

**The Journey Back to Egypt (late 1447 BC)**

Exodus 4:18–31

**Moses Says Goodbye to Jethro**

18 Then Moses departed and returned to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, “Please, let me go, that I may return to my brethren who are in Egypt, and see if they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.”

**Yahweh’s Final Instructions (Moses delayed his departure?)**

19 Now the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.”

20 So Moses took his wife and his sons and mounted them on a donkey, and returned to the land of Egypt. Moses also took the staff of God in his hand.

21 The LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go.

22 “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Israel is My son, My firstborn.

23 “So I said to you, ‘Let My son go that he may serve Me’; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn.’”

**Zipporah Circumcises Her Son (Moses refused or was unable to do it himself?)**

24 Now it came about at the lodging place on the way that the LORD met him and sought to put him to death.

25 Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and threw it at Moses’ feet, and she said, “You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me.”

26 So He let him alone. At that time she said, “*You are a bridegroom of blood*”—because of the circumcision.

**Aaron Meets Moses at Mount Sinai**

27 Now the LORD said to Aaron, “Go to meet Moses in the wilderness.” So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him.

28 Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which He had sent him, and all the signs that He had commanded him *to do*.

**The Israelites Believe Moses and Aaron**

29 Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel;

30 and Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people.

31 So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.

**Moses and Aaron Confront Pharaoh (late 1447 BC)**

Exodus 5:1–6:9

**Moses and Aaron Go to Pharaoh**

5:1 And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.’”

2 But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go.”

3 Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God, otherwise He will fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.”

4 But the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get *back* to your labors!”

5 Again Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now many, and you would have them cease from their labors!”

### **Pharaoh Responds By Making the Israelites Work Even Harder**

6 So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters over the people and their foremen, saying,

7 “You are no longer to give the people straw to make brick as previously; let them go and gather straw for themselves.

8 “But the quota of bricks which they were making previously, you shall impose on them; you are not to reduce any of it. Because they are lazy, therefore they cry out, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’

9 “Let the labor be heavier on the men, and let them work at it so that they will pay no attention to false words.”

10 So the taskmasters of the people and their foremen went out and spoke to the people, saying, “Thus says Pharaoh, ‘I am not going to give you *any* straw.

11 ‘You go *and* get straw for yourselves wherever you can find *it*, but none of your labor will be reduced.’”

12 So the people scattered through all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw.

13 The taskmasters pressed them, saying, “Complete your work quota, *your* daily amount, just as when you had straw.”

14 Moreover, the foremen of the sons of Israel, whom Pharaoh’s taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, “Why have you not completed your required amount either yesterday or today in making brick as previously?”

15 Then the foremen of the sons of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, “Why do you deal this way with your servants?

16 “There is no straw given to your servants, yet they keep saying to us, ‘Make bricks!’ And behold, your servants are being beaten; but it is the fault of your *own* people.”

17 But he said, “You are lazy, *very* lazy; therefore you say, ‘Let us go *and* sacrifice to the LORD.’

18 “So go now *and* work; for you will be given no straw, yet you must deliver the quota of bricks.”

### **The Israelites Berate Moses**

19 The foremen of the sons of Israel saw that they were in trouble because they were told, “You must not reduce *your* daily amount of bricks.”

20 When they left Pharaoh’s presence, they met Moses and Aaron as they were waiting for them.

21 They said to them, “May the LORD look upon you and judge *you*, for you have made us odious in Pharaoh’s sight and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

### **Moses Complains to Yahweh**

22 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, “O Lord, why have You brought harm to this people? Why did You ever send me?

23 “Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done harm to this people, and You have not delivered Your people at all.”

6:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for under compulsion he will let them go, and under compulsion he will drive them out of his land.”

2 God spoke further to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD;

3 and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by* My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them.

4 “I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned.

5 “Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.

6 “Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.

7 ‘Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

8 ‘I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you *for* a possession; I am the LORD.’”

9 So Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of *their* despondency and cruel bondage.

### Israel’s First Rebellion (late 1447 BC)

Ezekiel 20:5–9

5 and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God,

6 on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands.

7 “I said to them, ‘Cast away, each of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.’

8 “But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

9 “But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they *lived*, in whose sight I made Myself known to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt.

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### Chronological Notes

- 1) The rebellion of Israel mentioned in Ezekiel 20:5–91 is presented here as part of the Exodus narrative. That this rebellion occurred in Egypt itself, prior to the crossing of the Red Sea, is seen in v. 8 where God was determined to “vent my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt” (Ezek 20:8).<sup>2</sup> In light of this, it seems likely that the plagues were not meant for Pharaoh and the Egyptians alone—indeed, there is no indication that Goshen was spared from the first three plagues. It is only in the fourth plague that a distinction was made between the Israelites and the Egyptians (Exod 8:22–23). This distinction, although not explicitly referenced in the following narrative (it’s missing in the sixth and eighth plagues), seems to have continued throughout the remaining plagues.

<sup>1</sup> Other references that mention Israel’s idolatry while in Egypt include: Leviticus 17:7; Ezekiel 23:3, 8, 19; Joshua 24:14.

<sup>2</sup> Keil & Delitzsch comment: “It is true that there is nothing expressly stated in the Pentateuch as to the refusal of the Israelites to obey the command of God, or their unwillingness to give up idolatry in Egypt; but it may be inferred from the statements contained in Ex. 6:9 and 12...” (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, “Ezekiel Daniel,” *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 154). See also Steven Tuell’s comments on Ezekiel 20:5–9 (Steven Tuell, “Ezekiel,” *UBCS*, 128).

## 2) The Pharaoh of the Exodus.<sup>3</sup>

- A) When Moses returned to Egypt, he and Aaron spoke to the new king, Amenhotep II. This powerful and militaristic monarch conducted a major campaign in Canaan in his third year (ca. 1450) and another in his seventh (ca. 1446). His seventh year coincides with the traditional date of the exodus, 1446, and one cannot help but wonder if the decimation of Pharaoh's army at the Sea of Reeds might not have followed this second campaign, and had such a demoralizing impact as to discourage further immediate adventurism, especially to the north.
- B) Our identification of Amenhotep II as the pharaoh of the exodus is supported by two other considerations. First, although most of the kings of the Eighteenth Dynasty made their principal residence at Thebes, far to the south of the Israelites in the Delta, Amenhotep was at home in Memphis and apparently reigned from there much of the time. This placed him in close proximity to the land of Goshen and made him readily accessible to Moses and Aaron. Second, the best understanding suggests that Amenhotep's power did not pass to his eldest son but rather to Thutmose IV, a younger son. This is at least implied in the so-called dream stela found at the base of the Great Sphinx near Memphis. This text, which records a dream in which Thutmose IV was promised that he would one day be king, suggests, as one historian says, that his reign came about "through an unforeseen turn of fate, such as the premature death of an elder brother." It is impossible to prove, but one cannot help but speculate as to whether this premature death was not caused by the judgment of Yahweh, who in the tenth plague struck dead all the firstborn of Egypt, who were unprotected by the blood of the Passover, "from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon" (Exod 12:29).

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<sup>3</sup> Sourced from Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, Second Edition, (Baker Publishing, 2008), 80.