



LESSON 3

EXODUS – ESCAPE FROM EGYPT

The second book of the Pentateuch is called Exodus. “Exodus” means “going out.” This book tells how Jacob’s family grew into a nation in Egypt. It tells how the Egyptians became afraid of God’s people and made slaves of them. Exodus also reveals how God delivered His people from Egypt.

Genesis recorded the beginning of God’s chosen family through which the Saviour would come into the world. Exodus continues their history by showing how they actually grew from a family into a nation. Exodus deals with two themes:

1. Deliverance;
2. Law.

Moses is the chief character in the book of Exodus. He is also one of the greatest leaders who has ever lived. His lifetime of 120 years can be divided into three periods:

1. forty years as a prince in Egypt;
2. forty years in the wilderness of Midian as a shepherd;
3. forty years as the leader of God’s people.

Moses is the human author of the book of Exodus. The book itself claims Moses as its author (*Exodus 17:14; Exodus 24:4*). Jesus said Moses wrote Exodus (*Mark 1:44; John 7:19-23*). The Apostle Paul also gave Moses credit for writing Exodus (*Acts 26:22,23*). From ancient times the Jews have believed Moses wrote Exodus. It was written during the time Israel was in the desert. This was sometime between 1500 B.C. and 1400 B.C.

Genesis and Exodus are very closely connected. Genesis closes with Israel in Egypt. Exodus begins at that point and continues Israel’s history. Exodus covers a period of about 360 years. It begins with the death of Joseph and continues to the building of the tabernacle at Mt. Sinai.

Israel Escapes from Egypt (Chapters 1-18)

The people of Israel multiplied rapidly in Egypt. After a time, a new Pharaoh came to the throne. He did not know about Joseph and how he had saved Egypt from famine. He feared the people of Israel because of their growing numbers. Therefore, he made them slaves. The people of Israel were treated very badly. However, the more they were afflicted, the faster they grew. Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill the male babies, but they did not do it. Finally, in order to stop Israel from growing so rapidly, Pharaoh commanded that all male babies should be cast into the river.

Moses was born during this time. His parents feared God. They refused to kill their baby. They hid him for three months. Then they made a little ark (boat) of bulrushes and put Moses in the river near the place that Pharaoh’s daughter came to bathe. Miriam, Moses’ older sister, watched nearby.

Pharaoh's daughter found the baby. At her request Miriam called Jochebed, Moses' mother, to be his nurse. Therefore, Moses was brought up as a prince in the palace of Pharaoh. He was cared for by his own mother who must have told him about the true God and his people.

When Moses became a man, he gave up the pleasures of Egypt. He chose to be a slave with his own people instead of a prince (Please read *Hebrews 11:24-26*). One day he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. He defended the Israelite by killing the Egyptian. When this became known, Moses fled from Egypt. He went to the land of Midian where he met Reuel (also called Jethro), a priest of God. He married Reuel's daughter Zipporah and became the father of two sons.

After forty years the Lord spoke to Moses out of a burning bush. He told him that he must deliver His people from bondage. Moses made many excuses, but God answered them all. Aaron, Moses' elder brother, was sent to be Moses' spokesman. Moses asked Pharaoh to let Israel go, but the wicked ruler refused. God sent a series of ten plagues upon the land of Egypt to persuade Pharaoh to free His people. First, the water was turned to blood, but Pharaoh hardened his heart. Then the land was filled with frogs, but Pharaoh's heart was still hard. After this the dust of the land became lice. Still Pharaoh refused to let the people go. God then sent a plague of flies upon Egypt. Only the Egyptians were affected. The land of Goshen where Israel lived was not touched by the flies. This time Pharaoh said Israel could go. Then he changed his mind and refused. Next, God sent a murrain (sickness) upon all the cattle, sheep, camels, horses, and donkeys of Egypt so that they died. Pharaoh's heart was hardened once again. After this God sent boils (sores) upon the Egyptians. The Bible says God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He did this by giving him a command which Pharaoh refused to obey. Then God sent hail (ice) upon the land. All the crops were destroyed. Pharaoh confessed he had sinned. However, when God took away the hail, he hardened his heart again. After this God sent a plague of locusts. Again Pharaoh admitted he had sinned. Then he changed his mind and would not let Israel go. The next plague God sent was thick darkness over all of Egypt. This lasted for three days. Still Pharaoh would not let Israel go.

Finally, God sent the last plague. All the firstborn of both men and animals would die. Israel, however, was spared. They were told to kill a male lamb. It had to be one year old. It also had to be without spot or blemish. It was to be eaten the night God destroyed all the firstborn. The blood of the lamb was put on the doorposts of the houses where God's people lived. If the blood was seen on the door, God passed over them and the firstborn lived. If the blood was not applied, the firstborn died. This was the beginning of the Feast of the Passover. Jesus Christ is the passover sacrifice for us today (*1 Corinthians 5:7*). If His blood has been applied to us, we will be saved. If not, we will be lost forever.

That night Pharaoh let the people go. Israel marched to the Red Sea. Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army after Israel. The sea was in front. The Egyptian army was behind. Moses raised his rod and God parted the waters. Israel crossed over on dry land. When Pharaoh's army tried to follow, the waters closed over them. They were all drowned.

In the desert God provided for His people by giving them manna to eat. He gave them water from a rock. He also gave them victory over the Amalekites who attacked them.

The Giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai (Chapters 19-24)

The Israelites camped at Mt. Sinai where God had appeared to Moses in the burning bush. God called Moses up into the mountain. Moses was alone with God for forty days. God revealed His Law for the people of Israel to Moses during this time. The heart of this Law is the ten commandments. The first four commandments concern man's responsibility to God. The last six concern man's responsibility to his fellow man. These commandments are found in *Exodus 20:1-17*. The Law given at Sinai was God's Law for Israel. It continued until Christ died on the cross (*Colossians 2:14*). Now we live under the Law of Christ, which is also called "the New Testament" (*Hebrew 7:12; 8:6-13*).

The Building of the Tabernacle (chapters 25-40)

The tabernacle was a tent made up of two rooms. These rooms were known as the holy place and the most holy place. It was surrounded by an outer court. Here the priests offered up sacrifices to God on behalf of the people. The tabernacle was a tent which could be taken down and moved whenever Israel moved. It was built according to the pattern (plan) God gave to Moses (*Exodus 25:9, 40*).

As God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, so today He delivers us from slavery to sin. Moses was Israel's Lawgiver and Deliverer from physical bondage. Jesus Christ is our Lawgiver and Deliverer from spiritual bondage.