

Exodus 6

This chapter records the dialogue between Moses and Jehovah God after Moses' initial rejection by Pharaoh. God had told Moses in 3:18 that the elders would listen to Moses. He had also promised Moses that after having struck Pharaoh (3:20), He will grant grace for Israel in the eyes of the Egyptians so they will leave Egypt with arm loads of stuff (3:21-22).

Initially, the reception with the Israelites and their elders was positive (4:27-31). But then Moses was rejected by Pharaoh (5:2, 4-5) who made the oppression even worse for Israel (5:6-9). This motivated the elders and foremen to respond harshly to Moses and Aaron (5:21) so that Moses returned to Jehovah God claiming that God had made things worse and He had not delivered Israel. In this chapter, God does not change anything from His initial command. He repeats Himself to Moses to assure him that nothing changes just because Pharaoh refused to listen. The chapter ends with a genealogy of Moses and Aaron's family, reminiscent of Genesis.

TRANSLATION - 6:1-8:

1 And Jehovah said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh because by a strong hand he will send them out and by a strong hand he will drive them from the land."

2 And God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I [am] Jehovah. **3** And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob by 'El Shaddai' and by the name 'Jehovah' I was not made known to them. **4** And also I established My covenant with them, to give to them the land of Canaan, the land of their travelings in which they traveled in it. **5** And also I Myself have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel which the Egyptians are enslaving them and I will remember My covenant. **6** Therefore, say to the sons of Israel, 'I [am] Jehovah and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from their enslavement and I will redeem you by a stretched out arm and by great judgments. **7** And I will take you to Myself for a people and I will be for you for God, and you all will know that I [am] Jehovah your God, the one bringing you out from under the burdens of Egypt. **8** And I will bring you to the land which I raised My hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you all as a possession. I [am] Jehovah.'"

HEBREW WORDS:

"Strong" (ver. 1) was used earlier at 3:19. "To send out" was used earlier at 2:5 and frequently in chapter 3: 3:10, 12-15, 20; as well as chapter 4: 4:4, 13, 21, 23, 28. "To drive out," used first in the Bible at Genesis 3:24, was used earlier at 2:17. On the personal name of the God of Israel, Jehovah, see comments at 3:15. "To appear" or "to see" (ver. 3) was first seen at 1:16. "To know" was seen first at 1:8. "Covenant" (ver. 4) was used first in Exodus at 2:24. The word "travelings" is a participle (in Hebrew; used only here in Exodus, out of 11 times), of the same word as "to travel" in the same verse (three times in Exodus, out of 82 times). "Groaning" (ver. 5) was used at 2:24. "To enslave" is a participle (in Hebrew) of the verb "to serve," but it is in a Hebrew tense (*hiphil*), which is causative: "to make slaves." The verb was first used at 1:13-14. "To remember" was first used at 2:24.

"Burdens" (ver. 6) was used at 1:11. "To deliver" was used earlier at 2:19. "To redeem" was used only at Genesis 48:16 earlier; it is used in Exodus only at 6:6; 15:13. It is used 104 times in the OT, especially in Leviticus 25 and 27 and Ruth. This word for "arm" was used earlier at Genesis 49:24 and will only be used in Exodus at 6:6; 15:16. It is used 91 times. The adjective "stretched out" is used only here in Exodus; it is used 216 times. The noun "judgment" is used here, 7:4, and 12:12 in Exodus, out of 204 times.

"To raise the hand" (ver. 8) is an idiom in Hebrew to denote swearing an oath. "Possession" is used only here in Exodus, out of 9 uses.

HEBREW GRAMMAR:

“To raise My hand” (ver. 8) is a literal translation. It is an idiom to refer to swearing an oath.

REFERENCES AND ALLUSIONS TO GENESIS:

God referred to Himself as “El Shaddai,” or “God Almighty” or others called Him this designation in several passages from Genesis: 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25. It’s a name used especially in the book of Job (31 times). For further references to the “covenant” in Genesis, see comments at Exodus 2:23-25. The promise of the land, made to Abraham specifically in Genesis 15:7, 18-21 was reiterated many times through the book of Genesis.

God swore an oath to Abraham in Genesis 22:16-18 that He would make Abraham’s family very numerous. While the verb “to swear” was not used in chapter 15 relative to the land promise, God does tell Isaac that He “swore” to his father Abraham that He would give their family the land of Canaan (Gen. 26:2-3). On his deathbed, Joseph referred to the “oath” which God had “sworn” to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give them the land (Gen. 50:24).

COMMENTARY:

First, Jehovah repeats what He had said at 3:19. Pharaoh will not allow Israel to leave except under force. Yet, not only will Pharaoh allow Israel to leave, but the verbs Jehovah uses show how much Pharaoh will be thankful to be rid of Israel. He will “send them out” and he will “drive them” from the land.

In verse 2, Jehovah identifies Himself as the “I am Who I am:” “I am Jehovah.” This phrase is found four times in this chapter: 6:2, 6-8, 29. It is found a total of 16 times in the book of Exodus (twice in Genesis: 15:7; 28:13), 49 times in Leviticus (as the basis of God’s call for Israel to be “holy”), six times in Numbers, and twice in Deuteronomy. Outside of the Law of Moses, it is found 90 times (14 times in Isaiah, 67 times in Ezekiel, reflecting his emphasis on Israel’s need to be “holy” as the Law had required).

Beginning with verse 3, note how many verbs have God (or Jehovah) as the *subject* of the verb. In this way, Jehovah God emphasizes what He will do for Israel. In verse 3, Jehovah notes that He had appeared to the forefathers as “El Shaddai,” or “God Almighty.” He also states that the forefathers did not know Him by the name “Jehovah.” This statement has motivated many scholars to believe the Torah, and Genesis specifically, must be divided into multiple documents, at least two: the “Eloistic” document, otherwise known as the “E” source in which God was known as “God” (*Elohim*) and similar names (such as “God Most High;” see Genesis 14:19, 20-22); and the “Jehovistic” document, otherwise known as the “J” source in which God is known as “Jehovah.” See the introduction for a discussion of the so-called “Documentary Hypothesis.” This statement by Jehovah God does not require such elaborate mental gymnastics to make sense of His statement.

In fact, “Jehovah” is used 165 times in the book of Genesis, even in the mouths of the patriarchs. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew God as “Jehovah” according to Genesis 15:2; 18:1; 25:21; 28:16. A better interpretation of God’s statement is that He *revealed* Himself to the patriarchs through His powerful nature (“El Shaddai,” or “Almighty”), but with the exodus, Jehovah God will begin a new aspect of His connection with Israel, through a *relational* name, that of “Jehovah,” the “One Who will be will be.” Now through the exodus, God will begin a relationship with Israel which He did not have with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In fact, once Jesus comes to earth, God will have a relationship with mankind through Jesus which He did not have with Israel.

Beginning in verse 4, we note the verbs which show God’s relationship with Israel:

1) God established His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (ver. 4), to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they had traveled temporarily. See comments at 2:23-25 for further comments on God’s covenant with the patriarchs.

2) God heard Israel’s groaning in which the Egyptians were enslaving them (ver. 5). Again, see comments on 2:23-25 and 3:7-9.

3) God will remember that covenant (ver. 5). When the text says “God remembers,” it does not mean to say God had forgotten. The Bible intends to say that God is now going to do something to fulfill His plan respecting the object of His “remembering.”

4) So Jehovah repeats His command to Moses which He had given him in chapters 3 & 4: “I am Jehovah” (6:6; see 3:13-14). “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.” See 3:17. The phrase Jehovah “who brought you out” is found further at 6:7; 16:6; 20:2; 32:4.

5) “I will deliver you from their enslavement.” See 3:8. Moses had used this verb at 5:23 but God still intended to deliver Israel.

6) “I will redeem you by a stretched out arm and by great judgments.” Jacob had identified the “angel” of God as the One who had redeemed him (Gen. 48:16). God intended also to “redeem” Israel from the slavery in Egypt. The idea of “redemption” comes from the law courts, as illustrated best in the book of Ruth. That is, God would do what was necessary to work out the freedom and protection of Israel. The “judgments” were called “wonders” earlier (3:20), but now we see that they have a punitive aspect as well. Consequently, God is referring to the plagues (7:14-12:51) as well as perhaps the defeat of Pharaoh’s army (14:26-28).

7) “I will take you to Myself for a people” (ver. 7). God had told Moses that Israel was His “son, His firstborn” (4:22). They were to be His people. They were not, in fact, Pharaoh’s people to do with what he desired! The verb “to take” can be used in the sense of “marriage;” see, for example Genesis 12:19; 24:4, 7; 27:46; 28:1, 2, 6. Even in Exodus, 2:1 says Moses’ father “took” a daughter of Levi, in the sense that he married her. Subsequently, some see in this expression by God - “I will take you to Myself” - as marriage contractual language. The later prophets will use marriage terminology to depict God’s relationship with Israel. See below under “Later Jewish Writers.”

8) “I will be for you for God, and you all will know that I [am] Jehovah your God, the One bringing you out from under the burdens of Egypt” (see verse 6). Jacob had promised that if God returned him to his parents, his family, then God would be “his God” (Gen. 28:20-21). Here God expresses His desire to be Israel’s God, in contrast with the pantheon of idols in Egypt. And they will know that He is Jehovah their God. Note here the use of the verb “to know.”

9) “I will bring you to the land which I raised My hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you all as a possession. I [am] Jehovah.” God promises again that He will bring Israel to the land of Canaan, which He had promised to Abraham as early as Genesis 12:1, 5, 7 and a host of passages throughout the book of Genesis.

APPLICATION:

Later Jewish writers - Both Isaiah (52:6) and Jeremiah (16:21) refer to Israel “knowing” Jehovah, although they should have been familiar with Him already. Their point, as is God’s here, is that even in Isaiah and Jeremiah’s day, there were Israelites who did not have a *relationship* with God. The verb “to redeem” is used 117 times in the OT, as noted above. The verb is especially notable in the book of Psalms (21 times). Isaiah will picture Israel’s return from exile as a “redemption:” 44:22-24; 51:11; 52:3; 62:12. Hosea 2:21 is one of several passages, especially in Hosea, which depict Israel as God’s wife. See also Isaiah 54:5.

NT Writers - Jesus is the Redeemer from sin: Luke 24:21; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18. The NT also teaches that God’s people are composed of both Jew and Gentile: Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:11-22; Rom. 10:19-21; 1 Peter 2:9. The NT pictures the church now as Christ’s bride: John 3:29; Eph. 5:24-33; Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17.

TRANSLATION - 6:9-13:

9 And Moses spoke thus to the sons of Israel and they did not listen to Moses from anguish of spirit and from difficult service.

10 And Jehovah spoke to Moses saying, **11** “Come, speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt and he will send the sons of Israel from the land.”

12 And Moses spoke before the face of Jehovah saying, "Behold the sons of Israel have not listened to me and how then will Pharaoh listen to me and I [myself] with uncircumcised lips?"

13 And Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron and He commanded them to the sons of Israel and to Pharaoh king of Egypt to bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt.

HEBREW WORDS:

"Anguish" (ver. 9) is used only 6 times and only here in Exodus. This is the first use of "spirit" in Exodus; in some contexts it will refer to the Holy Spirit (31:3; 35:31). It is used 378 times in the OT; in Exodus, at 6:9; 10:13, 19; 14:21; 15:8, 10; 28:3; 31:3; 35:21, 31. "Service" was seen earlier at 1:14. "Difficult" was used first at 1:14. "Behold" (ver. 12) was used earlier at 1:9. "To hear, listen, or submit" was used earlier at 2:15, 24. "Uncircumcised" was used in Genesis 17:14. It is used in Exodus at 6:12, 30; 12:48. It is used 35 times in the OT. "To command" (ver. 13) was used earlier at 1:22; 4:28; 5:6.

COMMENTARY:

Moses took the renewed call to leave back to the Israelites in Egypt, but they still refused to listen to him. Their spirits were in anguish because of the difficult service under which Pharaoh was enslaving them (see 5:6-9, 12-14). Sometimes life is so difficult, it is a challenge to think of spiritual matters.

Subsequently, Jehovah God reappeared to Moses and spoke to him yet again. He told him to go speak to Pharaoh and Pharaoh would send the sons of Israel from the land. Moses responded (ver. 12) that the "sons of Israel" had not listened to him (5:19-21) so why should he expect Pharaoh to listen to him, since he was with "uncircumcised lips."

Moses' "uncircumcised lips" (ver. 12) are also mentioned in verse 30. This was Moses' excuse to God not to go back to Egypt in 4:10-13. This suggests that the report of Aaron's genealogy (6:14-27) relates to Moses' speech problem. Indeed, it was due to this problem that God gave Aaron to be Moses' spokesman (4:14-17).

Jehovah God responded to Moses and to Aaron one more time (ver. 13) and commanded them to go to the sons of Israel in Egypt and to Pharaoh and tell him to let God's children leave the land of Egypt.

APPLICATION:

Moses' contemporaries - God will require Israel to circumcise their *hearts* in Deuteronomy 10:16 while God will serve a role in that regard as well: Deut. 30:6.

Later Jewish writers - God's commission to Moses did not change, despite Israel's response. When Jonah ran from God's command to preach to the Ninevites, God did not change His command (compare Jonah 1:2; 3:2). Jeremiah also renewed the call to circumcise the hearts in Jeremiah 4:4.

NT writers - Jesus compares "thorny soil" to hearts which are weighed down with burdens and cares of this world (Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:18-19; Luke 8:14). How many times do we, as Christians, fall into the trap of having a weak faith because we do not have the patience to wait for God to work?

Even though most people will not respond to the Gospel of Christ, we should not expect God to make exceptions to His commands. The word of God "cannot be broken" (John 10:35). Circumcision under the Covenant of Christ is a spiritual circumcision (Rom. 2:28-29) which occurs when one is immersed in the waters of baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Col. 2:11-12).

TRANSLATION - 6:14-27:

14 These [are] the heads of the house of their fathers: Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, Hanoch and Palu, Hetsron and Carmi. These [are] the clans of Reuben.

15 And the sons of Simeon, Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zochar and Saul, son of the Canaanite woman. These [are] the clans of Simeon.

16 And these the names of the sons of Levi for their generations: Gershon and Kohat and Merari and the years of the life of Levi, one hundred and thirty seven years.

17 The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei for their families.

18 And sons of Kohat: Amram and Jizhar and Hebron and Uzziel and the years of the life of Kohat [was] one hundred and thirty-three.

19 And sons of Merari: Machli and Mushi. These [are] the clans of Levi according to their generations.

20 And Amram took Yochebed, his aunt to himself for a wife and she gave birth to him Aaron and Moses and the years of the life of Amram [was] one hundred seventy-three.

21 And sons of Yizhar: Chorah and Napeg and Zichri.

22 And sons of Uzziel: Mishael and Aelzapan and Siri.

23 And Aaron took Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, sister of Nashon, to himself, for a wife and she gave birth to Nadab and Abihu, Elieazar and Aithamar.

24 And sons of Korah: Asir and Elchanah and Abiasaf. These [are] the clans of Korites.

25 And Eleazar, son of Aaron took to himself from the daughters of Putiel for himself for a wife and she gave birth for him, Phineas. These [are] heads of the sons of Levities for their families.

26 This is the Aaron and Moses to whom Jehovah spoke to them: “You bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts.” **27** These [are] the ones speaking to Pharaoh, king of Egypt to bring out the sons of Israel from Egypt. This [is] Moses and Aaron.

HEBREW WORDS:

“Clans” (ver. 14) is used extensively in this chapter (6:14-15, 17, 19, 24-25; 12:21). It is used 304 times in the OT, 159 times are in Numbers. “Generation” (ver. 16) is used here, 6:19; 28:10. The word is used 39 times in the OT; it is a key word in Genesis. “Aunt” (ver. 20) is used here and Leviticus 18:14; 20:20. “To give birth” was used earlier at 1:16, 19. “Hosts” (ver. 26) was first used in Genesis 2:1 to refer to the “hosts” of heaven. It generally refers to a military division. It is used 487 times in the OT, 77 times in Numbers.

REFERENCES AND ALLUSIONS TO GENESIS:

The genealogies follow Genesis 46:8-11, the names of Jacob’s family (from Reuben, Simeon, and Levi) who came to Egypt with him.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

We note that at least one non-Hebrew was in the genealogy (6:15) and the mention of several women, which was unusual for Jewish genealogies (6:20, 23, 25). We also mention that the ages of Levi (137 years, 6:16), Kohath (133 years, 6:18), and Amram (137 years; 6:20) are only of limited use in determining how long Israel stayed in Egypt. Both Levi and Kohath were among the initial migrants into Egypt (Gen. 46:11) and we do not know how old any of these men were when they gave birth to their respective sons. This ignorance does not apply to the genealogies in Genesis 5. Finally, we note that Amminadab and Nahshon were from the family of Judah (6:23; Num. 1:7; 2:3), showing that the line of the Levites was mixing with the line of the Judahites very early.

COMMENTARY:

Moses now backs up to give the genealogy of Moses, but especially Aaron; probably this shows the legitimate role Aaron’s family will have in serving as priests. Moses begins with the three oldest sons of Jacob: Reuben (ver. 14), Simeon (ver. 15), and Levi (ver. 16). Levi lived 137 years until he died.

As noted above under “References and Allusions to Genesis,” verses 14-16 repeat the names of those who came to Egypt with their father Jacob, according to Genesis 46:8-11. However, beginning in verse 17, Moses starts delineating the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Then Moses gives the names of Gershon’s sons (ver. 17), then Kohath’s sons (ver. 18), and then the sons of Merari (ver. 19).

Beginning in verse 20, Moses begins giving us his own genealogy from Levi, through Kohath, to Amram who married his father’s sister, Jochebed. Amram and Jochebed (whose name means “Jehovah is glory”) gave birth to Aaron and Moses (and Miriam; Num. 26:59). It was not normal to give women in the genealogies, but Moses was led by the Spirit to emphasize the importance of the women in Moses’ life. Further sons of Kohath’s son Jizhar are given in verse 21; further sons of Kohath’s son Uzziel are given in ver. 22. It should be noted that some scholars think the “Amram” in verse 18 is not the same “Amram” in verse 20, Moses’ father. The reason is because there are many members of the Amram clan according to Numbers 3:27-28.

According to verse 23, Aaron took the daughter of Ammindab to be his wife. To Aaron and Elisheba were born the men who would serve as priests: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. The sons of Korah, who himself was a son of Jizhar (ver. 21), son of Chehath (ver. 18) were Asir, Elchanah, and Abiasaph (ver. 24). One final note in this genealogy notes that Aaron’s son Eleazar took a wife of the daughters of Putiel and she gave birth to Phineas (ver. 25). See below under “Moses’ contemporaries” for later biblical stories which will involve many of these individuals.

At the end of the genealogy, Moses identifies himself and Aaron, whose genealogy he just gave, as the very men to whom Jehovah God spoke and commanded to go to Egypt to lead the sons of Israel out of Egypt. Moses emphasizes his and Aaron’s connection to this genealogy three times in verses 26-27: “This is the Aaron and Moses...,” “These [are] the ones speaking to Pharaoh...,” and “This [is] Moses and Aaron.”

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - Korah is punished for his rebellion against Moses’ leadership in Numbers 16. Nadab and Abihu are killed by God for offering unauthorized worship in Leviticus 10:1-2. Eleazar will become high priest after Aaron’s death (Exo. 28; Numbers 3:32). Aaron’s son Phineas will exhibit a unique zeal for God’s honor in Numbers 25 (see also Psa. 106:30-31; Josh. 22). Moses refers to Israel as “hosts” (ver. 26); this is consistent with God’s portrayal of the exodus as a battle between God (through His people, Israel) and Pharaoh (and His people, Egypt); see 7:4; 12:12, 17, 41, 51; 15:3; Num. 1:52. The sons of Aaron are given specific duties related to the tent of meeting in Numbers 3:17-39.

The Law of Moses prohibited the marriage of a man with his aunt (Lev. 18:12; 20:19). This militates against the idea of modern “scholars” that Genesis and Exodus are later writings. No Jew would make Moses violate his own law!

Later Jewish writers - Many of the psalms are written by Korah’s family: Psalm 42, 44-49; 84-85, 87-88. His genealogy is given in 1 Chronicles 6:1-48. The sons of Eleazar will be the high priests in Ezra 7:1-5; 1 Chronicles 6:1-12, 35-38. Phineas would enter the promised land (Josh. 22:30-32) and serve as high priest (Judg. 20:28). Eleazar was a descendant of Phineas (1 Chron. 9:20). It appears that Amminadab and Nahshon were ancestors of King David (Ruth 4:20, 22).

NT writers - Nahshon and Amminadab are listed in Jesus’ genealogy according to Luke 3:32-33.

TRANSLATION - 6:28-30:

28 And it was in that day Jehovah spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, **29** And Jehovah spoke to Moses saying, “I [am] Jehovah. Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all which I am speaking to you.”

30 And Moses said to the face of Jehovah, “Behold I [am] uncircumcised in lips and how then will Pharaoh listen to me?”

HEBREW WORDS:

“Uncircumcised” (ver. 30) is used in the same expression “uncircumcised lips” in verse 12.

COMMENTARY:

In verse 28, Moses reiterates that it was in “that day” that Jehovah spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, identifying Himself as “Jehovah,” and commanding him (again) to go speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, whatever He commanded him.

Finally, Moses complained again that he was of “uncircumcised lips” and doubted that Pharaoh would listen to him. It is at this point (chapter 7) that God will begin bringing the plagues on the nation of Egypt.

APPLICATION:

Moses’ contemporaries - If we have counted correctly, verse 29 is the seventh time God has told Moses to either “go” or “speak” to Pharaoh. Neither Moses’ excuses, nor Pharaoh’s, nor Israel’s responses have negated God’s command.