptians for several hundred years. They are the main labor force of the Egyptians and, therefore, have an important role in their mammoth building project. To bring the children of Israel out of Egypt will be complicated by the additional task of getting Egypt out of the hearts and minds of the Israelites. Who wouldn't be completely overwhelmed by the calling the Lord has just issued to Moses?

Robert L. Millet observes,

"Moses' response to the Lord's call is typical of the response of many of the humble servants of God. He now asks a series of questions:

- 1. Who am I, that I should go unto the Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Ex.3:11). Why would he even listen to me? I am a shepherd.*

2. When the Hebrew children ask who sent me, what shall I say unto them?" (Ex.3:13). Why would they listen to me? I have no power over them.
3. What do I do if they still do not believe me? (Ex.4:1). How will I convince them that I am sent as thy servant?
4. I am not eloquentI am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue (Ex.4:11). This is an interesting statement by Moses from what we had learned previously is that Moses "was mighty in words" (Acts 7:22). Was this just a final excuse?, or had Moses over the past forty years lost his ability to communicate, especially in an eloquent manner, in Egyptian?

The Lord in patience responds to Moses' concerns by providing:

1. I will be with you" (Ex.3:12). I am all powerful and there is no one who can stand against me.
2. Jehovah gives to Moses his sacred name, "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex.3:14). These words are so sacred that the mere mention of them can bring charges of blasphemy to the individual. Jehovah knows however that once the Israelites hear this name it will be proof to the Israelites that Moses' comes in the name of the Lord.
3. Should they continue to doubt, Moses is to perform a miracle before them which consists of turning Moses staff into a serpent and then back into a staff (Ex.4:2-3) and also making his hand leprous and then restored it (Ex.4:6-7). These are significant signs in order to demonstrate to the Israelites his power.
4. Moses is rebuked by the Lord for his lack of faith in being able to speak eloquently to the Egyptians (Ex.4:14), however the Lord answers Moses lack of faith by extending the call of spokesman to his older brother, Aaron (Ex.4:14-16)" (see "The Call of Moses and the Deliverance of Israel," in *Studies in Scripture Vol. 3*. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 98-101, Numbering added).

Unfortunately many of us are like Moses. When called by the Lord to serve in his kingdom we too often doubt our ability to perform the task. We forget that this is the Lord's Church and while he does call those to positions in his Church who are not equal to the calling, as many will often point out, the Lord does make those who are humble and truly seek to do his will to the very best of their ability, equal to the task. This is what he did for Moses.

Romans 8:30

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

4.4.2. On a High Mountain

Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

"[The second major visitation by Jehovah to Moses prior to his return to Egypt is not found in the Old Testament. It is found in the Latter-day Saint scripture, The Pearl of Great Price, which contains a vision that Moses received] after Moses' original call on Mount Horeb (Sinai) and before his arrival in Egypt." (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 106).

The Guide to the Scriptures states,

"The Book of Moses "contains Joseph Smith's inspired translation of the first seven chapters of Genesis." (The Guide to the Scriptures. Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2001, 77)

An important lesson Moses learned during this visitation, I believe, is the power of Jehovah and the nothingness of man/Moses.

PGP, Moses 1:7-10

7 And now, behold, this one thing I show unto thee, Moses, my son, for thou art in the world, and now I show it unto thee.

8 And it came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created; and Moses beheld the world and the ends thereof, and all the children of men which are, and which are created; of the same he greatly marveled and wondered.

9 And the presence of the God withdrew from Moses, that his glory was not upon Moses; and Moses was left unto himself. And as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth.

10 And it came to pass that it was for the space of many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength like unto man; and he said unto himself: Now, for this

cause I know that man is nothing, which thing I never had supposed.

I have included these verses because I believe it is imperative Moses understands the power of God compared to man.

Moses was returning to Egypt and was going to meet with the Pharaoh of Egypt. His belief and that of his subjects, the children of Israel, is that he is god and king in one.

Lionel Casson states,

“At the apex of Egyptian society stood the pharaoh, who is god and king in one....The pharaoh was the embodiment of the gods and the soul of the state...He owned the land, directed the energies of the people and spoke the law...as he was a god, he was thought to be everywhere present.” (Ancient Egypt. New York: Time Inc., 1965, 93).

Through this event on the high mountain, Moses learns for himself that Jehovah, not the Pharaoh is all powerful, all knowing and the supreme ruler of the world and the universe. This important reality is not only important for Moses to know, but for him to be able to communicate this to those whom he is to deliver, who see the Pharaoh, not Jehovah, as all powerful.

4.4.3. Desert near Midian

The third of the major visitations of Jehovah is covered in just three verses as recorded in Exodus 4.

Exodus 4:21

21 And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

The Lord does not harden Pharaoh's heart, as we learn from the Joseph Smith translation.

JST, Exodus 4:21,

21 ...see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand, and I will prosper thee; but Pharaoh will harden his heart, and he will not let the people go.

The eternal law in heaven is that each of God's children is given their free agency to either accept or reject God's commandments. No one is forced. It is Pharaoh who will harden his heart against the will of the Lord. This is an important concept to understand in lieu of the fact that there are three other verses that refer to the Lord hardening Pharaoh's heart or the Egyptians (Exodus 7:3; 10:1; 14:4; 14:8). The message is received, ONLY if the receiver allows it to occur.

Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

“God gave the pharaoh a chance to let Israel go, of his own free will, to worship God. Through his refusal the pharaoh could blame no one but himself for the consequences.” (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 107).

Exodus 4:22-23

**22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:
23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.**

These verses re-confirm to Moses, the Lord's ability to know events before they occur. This insight serves to strengthen Moses' belief that if he completely follows the direction of the Lord, all will occur as the Lord had previously indicated. In view of the stumbling blocks that Pharaoh will place in the way, ultimately he will allow the children of Israel to go free.

5. Moses Life: Leader and Lawgiver

Prior to Moses departing from the home of Jethro, he discusses one last concern with his father-in-law concerning his killing of the Egyptian. The Lord responds.

Exodus 4:19

19 And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return unto Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.

All possible concerns answered, Moses now gathers his family and they set off for Egypt as directed by the Lord. He has not been in Egypt for forty years. He knows the leadership of the nation has changed and there is a new Pharaoh in Egypt. However, what about the attitude of the Israelites? How will they receive him when he tells them that he has come to deliver them from Egypt! Will they laugh and scorn him or will they believe him? These must have been some of the concerns Moses had as they made the way back to the land where he had been raised as the prior Pharaoh's grandson.

Moses is instructed by Jehovah to go with Aaron first to the Israelites and indicate to their leaders that he has been called of the Lord to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt. The Lord had previously indicated their response.

Exodus 3:18

18 And they shall hearken to thy voice:...

As Moses and Aaron met with the children of Israel and their leaders, the Lord's words are fulfilled.

Exodus 4:30-31

30 And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

31 And the people believed: and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their afflictions, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

Just as the Lord had said, the people did believe. Moses and Aaron now go to the Royal Court to meet with the Pharaoh.

[5.1. Moses Meets Pharaoh](#)

The request of the Lord, through his spokesman, Aaron and Moses is simple.

Exodus 5:1

1 ...Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.

Their simple request is they be allowed to go into the wilderness for three days that they may sacrifice unto their God. Pharaoh's response is clear.

Exodus 5:2

2 And the Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I know not the Lord neither will I let Israel go.

Pharaoh's response is curt and to the point. There is no other god than me! I am the supreme ruler of Egypt and my word and power is ultimate. I am the head god and not subject to any other gods. Who is this god? I don't know him or recognize him. I will not obey him. I am the supreme god in Egypt.

Pharaoh not only refuses to recognize Moses' God, but he also attempts to turn the Hebrew children against Moses.

Exodus 5:6-8

6 And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,

7 Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves.

8 And he tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.

Pharaoh's attempt to turn the people against Moses was successful and they are extremely upset with the additional burden the Pharaoh has placed upon them, with no reduction in the daily number of bricks they are to produce.

They are angry with Moses and he in turn is upset with God. The calling to be a deliverer is a difficult task, if not impossible, just as he had thought.

Exodus 5:22-23

22 And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me?
23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.

The Lord reassures Moses that He will do as he has said, and He will deliver the people. He instructs Moses to return to the people.

Exodus 6:9

9 And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

Moses again returns to the Lord and who now tells Moses to return to Pharaoh's court and tell what Moses what he is to ask.

Exodus 7:9-10

9 When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.
10 And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded:...

It is understandable the Pharaoh would want to see a demonstration of the power of the Lord whom Moses represents. Moses and Aaron are prepared and empowered by the Lord to perform the "miracles" that Pharaoh requests. The following is a list of the "miracles" Aaron performed in an effort to demonstrate the power of their God and to soften the heart of the Pharaoh to set the children of Israel free.

5.2. Series of Plagues

Robert L. Millet provides a list of the plagues,

1. *"Water turned to blood*
2. *Frogs*
3. *Lice*
4. *Flies*
5. *Severe plague upon cattle (murrain)*
6. *Boils*
7. *Fiery Hail*
8. *Locusts*
9. *Thick darkness"*

("The Call of Moses and the Deliverance of Israel," in Studies in Scripture. Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 103).

Joseph Fielding Smith comments:

"When Aaron threw down his rod, it became a serpent. The Egyptian magicians threw down their rods, and they also became serpents...Beyond this point the magicians of Egypt could not go...It should be remembered that Satan has great knowledge and thereby can exercise authority and to some extent control the elements, when some greater power does not intervene." (Answer to Gospel Questions, Vol. 1. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957, 176-178).

The scripture reports that when the plagues reached number 4, Lice, there was a change of attitude by the magicians themselves.

Exodus 8:18-19

18 And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.
19 Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and

hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said.

It is interesting to me when they saw that there was a limit to their power, the magicians, who performed their "miracles," by the power of Satan, recognized the power of Aaron as emanating from God or from a power that was greater than what they possessed!

Because of the Pharaoh's belief in his omnipotent power, he continued to reject the fact that there was a power greater than his own. He had requested a sign in order to demonstrate the power of Moses' God, but when the evidence was provided, he refused to accept it. He now threatens Moses and Aaron.

Exodus 10:28-29

**28 And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.
29 And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more.**

It is my impression that Pharaoh thought he was through with Moses and Aaron. They feared for their lives and he had defeated them by his power. He would not be bothered by them in his court again. The children of Israel would continue to serve as their slaves.

The Lord had given Pharaoh sufficient opportunity to "act on his own" for a righteous request. He had chosen to reject not only his servants, Moses and Aaron, but also to reject God himself! God told Moses there would be "one plague more."

Exodus 11:1

1 And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.

It appears to me that Moses did return a last time to Pharaoh's court and told him the last plague.

Exodus 11:4-5, 8

**4 And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt:
5 And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.
8 And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.**

The Lord, through Moses, gave Pharaoh one last opportunity to grant freedom to the children of Israel before his people and his own family will suffer sweeping death in their land. Moses' utter frustration in dealing with Pharaoh's pride is underlined by the Lord's statement.

Exodus 11:9

9 And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.

Sometimes no matter what evidence is provided or action taken, our decision remains to our detriment unchanged. We become figuratively like concrete: mixed-up and set in our ways. The stage is now set. The promise of the Lord is certain. The firstborn of the Egyptians including their animals will die this night.

Unfortunately, the firstborn of the children of Israel will also die if they do not follow the prophets' directions. They are to take a "lamb without blemish, a male of the first year" and "take of the blood, and strike [smear] it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses"...and they shall eat the flesh [of the lamb] that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it...And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand: and ye shall eat in it haste: it is the LORD's Passover" (Exodus 12:5, 7-11).

Exodus 12:13

13 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

We do not know the number of deaths of the Egyptians, or the number of the children of Israel who died that horrible night. What we know is those Israelites who did not follow the direction of their prophet suffered the same consequences as the Egyptians. The tragedy for them is that if there had been complete obedience by the Hebrew children they would have been spared the calamity that came upon the Egyptians.

What a powerful reminder to each of us to be obedient to the direction of the Prophet. We, too, face dangers in our lives that can be averted if we will heed the counsel of our prophet. The counsel may be simple. Do not drink that; do not go there; do not watch that, but if we choose to ignore it, we too, like our Hebrew brothers and sisters, will suffer similar results in our lives. Those Israelites who were obedient to the directions given reaped the blessing of having their firstborn alive the next morning. Those who were disobedient suffered a terrible consequence!

5.3. Similarities: Passover and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ

Bruce R. McConkie states significant similarities between the Passover and the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ:

- 1. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year, signifying the Lamb of God, pure and perfect, without spot or blemish, in the prime of his life, as the Paschal Lamb, would be slain for the sins of the world.*
- 2. They were to take of the blood of the lamb and sprinkle it upon the doorposts of their houses, having this promise as a result: 'And the blood shall be to you a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you,' signifying that the blood of Christ, which should fall as drops in Gethsemane and flow in a stream from a pierced side as he hung on the cross, would cleanse and save the faithful; and that, as those in Israel were saved temporally because the blood of a sacrificial lamb was sprinkled on the doorposts of their houses, so the faithful of all ages would wash their garments in the blood of the Eternal Lamb and from him receive an eternal salvation. And may we say that as the angel of death passed by the families of Israel because of their faith—as Paul said of Moses, 'through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them; (Heb. 11:28)—even so shall the Angel of Life give eternal life to all those who rely on the blood of the Lamb.*
- 3. As to the sacrifice of the lamb, the decree was, 'Neither shall ye break a bone thereof,' signifying that when the Lamb of God was sacrificed on the cross, though they broke the legs of the two thieves to induce death, yet they brake not the bones of the Crucified One 'that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken (John 19:31-36).*
- 4. As to the eating the flesh of the sacrificial lamb, the divine word was, 'No uncircumcised person shall eat thereof, 'signifying that the blessings of the gospel are reserved for those who come into the fold of Israel, who join the Church, who carry their part of the burden in bearing off the kingdom; signifying also that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood, as he said, shall have eternal life and he will raise them up at the last day (John 6:54).*
- 5. As the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt because they believed not the word of the Lord delivered to them by Moses and Aaron, even so should the Firstborn of the Father, who brings life to all who believe in his holy name, destroy worldly people at the last day, destroy all those who are in the Egypt of darkness, whose hearts are hardened as were those of Pharaoh and his minions.*
- 6. On the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Israelites were commanded to hold holy convocations in which no work might be done except the preparation of their food. These were occasions for preaching and explaining and exhorting and testifying. We go to sacrament meetings to be built up in faith and in testimony. Ancient Israel attended holy convocations for the same purposes. Knowing that all things operate by faith, would it be amiss to draw the conclusion that it is as easy for us to look to Christ and his spilt blood for eternal salvation as it was for them of old to look to the blood of the sacrificed lamb, sprinkled on doorposts, to give temporal salvation, when the angel of death swept through the land of Egypt?*

"It was, of course, while Jesus and the Twelve were keeping the Feast of the Passover that our Lord instituted the ordinance of the sacrament, to serve essentially the same purposes served by the sacrifices of the preceding four millenniums." (The Promised Messiah. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978, 429-431).

5.4. Moses and the Children of Israel Leave

Following the last plague, the Pharaoh, in response to the cry in Egypt; "for there was not a house where there was not one dead"(Ex.12:30), "...called Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up and get you forth from among my people...and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said" (Exodus 12:31).

The Israelites did not leave Egypt without means.

Exodus 12:35-36

**35 ...borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment:
36 And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians. .**

Adam Clarke stated,

"God commanded the Israelites to 'ask' or 'demand' a certain recompense for their past services, and He inclined the hearts of the Egyptians to give liberally; and this, far from a matter of oppression, wrong, or even charity, was no more than a very partial recompense for the long and painful services which we may say six hundred thousand Israelites had rendered Egypt, during a considerable number of years." (Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible. Abridged by Ralph Earle. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1967, [Nineteenth printing, March 1991], 95).

5.5. Pharaoh's Army Follows

Apparently the loss of labor for their continued building projects proved to be too much, for in spite of the loss of their firstborn, Pharaoh and his servants respond to the departure of the Israelites.

Exodus 14:5

5 ...Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?

So in force, Pharaoh orders his armies to pursue the Israelites that they might by force bring them back.

When the children of Israel see Pharaoh and his army pursuing them, they complain to Moses.

Exodus 14:12

12 Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.

At the first sign of danger, the Israelites are ready to return to Egypt and be their slaves! In their defense, all they had known during their lives is to be a slave. Any hope of freedom, once dreamed of had been dashed by the reality of the lash. When death appears to be imminent, they are ready to surrender, rather than die.

Exodus 14:16, 21-22

**16 But lift up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.
21 And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.
22 And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.**

In this miracle, the Lord demonstrates his power for as Moses lifts his rod, the waters of the Red Sea part and the children of Israel pass through on dry ground!

Once the children of Israel are safely across to the other side, the waters receded.

Exodus 14:28

28 ...and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

One can only imagine the great relief and joy that must have accompanied the Israelites upon seeing their oppressors drowning in the depths of the Sea. Maybe it was possible, really possible, that they no longer had to serve as slaves to the Egyptians! Jewish tradition states that they now began singing hymns of praise.

Leaun Otten shares the following Jewish tradition,

"On the feast of the Passover each year they celebrate that tradition. It is called the tradition of Half Hallel's which is sung by the Jews in the last six days of the Passover. 'As the Israelites were safely through the Red Sea, they started to sing hymns of praise. God stopped them by asking, 'How can you sing hymns of praise when so many of my children are drowning in the depths of the sea?'" (Heavenly Father-Child Relationships From the Doctrine and Covenants" in 1973-1974 California Know Your Religion Speeches. BYU California Center, 74).

Sometimes we forget that God loves all his children, including the Egyptians. Our own relief from danger may overshadow the reality there are others who suffered far greater than ourselves. It is especially hard when those who suffer or lose their lives were just moments before our enemies. We are, however, all brothers and sisters, even in war, and must never allow our animosity to overcome our desire for peace. Why then we might ask, why did the Egyptians have to die?

Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

"The Lord may have had at least two reasons for taking Israel through the Red Sea. First, the action displayed his awesome and great protective power. He was the one warrior in this battle against one of the most formidable armies in the world. Therefore, this event was the prelude and proof of his demand henceforth for trust and obedience. Second, when that battle was over, the power of the Egyptian army was destroyed. The time necessary for rebuilding Egypt's power left Israel unmenaced until she became established in the promised land." (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 121).

5.6. People Murmur

The songs of praise and exultation had scarcely had time to die away when three days later in the desert wilds the Israelites found themselves without portable water and fearful again that they would not survive. But they did not ask the Lord, nor did they ask Moses to ask the Lord to help them in their need; they simply murmured against Moses.

Exodus 15:24

24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

Old Testament Institute Student Manual states,

"This verse contains the first of over twenty uses of the word murmur in its various forms in the record of Israel's wanderings....Murmuring is defined as "a half-suppressed or muttered complaint" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1979 ed., s.v., "murmur, 781). Instead of open expression of concern and criticism so a problem can be dealt with, it is behind-the-scenes grumbling. That problem is not unique to the Israelites...It is too often prevalent among Latter-day Saints today." (Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis-2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 121).

The plague of murmuring can serve as a cancer to social relations if we do not take concerted steps to eradicate this infectious disease from our own lives. In this instance, Moses turned to the Lord, and water was made available. With the blessing of water, the Lord gave them also a statute and ordinance of promise that if they would try to do right, and keep His commandments, none of the troubles which they had seen in Egypt would come upon them; He would not let diseases come upon them, but would be unto them "the Lord that healeth" (Exodus 15:25-26). This should have been reassuring and an impressive lesson for them. Unfortunately their faith is weak and, as we will discuss, they will continue to vacillate between obedience and rebellion under Moses' direction for many years to come.

6. Conclusion

It is amazing that despite the number of years that separate us from our Israelite forefathers, how similar we are to them. When our life gets difficult, do we not also believe that the Lord has abandoned us and that He no longer hears our prayers? Are there not times when we also look to the past and believe that our parents or others had things much easier than us. They had life easy, we complain, compared to the challenges we face. Sometimes we may even be unhappy with our daily living situation, but we do nothing to initiate change in order to better our lives. We might state that if opportunities were made available to us for change, we would take advantage of them. But sometimes opportunities are extended and we do not take advantage of them for a variety of reasons including fear of the unknown.

It is true that we have many conveniences the children of Israel did not have, but does that stop us from also "murmuring." Some of us, like some of them, seem to be miserable no matter what our circumstances may be. Others, almost in spite of how little they have, are able to be grateful for what they have and to make the best of their lives.

The scripture note, "your Father which is in heaven: ...he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:48). Let us therefore go forth with both hope and gratitude. Hope that tomorrow the sun will still shine and a new day will begin and gratitude for the blessings that have come into our lives, even those that we may not even be aware until later in our lives. In spite of all the children of Israel went through, they were greatly blessed by the Lord throughout their journey. This will also be true for us.

Alan Carr shares the following anonymous poem,

"I walked a mile with pleasure,
And she chattered all the way;
But left me none the wiser,
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she;
But oh the things I learned from her,
When sorrow walked with me."

