

The Book of Exodus

Historical Setting

There is a Biblical way to identify the date of the Exodus accurately. In [1 Kings 6:1](#), at the inauguration of the Temple in 966 B.C., Solomon states that it has been 480 years since the Israelites left Egypt. This provides the ability to date Exodus's timing in Egyptian History accurately. The Exodus would have happened around 1446 B.C. The texts in Exodus show that Israel was in Egypt for 430 years. This gives us a general timeline for Israel's time in Egypt, which would have lasted from 1876 to 1446 B.C.

From about 1730 to 1446, there was much tumult and volatility in Egypt. Following the end of the 13th Dynasty, in which Joseph would have ruled as second in command over Egypt, you have what is called the Hyksos period, which lasted from about 1650 to 1550. These Hyksos rulers were a Semitic people who rebelled against the Egyptians and ruled over Egypt. Since the Israelites were also from the line of Shem, this period would have been a time of great prosperity and protection.

Eventually, however, the Egyptians rebelled and overthrew the Hyksos in the New Kingdom era in Egypt. This era began with Ahmose I, who was the first ruler of the 18th Dynasty. This is the Dynasty in power during the mid-1500s and on into the 1300s, and it was during this time that Egypt became the world's first superpower.

The next Pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty was Thutmose I. He is known for expanding Egypt's borders to their farthest reach and for his vast building projects. He is most likely the Pharaoh in the opening chapters of Exodus. His daughter, Hatshepsut, was likely the one who found Moses in the river. Hatshepsut is a very famous woman in Egyptian History. She married her step-brother, Thutmose II, who was heir to the throne. Shortly after, Thutmose II mysteriously dies, and Hatshepsut becomes the queen mother, ruling in the place of her young son Thutmose III. During this time, she eventually claimed the title of Pharaoh, brought excellent prosperity to Egypt, and began many building projects herself.

When Thutmose III, Moses' adopted brother, comes of age, he rules with his mother briefly until her death, which would have probably been around Moses' flight to Midian. Thutmose III is the most significant military Pharaoh, leading the

largest army in Egyptian History. He also enjoyed a relatively long reign of almost 54 years, which would have fully encompassed Moses' 40-year exile in Midian.

After Thutmose III died in 1450 BC, his second-born son Amenhotep II came to power while Moses was in the land of Midian. He is the likely Pharaoh of the Exodus. On top of large shoes to fill, Amenhotep II was assuredly threatened by the return of the last living son of Queen Hatshepsut. Another evidence that this was the Pharaoh of the Exodus was that the successor to his throne was his *second-born* son, Thutmose IV. This son is famous for the inscription carved on the Great Sphinx of Giza in which he wrote that in a dream, the gods ordained him to be Pharaoh, which scholars believe he did to legitimize his claim to the throne.

Now, imagine the political ramifications of the return of Moses to Egypt. Here comes this prince of Egypt from his exile in Midian. He is the brother of the most powerful Pharaoh of all time and the son of the greatest queen Egypt has ever seen. It is safe to assume that when Moses returns, the newly crowned Amenhotep II is fearful that Moses has returned to take the throne.

One last historical fact is the connection between Pharaoh and the seed of the Serpent of Genesis 3. It was in the 18th Dynasty that the royal headdress of the Pharaoh began to feature a snake. And in Isaiah 30 and 51, we see that Israel identified Egypt with the symbol of a snake. In the minds of the original audience of Moses, the defeat of Pharaoh in the Exodus would have been seen in the context of the seed of the woman crushing the head of the seed of the Serpent.

See how important it is to remember that the events of this book happened in History with real people. With some historical background, we can begin to see the motivations behind the actions of the pharaohs of the Exodus. Moreover, seeing how God orchestrates Egyptian History for His purposes is incredible, preserving and protecting his people for 300 years. Then, he raises an oppressive dynasty that is antisemitic in nature, having just overthrown the Hyksos. God then caused this Dynasty to become the world's first superpower with the most powerful Pharaohs, all to demonstrate His power and His might through the deliverance of His people from this Dynasty. God stacks the deck as high as possible to show He truly is sovereign and infinitely powerful.¹

¹ For further research, see: "Origins of the Hebrews: New Evidence of Israelites from Joseph to the Exodus" by Douglas Petrovich (Ph.D., M.A., Th.M., M.Div.)

Background and Introduction

The structure of Exodus is divided into three different parts. These sections are divided due to the location in which they take place.

1. Israel in Egypt (1:1-13:16)
2. Israel in the Wilderness (13:17-18:27)
3. Israel at Sinai (19:1-40:38)

The Hebrews traditionally call this book — *Shemot* — which translates to *Names*. The theological theme of this book fits its title, for it is in this book that we see THE NAME, the name of God, YHWH, revealed to His people. The central theological theme of Exodus is that **God reveals His Name to all the earth through the salvation of His people.**

This would have been a foundational lesson for the Israelites to learn and remember before entering the Promised Land. **In Exodus, God directly reveals who He is, how He acts, and what He wants from His people. Ultimately, Moses is writing Exodus to show the original readers that YHWH is a God worth serving with fear and faith.**

This is also a foundational lesson for the New Covenant people of God to learn and remember. Exodus is the foundation of the theology of the Bible. It takes the theological truths of Genesis and then packages them together in a way that sets the course for all theology and redemptive History. In Exodus, God's agenda for the world is expressly established. In Exodus, we see God's wrath and judgment against His enemies. It is in Exodus that we see God dwell *with* His people. In Exodus, we see God reveal His will through His inspired Law. In Exodus, we see God act with mercy and grace in forgiving the sins of His people. The foundations for these Redemptive Historical theologies are found in Exodus.

However, this book is not just relevant due to its impact on theology. It has an excellent effect on the devotional aspect of our relationship with God. **In the book of Exodus, we must have faith that the same God acting then on behalf of His people is the same God acting on behalf of His people now.**

I. Israel in Egypt (1:1-13:16)

General Overview

The main idea of this section is to show how **God delivers His people. He delivers from Egypt, and He delivers them to Himself. He saves them from their slavery to Pharaoh to make them His nation. And this deliverance demonstrated to Israel and the world that YHWH is the ONE TRUE GOD.**

1. God's Plan Continues (Exodus 1:1-7)

The Book of Numbers begins with a list of Israel's sons' names, picking up where Genesis left off. After this genealogy, Moses gives us this commentary,

Exodus 1:5–7: "And all the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt. Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the sons of Israel were **fruitful and increased and multiplied and became exceedingly mighty so that the land was filled with them.**"

This story picks up right where Genesis left off. Notice in verse 7 that God caused the people of Israel to be fruitful, to increase (multiply), and to fill the land. God has blessed His people in Egypt like He blessed Adam, Noah, and Abraham. Even with His people in exile, God has not forgotten His plan and promises to them. And here is a lesson that has rung true throughout redemptive History: **God's people grow in persecution. God's pruning leads to fruitfulness.**

2. God's People Persecuted (Exodus 1:8-22)

The story begins in verse 8,

Exodus 1:8–10: "And a new king arose over Egypt, **who did not know Joseph.** And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. "**Come, let us** deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it is in the event of war that they also join themselves to those who hate us and fight against us and go up from the land."

The statement in verse 8 that this new King did not know Joseph implies that he did not recognize the Israelites as allies. And historically, we can understand this sentiment.

Joseph was famous in the land and even had a canal named after him in Egypt (Bahr Yussef). And this new Pharaoh, likely from a New Egyptian Dynasty, did not have a relationship with the Israelites, as past Pharaohs had. Moreover, in verses 9

and 10, he recognizes that Israel has become great in number; they've filled the land. And this leads to the fear that they will revolt. In response to this supposed threat, the Pharaoh oppresses the people of Israel, making them work as slaves.

But God, being true to the promise He made to Abraham, to curse those who curse Abraham, oppresses Pharaoh in return by multiplying his fear - verse 12, Exodus 1:12: "**But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied** and the more they spread out so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel."

In verse 15, we see Pharaoh's policy go from slavery to mass infanticide, Exodus 1:15–16: "Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, **one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah**; and he said, "When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live."

Notice the contrast between the supposedly all-powerful Pharaoh, who goes unnamed, and the two lowly Hebrew midwives, whose names are documented for all of time. Pharaoh instructs them to kill any son that is born to a Hebrew. However, they did not serve Pharaoh but instead feared God, vs. 17,

Exodus 1:17: "**But the midwives feared God** and did not do as the king of Egypt had spoken to them, but let the boys live."

They recognized that God was supreme over Pharaoh and chose to serve Him instead of Pharaoh. And when Pharaoh hears of their refusal to carry out his order, he is furious, verse 18,

Exodus 1:18–19: "So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing and let the boys live?" Then the midwives said to Pharaoh, "**Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife can come** to them."

God was thwarting the command of the so-called divine King of Egypt by causing the Hebrew women to give birth before the Hebrew midwives arrived to disobey his satanic decree.

Also, see that the midwives go as far as declaring to Pharaoh that the Hebrew women are far superior to the Egyptian women. It's almost comical. Pharaoh's fear keeps getting worse and worse. He's fearful of the Hebrews growing too strong and causing a war. He tries to kill a generation of males at birth, but

instead, the Hebrew woman pops out babies so fast no one is there to catch them.

Sadly, as a result, Pharaoh's heart is bent on destroying the people of God, commanding that every Hebrew boy be cast into the Nile upon birth.

3. Raising a Deliverer (Exodus 2:1-4:31)

A. Delivered through the Waters (2:1-10)

In chapter 2, the camera shifts to a tiny house in Goshen, where we find what should be a happy scene: a Levite woman gives birth to a son in the midst of Pharaoh's edict. And when this baby's life comes into danger, we see her take action, 2:3-4,

Exodus 2:3-4: "But she could not hide him any longer. So she took for him **an ark** of papyrus reeds and covered it over with **tar and pitch**. Then she put the child into it and put it among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him."

She puts him in a basket to protect her son, which can also be translated as Ark. This allusion becomes even more apparent when she covers this "ark" with bitumen and pitch, which are coatings used to keep objects floating amid large bodies of water, exactly what Noah did with THE ARK. *Just as God preserved His people by delivering Noah in the Ark, so is He here preserving His people by delivering Moses in the basket.*

As we saw before, Pharaoh's plan to destroy the Israelites was thwarted by God's providence. In chapter 2, we see God thwart him once more as He uses Pharaoh's daughter to deliver the knockout punch - verse 5,

Exodus 2:5-6: "And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the Nile, with her young women walking alongside the Nile; and she saw the Ark among the reeds and sent her maidservant, and she took it to her. Then she opened it and saw the child. And behold, the boy was crying. And **she had pity on him** and said, "**This is one of the Hebrews' children.**"

God uses Pharaoh's daughter to preserve the man's life, who will one day do what Pharaoh does not want: lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Pharaoh wants to throw all the Hebrew boys into the water. Pharaoh's daughter does the opposite by bringing a Hebrew baby out of the water. Pharaoh can't control the birthing process of the Hebrew women, and he can't control the rebellious nature of his

daughter, who sees that the baby is a Hebrew child and then decides to adopt him. She even names him Moses Because she "drew him out of the water." (Ex 2:10)

And this is the message: Who has all the power? The "divine" King of Egypt or the One True God? YHWH does. He has all the power to orchestrate a deliverance through the strangest means to demonstrate in this opening chapter that He will have victory.

Christ Connection

What happens to Israel's deliverer will happen to Israel. He was saved through the death-dealing waters, and as we will see, the nation will also be saved through the waters. From the beginning of Moses' life, we are intended to see that he is a type of Christ. As He was raised from the grave, so will all His people be delivered from death.

B. A Failed Deliverance (2:11-15a)

The story then fast-forwards in time, bringing us to a pivotal moment in Moses' life as a prince of Egypt.

Exodus 2:11: "Now it happened in those days that Moses had grown up. **And he went out to his brothers and looked on their hard labors.** And he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his brothers."

Here, we find ourselves with a young Moses who sees the oppression of his people. Even though he was raised as an Egyptian in the house of Pharaoh, we see that Moses has compassion for the people of God. However, these good intentions of protecting God's people aren't carried out correctly as Moses murders an Egyptian.

But even in this act of protection, Moses hesitates to let the Egyptians see that he is acting on behalf of his Hebrew kinsmen, performing his act secretly and hiding the evidence. He is fearful to take on that role as their deliverer. Moreover, the people whom he "delivered" have no respect for him and declare sarcastically, "Who made you a prince over us" (Ex. 2:14).

From this, we see that Moses isn't quite ready to deliver God's people, and God's people aren't quite prepared to be led by Moses. He needs to go through a refining process, and in God's way of doing things, refinement happens best in an

exile into the desert. This is brought about when Moses' adopted brother, the Pharaoh, hears of the murder and seeks Moses' life as retribution, causing Moses to flee to the land of Midian.

C. The Deliverer Refined in the Wilderness (2:16-22)

And when Moses arrived in Midian, he came to a well like the forefathers before him. Immediately, he is presented with an opportunity to deliver the daughters of a Midianite priest, 2:17

Exodus 2:17: "Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but **Moses rose up and saved them** and gave water to their flock to drink."

The text states that he rose and **saved them** from their oppressors; he was their *savior*. This is the first time salvation is mentioned in the Bible and one of only two uses of the word in Exodus.

Immediately after this, we see a testimony of his saving act. Moses is introduced to the Midianite Priest, Jethro, who welcomes him into his family, vs 21

Exodus 2:21–22: "And Moses was willing to settle down with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses. Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, **"I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."**

Just like Isaac and Jacob, Moses finds a wife at a well. God is sovereignly ordaining the life of Moses to have harmony with the lives of the patriarchs. In His wisdom, God is raising and shaping a new leader for His people. This is further emphasized by the name Moses gives his son. He names him a Hebrew name, **Gershom**, demonstrating that he is not a citizen of Egypt but a **sojourner** like the rest of the Hebrews.

Christ Connection

As I already mentioned, there are significant links between the Messiah and Moses. Moses foretells that God will raise up a prophet like himself in Deuteronomy 18. And here in Exodus, we see that Moses is a savior of the oppressed. But he is merely a foreshadow. Moses saved a couple of women by a well from some bullies. Thousands of years later, Jesus met a woman at a well and saved her not from some dirty shepherds but from her dirty sins.

D. God Remembers (2:23-25)

During Moses' refining time in the Wilderness, his adopted brother, the Pharaoh, dies. Along with the death of Pharaoh, the spirit of the people of Israel begins to die as well as they cry out in agony, verse 23,

Exodus 2:23–25: "Now it happened in the course of those many days that the King of Egypt died. **And the sons of Israel sighed because of the slavery, and they cried out**; and their cry for help because of their slavery **rose up** to God. So **God heard** their groaning; and **God remembered** His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And **God saw** the sons of Israel, and **God knew them.**"

When the text says that God heard them, that He saw them, and that He remembered His covenant, it does not mean that God somehow forgot His people or was not paying attention. This language is similar to God remembering Noah and his family on the Ark., Which implies that they are at the forefront of God's mind, that He is filled with covenant love for His people, and that He is devoted to delivering them from their oppression. **He heard them, He remembered them, He saw them, and He knew them with His covenant love.**

A great hope and comfort comes from knowing that God sees and knows the sufferings of his people. In Revelation 2:9 Jesus tells the suffering and poor church at Smyrna,

Revelation 2:9: "**I know your tribulation** and your poverty (but you are rich)..."

As God's child, you can find comfort in knowing He sees you and knows what you are going through, just as He did with the Israelites.

E. God Calls Moses (3:1-22)

In Chapter 3, we see the camera focus again on Moses. While Moses is shepherding, the Good Shepherd, the angel of the Lord who is the pre-incarnate Christ, appears to Moses.

Exodus 3:2: "And **the angel of Yahweh appeared to him** in a blazing fire from the midst of the bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed."

Just as God called out to Abraham in Genesis 22, saying "Abraham, Abraham," God calls out to Moses, vs. 4

Exodus 3:4: "...so **God called to him** from the midst of the bush and said, **"Moses, Moses!"** And he said, "Here I am."

God continues in verse 5,

Exodus 3:5–8: "Then He said, "Do not come near here. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." He said also, "**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.**" Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. And Yahweh said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sufferings. **"So I have come down to deliver them from the hand of the Egyptians** and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite."

This covenant-keeping God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sees and knows the sufferings of his people. He decided that it was the time when He would come down and deliver them out of Egypt and into the Land that He promised to Abraham.

But Moses is still hesitant to return to Egypt, **questioning God by asking, "Who am I?" (Ex 3:11) But God answers him with that familiar refrain from Genesis vs. 12**

Exodus 3:12: "And He said, "**Certainly I will be with you,** and this shall be the sign to you that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God at this mountain."

This then leads the doubtful man, who asked, "Who am I" to ask God to reveal His name to Moses, vs 14,

Exodus 3:14–15: "And God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM**"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, '**I AM has sent me to you.**'" And God furthermore said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' **This is My name forever, and this is My memorial name from generation to generation.**"

As we saw in Genesis, a name is very important, defining a person's essence. God's name is no different. In telling Israel His name, God is revealing to them His essence. The name I AM, or YHWH as it is pronounced in Hebrew, reveals the transcendent nature of God. So often, we tend to describe God by the sum of His character traits. However, God describes Himself by His essence as God. He can not be reduced or divided into a list of attributes. In the end, he is in a category

that is supreme and transcendent above all other beings. This is why articulating what I AM means is so complex and challenging. If the Person of God could be fully definable by human language, He would not be a supreme being. He is a holistic entity, and all who He is seen in His character as God. This revelation also demonstrates God's relational nature. He gives Israel His name because He wants His people to know Him intimately.

F. God Instructs Moses (4:1-20)

After God reveals Himself to Moses and tells Him exactly how He plans on using Moses to deliver Israel from Pharaoh, Moses continues to bring up objections to God's plan. Moses states in a very complex and eloquent objection that he isn't the best choice to go before Pharaoh because he isn't eloquent and has difficulty forming effective speech.

In verse 11, God responds to this pitiful excuse with a forceful rebuke,

Exodus 4:11–12: "And Yahweh said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, Yahweh?" So now, go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth and will instruct you what you shall speak."

The obvious answer to this rhetorical question is that YHWH is speaking to Moses now. He promises *again* that He will be with Moses and teach Moses what to say. His message: TRUST ME!

However, in verse 13, Moses still asks God to send someone else, which causes God's anger to be kindled against this stubborn shepherd. As we shall see, Moses' fear of man, unbelief of God's promises, and resistance to God's instruction will mark the people of Israel throughout the rest of this book and for generations.

However, even though God's anger is kindled against Moses, He does not give up on him and move on. Instead, he makes Moses a mediator between God and Aaron, the brother of Moses, who will speak to Pharaoh and the people of Israel on Moses' behalf.

G. An Important Reminder (4:21-31)

Chapter 4 ends with God informing Moses that Pharaoh will not listen but instead put up a fight,

Exodus 4:21–23: "And Yahweh said to Moses, "When you go to return to Egypt, see to it that all the miraculous wonders which I have put in your hand, that you do them before Pharaoh; **but as for Me, I will harden his heart with strength so that he will not let the people go.**" Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says Yahweh, "**Israel is My son, My firstborn.**" 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.**"

Notice that God tells Moses beforehand that He will harden Pharaoh's heart. This is a critical discussion, and it is worth our time evaluating what God is doing here with Pharaoh. However, we will not do so until we get to chapter 7. God also instructs Moses and Aaron to call Israel God's firstborn son and commands that Pharaoh let God's firstborn son go and serve Him. It is essential to know that the word for serve implies serving a Master as a slave. God is saying, Pharaoh, let my firstborn go from being your slaves **to being my slaves.** And if Pharaoh resists, the punishment will be just. If Pharaoh refuses to release God's firstborn, God will take Pharaoh's firstborn.

Upon returning to Egypt, Moses is reunited with Aaron, and after telling his brother of all that God had said, they go and tell the people of Israel. In verse 31, we see their response,

Exodus 4:31: "**So the people believed, and** they heard that Yahweh cared about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction. So they bowed low and worshiped."

Like Abraham before them, we see faith and worship here from God's people.

4. God Battles Pharaoh and the Egyptian Pantheon (Exodus 5:1-12:30)

A. God's Command and Pharaoh's Challenge (5:1-23)

After meeting with the people of Israel, Moses and Aaron first met with Pharaoh. They declare to Pharaoh in verse 1,

Exodus 5:1–2: "And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, "Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" But Pharaoh said, "**Who is Yahweh that I should listen to His voice to let Israel go? I do not know Yahweh,** and also, I will not let Israel go."

Notice Pharaoh's response of utter disrespect. Pharaoh is here challenging YHWH. He says he does not know Him, meaning He does not recognize YHWH as God. In response, Pharaoh made his own divine command. He wants to demonstrate that

he has power over Israel, and they are *his* slaves. He makes his point by forcing them to make bricks without the straw provided. Now, they must bend down or kneel to pick up the straw to make bricks as a demonstration.

After this occurs, the people grumble against Moses. In their eyes, Moses and God were tools in the hands of their master Pharaoh. And this grumbling causes Moses to experience doubt as well, verse 22,

Exodus 5:22–23: "Then Moses returned to Yahweh and said, "O Lord, why have You brought harm to this people? **Why did You ever send me?** "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.**"

In this, we see that despite the revelation of His name and the signs and wonders He performed through Pharaoh, Israel's faith was fickle. Even Moses himself doubted and forgot the words of God.

B. The Lord's Assurance of Deliverance (6:1-30)

In response to this complaining and this doubt, we find a patient God, chapter 6:2

Exodus 6:2–5: "God spoke further to Moses and said to him, "**I am Yahweh; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Yahweh, I was not known to them.**" And I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, where they sojourned. "**Furthermore, I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel** because the Egyptians are holding them in slavery, and **I have remembered My covenant.**"

See here the long-suffering and love of God for His people. Even when they doubt Him and do not trust Him, He continues to reveal Himself to them and assure them that He will carry out His plan. He again declares to Moses that He is YHWH and has waited until this time to make Himself truly known to His people. He revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He had covenant relationships with them, but what He plans to do now with His people will show Himself to them on a far greater level, which is what we see in verses 6-7

Exodus 6:6–8: "Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the hard labors of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their slavery. **I will also redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. **Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am Yahweh your God,** who brought you out from under the hard labors of the Egyptians. 'And I will bring you to

the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am Yahweh."

Listen to these words of God: "I will redeem you...I will take you for My people...I will be your God...You shall know that I am YHWH." And here we find the foundation of redemption. God is redeeming His people from slavery to Pharaoh to be His, to make them His people, to be their God...and He will carry out this redemption so that they will know!

C. The Introduction to the Plagues (7:1-13)

At the beginning of chapter 7, we see again how God declares to Moses that He will harden Pharaoh's heart. But what does that mean? In chapter 3:19, God revealed to Moses that Pharaoh would not let Israel go "unless compelled by a mighty hand." What this shows us is that Pharaoh already desires in his own heart to keep the Israelites from leaving. At its root, Pharaoh's resistance results from his sinful desires.

That said, we see God declaring that he will harden Pharaoh's already resistant heart. This means that God will play a role in preventing Pharaoh's heart from changing under the pressure of God's wrath. And in 7:3-5 we see God's purpose in doing this,

Exodus 7:3–5: "**But I will harden Pharaoh's heart with stiffness that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.**" But Pharaoh will not listen to you. And I will set My hand upon Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people, the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. "**Then the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh** when I stretch out My hand against Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."

If Pharaoh broke after the first plague, God would only have shown a small amount of his power and signs and wonders, and Egypt and all the nations around them would not have known He was YHWH. God caused Pharaoh's attitude to intensify so that He would glorify and magnify His name and demonstrate His power against the Egyptians and *for* His people.

To sum it up, God actively affected Pharaoh's heart to accomplish His will for His glory. However, Pharaoh's heart was already bent in this direction alone and is therefore guilty for his actions.

Background to the Plagues

Now, before we get to the plagues, some background is needed. At that time, each nation was represented by its gods. When a nation attacked another nation, it was believed that their respective gods were also battling. If your nation won, your gods were the reason for your victory. If you lost, your gods lost, and could even be considered dead.

The ten plagues are not random acts of God's judgment. They are designed to symbolize God defeating the false gods of the Egyptian pantheon. One must not think that there was some supernatural battle in the spiritual realm between God and the gods of Egypt. The purpose was to show Egypt, Israel, and the world that the gods of the greatest nation of the world were nothing. They were dead false idols, and YHWH was the only real true God. This is stated explicitly by God before the 10th plague in

Exodus 12:12:"And I will go through the land of Egypt on that night and strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; **and against all the gods of Egypt** I will execute judgments—I am Yahweh."

There is another exciting background feature of these ten plagues. In Genesis 1, God demonstrated His awesome power by speaking ten separate times to create the world, and God showed His awesome power here when He used what He made ten different times to destroy Egypt.

Lastly, we need to know that there is an order to the ten plagues. The plagues are divided into groups of 3, moving from lesser severity and impact to greater, like so: 1-3; 4-6; 7-9; 10.

Plague #1: Water to Blood- 7:14-25

In verse 17, we see God send the first plague,

Exodus 7:17–18:"Thus says Yahweh, "**By this you shall know that I am Yahweh:** behold, I am about to strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and **it will be turned to blood.**" And the fish that are in the Nile will die, and the Nile will become foul, and the Egyptians will be weary of drinking water from the Nile."

The first plague was an attack against the god of the Nile, Hapi. The Nile was the lifeblood of the economy and agriculture of Egypt. This impacted all the major cities where most of Egypt lived on the Nile. So, by turning the Nile into blood, God symbolized that Hapi was dead.

This plague was also very inconvenient, requiring people to dig wells to drink fresh water. It also killed a major food source: fish. Pharaoh tries to demonstrate that he still has divine power by using magicians to recreate God's plague, and this is slightly comical because it requires that the magicians take good drinking water and change it into blood, making it undrinkable.

Plague #2: Frog Infestation (8:1-15)

The second plague was an attack against Heqt, the goddess of childbirth and midwives. A frog symbolized her. Let's look at verse 1,

Exodus 8:2-3: "Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Come to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says Yahweh, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. "But if you refuse to let them go, behold, **I will smite your whole territory with frogs**. "And **the Nile will swarm with frogs**, and they will go up and come into your house and into your bedroom and on your bed and into the houses of your servants and on your people and into your ovens and into your kneading bowls."

By multiplying the frogs in the land, they became a nuisance. This is very ironic as the people of Egypt became irritated with the over-multiplication of their symbol of fertility.

Even more comical is that Pharaoh instructs his magicians to repeat this plague, causing frogs to multiply again in the land, making the situation worse.

Notice that the frogs were caused to swarm. This is the same language used in Genesis 1 describing the creation of the creatures of the sea. With each of these plagues, God's work at creation is upending, demonstrating He alone has the power and authority of the world He had made.

Plague #3: Gnats (8:16-19)

The third plague was an attack against Geb, the god who controlled the dust of the earth. Let's start in verse 16,

Exodus 8:16-17: "Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become gnats through all the land of Egypt.'" And they did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his staff and struck the dust of the earth, and **there were gnats**

on man and beast. All the dust of the earth became gnats through all the land of Egypt."

Geb lost his control because the dust was turned to gnats, and they were everywhere. This, again, is not a life-threatening plague, but it isn't very pleasant. And when Pharaoh's magicians were unable to reenact this plague, they warned Pharaoh that this had just been the fingertip of God's wrath,

Exodus 8:19: "And the magicians said to Pharaoh, **"This is the finger of God."** But Pharaoh's heart was hardened with strength, and he did not listen to them, **as Yahweh had spoken."**

Plague #4: Flies (8:20-32)

With the fourth plague, we advance to the next level. Look at verse 20,

Exodus 8:20–21: "For if you do not let My people go, behold, **I will send swarms of flies on you and on your servants and on your people and into your houses**; and the houses of the Egyptians will be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand."

This was an attack on Khepri, represented by the scarab fly. The scarab fly was not your ordinary fly. It had pincers that could grab onto chunks of skin. This plague is not lethal, but it is harmful.

Another distinction of this next level of plagues is that this plague only affected the land of the Egyptians. God tells Pharaoh that the land of the Israelites will be spared from these plagues, vs. 22,

Exodus 8:22: "But on that day I will make a distinction for the land of Goshen, where My people are living, so that no swarms of flies will be there, **that you may know that I, Yahweh, am in the midst of the land."**

This act was meant to show who the real God of Egypt was. God was in the midst of Pharaoh's land, an invading force that Pharaoh could not combat.

Plague #5: Pestilence on Cattle (9:1-7)

The fifth plague is against Hathor, the god of cows. Verse 3

Exodus 9:3–4: "Behold, **the hand of Yahweh** will come with a very heavy pestilence on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks. "But **Yahweh will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt**, so that nothing will die of all that belongs to the sons of Israel."

This was a very damaging plague that crippled a large portion of Egypt's food production and economy. The Egyptians could not eat fish because of the bloody Nile. And now they can not eat beef. However, this is not entirely lethal.

Plague #6: Boils (9:8-12)

The sixth plague is an attack against Isis, the goddess of medicine. We see it starting in verse 8,

Exodus 9:8–9: "Then Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, "Take for yourselves handfuls of soot from a kiln, and let Moses toss it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh. "And it will become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and it will become boils **breaking out with sores on man and beast through all the land of Egypt.**"

The Egyptians are covered in boils, and Isis cannot heal them. Notice again that this plague only affected Egypt. Lastly, even Pharaoh's magicians could not stand because of God's power, leaving them unable to even attempt a counter sign.

Plague #7: Hail with Fire (9:13-35)

The seventh plague begins the next level of plagues. God reiterates his message to Pharaoh in verse 13,

Exodus 9:13–16: "And Yahweh said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and you shall say to him, 'Thus says Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. "**For this time I will send all My plagues against your heart and amongst your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth.**" For if by now I had sent forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been wiped out from the earth. "But, indeed, **for this reason I have caused you to stand, in order to show you My power and in order to recount My name through all the earth.**"

Here, we again see that God is glorified in His people's deliverance and judgment against His enemies. As theologian James Hamilton puts it, God is glorified in salvation through judgment.

See also how terrifying it is to be an enemy of God. He alone is to be worshipped with awe and reverence. There is no room for exalting oneself, only for humility.

The 7th plague begins in verse 18,

Exodus 9:23-26: "So Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and **Yahweh gave forth thunder and hail, and the fire went down to the earth. And Yahweh rained down hail on the land of Egypt.** So there was hail, and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail struck all that was in the field through all the land of Egypt, from man to beast; the hail also struck every plant of the field and shattered every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the sons of Israel were, there was no hail."

This plague is attacking the god who controls the skies, Nut. God is showing that Nut has no control by sending massive hail to all the land of Egypt *except* Goshen. In this plague, God is also reversing the order of creation. Heavy hail and fire *rained down* like the rain in the flood of Noah. The hail struck man and beast, plant and tree. The plagues are no longer just annoying or harmful. This plague is deadly.

But in verse 20, we also see the mercy of God upon those Egyptians who hear His word and believe,

Exodus 9:20: "The one among the servants of Pharaoh **who feared the word of Yahweh** made his servants and his livestock flee into the houses;" Now, even some of the Egyptians see that their gods and Pharaoh are powerless and that what YHWH says, He will do. They believe Him and act upon His word.

Plague #8: Locusts (10:1-20)

The eighth plague is an attack against the god Seth, who controls chaos and prevents famine. And in verse 3,

Exodus 10:3–5: "Then Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, **'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?** Let My people go, that they may serve Me. 'For if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory. 'And they shall cover the surface of the land so that no one will be able to see the land. **They will also eat the rest of what has escaped—what remains for you from the hail—and eat every tree which sprouts for you out of the field.**"

God sent locusts to eat up all that was left by the hail. This was a devastating plague, for after the locust came, there was no food left for the Egyptians to eat, finally reversing the blessing He had shown them through Joseph.

Again, the people of Egypt begin to get the message. They plead for Pharaoh to repent in verse 7,

Exodus 10:7: "And Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve Yahweh their God. **Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?"**

But Pharaoh refuses to listen due to his hardened heart.

Plague #9: Darkness (10:21-29)

In the Egyptian pantheon, the sun god, Ra, was the most worshipped god other than Pharaoh himself. And in the 9th plague, God demonstrates that Ra is a false god with no power,

Exodus 10:21-23: "Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, **even a darkness which may be felt.**" So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt **for three days.** They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, **but all the sons of Israel had light in their places of habitation."**

This darkness was so dark that it could be felt. The darkness was present in every part of Egypt except Goshen, where the Israelites lived. This was the most visible example of God's love for His people and wrath against His enemies. All of Egypt would have known for those three days that the only God was YHWH, and He was the God of the Israelites. And yet, at the close of the 3rd set of plagues, Pharaoh still did not let the Israelites go. Notice, lastly, that the darkness endured for three days.

Plague #10: Death of Firstborn (11:1-12:30)

A. Before Pharaoh (11:1-10)

This tenth plague moves to the final level of God's judgment. This plague isn't just lethal. It is nation-destroying. God raised Egypt to be the most powerful nation in the world and to bring them down in one night with this final plague, - verse 4,

Exodus 11:4-7: "So Moses said, "Thus says Yahweh, 'About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, and **all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die**, from the firstborn of the Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the servant-girl who is behind the millstones; and all the firstborn of the cattle. 'Moreover, there shall be **a great cry in all the land of**

Egypt, such as there has not been before and such as shall never be again. **'But for any of the sons of Israel a dog will not even bark**, whether against man or beast, **that you may know how Yahweh makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.**'"

It is important to remember that, in the Egyptian pantheon, Pharaoh was considered the ultimate god of the Egyptians. He is the one who was supposed to have the most power and the most authority. In the beginning, God warned Pharaoh that if he did not let God's firstborn, Israel, go, He would kill Pharaoh's firstborn, and here we see God fulfill this promise (Exodus 4:23).

Also, notice that God will not use an element of creation to carry out this plague. He will perform it Himself. God declares that when He performs this plague, there will be wailing and crying throughout Egypt, such as never been heard before. And yet, not even a dog will bark in the land of Goshen where the Israelites live, signifying complete salvation. Remember that it was once Israel who was crying out in pain due to the enslavement of Pharaoh. That cry will pale compared to the cry that God will cause with the final plague.

B. The Passover (12:1-30)

The Tenth plague is not just the finale of God's judgment on Pharaoh and Egypt. It also marks the beginning of God's deliverance of His people from Egypt. This day was to mark the beginning of the first month of Israel's year as if the nation was experiencing its birth as it was delivered from Egypt. But what were they to do on this day? 12:3,

Exodus 12:3–7: "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. 'Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to apportion the lamb. **'Your lamb shall be a male, without blemish, a year old**; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 'And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. 'Moreover, **they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses** in which they eat it."

So they take a lamb or goat without blemish, break none of its bones (Ex 12:46), and put its blood on the wood of the doorposts in the house. But why do this? Vs. 12,

Exodus 12:12–13: "'And I will go through the land of Egypt on that night and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and **against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am Yahweh.** 'And **the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and I will see the blood, and I will pass over you,** and there shall be no plague among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt."

The blood of the lamb was to be a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the Israelite people, meaning that the lamb died in their place, making them holy before God. The blood demonstrated their holiness before God, which excused that household from the plague to be performed against the Egyptians. See in this that even though the Israelites were God's chosen people, they were marked by sin, just like the Egyptians. Moreover, notice that they, like their forefather Abraham, were called to exercise faith by performing a sacrifice based on the command and promise of God.

After Moses instructs the Israelites, the text says that the entire nation did just that, vs. 27,

Exodus 12:27–30: "that you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to Yahweh who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians but delivered our homes.'" **And the people bowed low and worshiped. Then the sons of Israel went and did so; just as Yahweh had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.** Now it happened at midnight that Yahweh struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle. Then Pharaoh arose in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians, and **there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was no home where there was not someone dead."**

What a contrast. Worship and silent awe with those who experienced grace, weeping, and wailing with those who experienced judgment.

Christ Connection

The connection to Christ and the Passover is vivid. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul calls Christ **"our Passover Lamb."** As John the Baptist declared in John 1, He is **"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."** Like the unblemished lambs

of Passover, not one of His bones was broken, as John records in John 19. And as He was sacrificed on the cross, His blood was shed so that we might be saved from the just judgment of God for our sins, being redeemed, as Peter says, 1 Peter 1:19, **"with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."**

In Egypt, the blood of the Passover lamb stained the door's wood so that the firstborn might live. On Calvary, the blood of the Passover Lamb, the Firstborn of Creation, stained the wood of the cross He hung on so that we might live. **God provided what God required: a substitute sacrifice to die for His people. His name is Jesus, the Firstborn Son of God, our Passover Lamb.**

5. The Exodus (Exodus 12:31-13:16)

A. Physical Move and Fulfillment of Prophecy (12:31-42)

Remember that back in Genesis (Gen 15:13; 46:4; 50:25) that God promised Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph that He would deliver Israel out of Egypt after some 400 years. Well, now the time had come. Four hundred thirty years had passed, and after three days of darkness, God's people were delivered after the shedding of the blood of the Lamb.

Exodus 12:31–33: "Then he called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, **"Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel; and go, serve Yahweh,** as you have spoken. "Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have spoken, and go, and bless me also." And the Egyptians strongly pressed the people to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, **"We will all be dead."**

The people were eager to see Israel leave, and gave them much bounty and fine possessions, fulfilling the promise God made to Moses in Exodus 3:22. And even some of them left Egypt with the Israelites, vs. 37,

Exodus 12:37–38: "And the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about **six hundred thousand men** on foot, aside from the little ones. **A foreign multitude also went up with them,** along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock."

B. Remembering the Deliverance (12:43-13:16)

The section ends with God commanding that the Passover is to be observed by His people alone. He declares that no foreigner should eat of it *unless* they become circumcised. Specifically, God mentions the slave who wishes to partake of the

Passover. This was instituted to remind the Israelites that they were slaves before, and if God had not purchased them, there would be no Passover to celebrate. Therefore, the Israelites should circumcise the foreign slaves and sojourners (immigrants) who desired to worship God so that they could celebrate Passover as well.

One last thing to note was that this celebration was a moment for parental instruction, vs. 8,

Exodus 13:8–9, 14: “And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ “And it will be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of Yahweh may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand Yahweh brought you out of Egypt...And it will be **when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ then you shall say to him, ‘With a strong hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.’**”

And this instruction was given so that for generation after generation, Israel was to celebrate and remember the work of their God, YHWH, that He performed in delivering them out of Egypt by His strong hand.