

# **EXODUS**

Part I: Chapters 1-4

*The Story of Moses*

**ASBURY**

## START HERE

The first book of the Bible is the book of Genesis. But I think you could make the case that the story of the Bible *really* begins with the second book of the Bible, Exodus.

Exodus tells us how God forms his people and founds his nation, Israel. Exodus is about how God rescues his people out of slavery, gives them the Law, and commissions them as his representatives. When Exodus begins, Abraham's family (also called the children of Israel) is a clan of 70 people sojourning in Egypt. When Exodus concludes forty chapters later, Israel has become a nation. All the pieces are in place for the biblical story to move on and show us how God will save the entire world.

### THE MAIN THEME OF EXODUS

The main theme of Exodus is *Rescue*. First, God will rescue Moses from Egypt, and then God will use Moses to rescue the Israelites from Egypt, and God will commission his people to be the vehicle by which God will bring rescue to the entire world. Over and over again we will learn that God is a rescuer who commissions men and women to participate as rescuers themselves.

### READING "MAPS" FOR EXODUS

The reason so many people struggle to understand the Bible is because we have a hard time seeing the story from a 30,000 foot view—we get lost in the details. So, I find it helpful to think of a “map” when I’m reading a book of the Bible. Here are two maps that have helped me.

#### MAP #1: EXODUS, LAW, TABERNACLE

One way of thinking about Exodus is to see the story in three parts:

- Part 1 is about **the Exodus** from Egypt (chapters 1-18);
- Part 2 is about **the Law** Israel receives at Sinai (chapters 19-34);
- Part 3 is about **the Tabernacle** whereby God dwells with his people (chapters 35-40).

**The Exodus** (part 1) is about God rescuing and forming his people;  
**The Law** (part 2) is about God instructing his people how to live and be his representatives in the world;  
**The Tabernacle** (part 3) is about God's transcendent presence among his people.

This threefold way of dividing up the story has been helpful to me, but it is not the way I've divided up our reading plan.

## MAP #2: MOSES, THEN ISRAEL

Another way to think about Exodus is to see it as made up of two stories, first the story of Moses, and then the story of Israel.

*Everything that happens to Moses prefigures what will happen to Israel. Israel's story expands and elaborates on Moses's story.*

For example:

- Moses is oppressed by Pharaoh → Israel is oppressed by Pharaoh;
- Moses is saved through water and the reeds → Israel is saved through water and the reeds;
- Moses wanders in the wilderness → Israel wanders in the wilderness;
- Moses meets God on the mountain in the fire → Israel meets God on the mountain in the fire;
- Moses is commissioned by God on the mountain and given a new identity → Israel is commissioned by God on the mountain and given a new identity.

Accordingly, I've divided our reading plan into two parts:

- Part 1 is **The Story of Moses** (chapters 1-4);
- Part 2 is **The Story of Israel** (chapters 5-40).

In Part 1, we will learn how God forms his man for the task ahead;  
In Part 2, we will learn how God forms his people for the task ahead.

---

## HOW THIS READING PLAN WORKS

Part 1 will begin very slowly and deliberately. I want to teach us how to pay attention to every detail and dwell over every word. By the time we get to Part 2, things will pick up and move at a faster pace.

**Remember, consistency is more important than intensity!** That is, don't try and read the whole Bible in one sitting—rather, pace yourself and make a commitment to be consistent.

To that end, the readings are parceled-out on weekdays only—if you get behind, catch up each weekend.

Each day I've written brief commentary to help you get something out of your reading; the commentary is NOT the point, the Bible is the point. If the commentary helps you, great! If it doesn't, no worries—just skip it.

---

## **WHY EXODUS MATTERS, AND WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF WE READ IT WITH OPEN MINDS**

Exodus is about how God formed his people and founded his nation. It is about *how God makes a man (or a woman) ready for mission and how God shapes a people (or a church) for mission.*

It is my prayer that our study of Exodus will be used by God to shape us individually as men and women of faith and fire, fit for the task ahead, and that Exodus will shape and strengthen us as his church.

Let's GO.



✠Andrew Forrest  
Asbury Church  
Tulsa, OK

P.S. Want to receive these daily readings and commentary each weekday morning in your inbox? Sign up on my website: [andrewforrest.org](http://andrewforrest.org).

**P.P.S. I'll be teaching two All-Church Bible studies on Exodus in January and February. These are large events with hundreds of people in attendance. I always close with Q&A and most of the questions come from our middle and high school students. Wednesdays, January 10 and February 7, 6:30-8:00 PM in the Asbury Sanctuary. (Dinner available beforehand, 5:00-6:30 PM. 18 and under are free on Bible study evenings!) Going to be out of town? Catch the livestream: [www.asburytulsa.org](http://www.asburytulsa.org).**

---

## ORDER FOR DAILY PRAYER

---

In a Bible study or small group?  
Use the order below to provide some structure to your gathering.

### 1. GREETING

This is the day that the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it.  
*Psalm 118:24*

### 2. THE INVITATORY

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
O God, make speed to save us;  
O Lord, make haste to help us;  
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.  
Amen.

### 3. OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known,  
and from you, no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and  
worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### 4. SCRIPTURE LESSON

*The day's scripture is read and briefly expounded.*

### 5. PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

#### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil:  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory  
For ever and ever. Amen.

## **6A. MORNING PRAYER**

O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: you have brought us safely to the beginning of this day, and we ask that you drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **6B. EVENING PRAYER**

O God, the life of all who live, the light of the faithful, the strength of those who labor, and the repose of the dead: We thank you for the blessings of the day that is past, and humbly ask for your protection through the coming night and so thereby bring us in safety to the morning hours. Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all this we pray in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **7. CLOSING BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you;  
The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace;  
And now may the blessing of God Almighty,  
The Father the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
Be with us and remain with us now and forever. Amen.

---

## **OCCASIONAL PRAYERS**

---

I have included below some occasional prayers that you may find helpful. Often at a birth or a death I find myself fumbling for the right words to say, and these occasional prayers have been a help to me. (I'd suggest copying to your phone the ones that seem most useful to you, so you can easily text them to others when the need arises.)

### **A GRACE BEFORE MEALS**

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*or*

Blessed are you, O Lord God, King of the Universe, for you give us food to sustain our lives and make our hearts glad; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **FOR OUR NATION**

Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure conduct. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom, in thy Name, we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all of which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **FOR A BIRTHDAY**

O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servant *N.* as *he* begins another year. Grant that *he* may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen *his* trust in your goodness all the days of *his* life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **FOR A CHILD, OR FOR A BIRTHDAY**

Watch over your child *N.*, O Lord, as *his* days increase; bless *him* and guide *him*, and keep *him* unspotted from the world. Strengthen *him* when *he* stands; comfort *him* when discouraged or sorrowful; raise *him* up if *he* falls; and in *his* heart may your peace which passes understanding abide all the days of *his* life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **FOR A MARRIAGE OR ANNIVERSARY**

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of marriage that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and his Church: Send your blessing upon these your servants [as they begin another year], that they may so love, honor, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## **A THANKSGIVING PRAYER**

Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love. We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side. We thank you for setting us at tasks that demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments that satisfy and delight us. We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone. Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ; for the truth of his Word and the example of his life; for his steadfast obedience, by which he overcame temptation; for his dying, through which he conquered death; and for his rising to life again, in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom. Grant us the gift of your Spirit, that we may know Christ and make him known; and through him, at all times and in all places, may give thanks to you in all things. Amen.

## **FOR OUR ENEMIES**

O God, the Creator of all, whose Son commanded us to love our enemies: Lead them and us from prejudice to truth; deliver them and us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge; and in your good time enable us all to stand reconciled before you in Jesus Christ; in whose Name we pray. Amen.

## **FOR THE RECOVERY OF A SICK PERSON**

O God, the strength of the weak and the comfort of sufferers: Mercifully accept our prayers, and grant to your servant *N.* the help of your power, that *his* sickness may be turned into health, and our sorrow into joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **AT THE TIME OF DEATH**

Rest eternal grant to *N.*, O Lord; and may *his* soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace and in the sure and certain hope of the Resurrection. Amen.

## **FOR DESIRING GOD**

O God, grant that we may desire you, and desiring you seek you, and seeking you find you, and finding you be satisfied in you forever. Amen.



### **FOR A PERSON IN TROUBLE OR BEREAVEMENT**

O merciful Father, you have taught us in your holy Word that you do not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men: Look with pity on the sorrows of your servant *N*. Remember *him*, O Lord, in mercy; nourish *his* soul with patience; comfort *him* with a sense of your goodness; lift up your countenance upon *him*; and give *him* peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **FOR THE DISCOURAGED AND DOWNCAST**

O God, almighty and merciful, you heal the broken-hearted, and turn the sadness of the sorrowful to joy: Let your fatherly goodness be upon all whom you have made. Remember in pity all those who are this day destitute, homeless, elderly, infirm, or forgotten. Bless the multitude of your poor. Lift up those who are cast down. Mightily befriend innocent sufferers, and sanctify to them the endurance of their wrongs. Cheer with hope all who are discouraged and downcast, and by your heavenly grace preserve from falling those whose poverty tempts them to sin. Though they be troubled on every side, suffer them not to be distressed; though they are perplexed, save them from despair. Grant this, O Lord, for the love of him who for our sakes became poor, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

### **FOR HELP TO BEAR BEREAVEMENT**

Heavenly Father, help us to entrust our loved ones to your care. Though sorrow darkens our lives, help us to look up to you, remembering the cloud of witnesses by which we are surrounded. And grant that we on earth, rejoicing ever in your presence, may share with them the rest and peace which your presence gives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **FOR QUIET CONFIDENCE**

O God of peace, who hast taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of thy Spirit lift us, we pray thee, to thy presence, where we may be still and know that thou art God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

---

(I've selected these prayers from the *Book of Common Prayer*.)

**MONDAY, JANUARY 1**

**GENESIS 12:1-3**

YOUR ENTIRE REASON FOR EXISTENCE

**12** Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

---

*Rescue* is the great theme of Exodus. First, God rescues Abraham’s family—the Hebrews, also called the children of Israel—from slavery in Egypt. Then, they are formed into a nation through their wilderness wanderings; at Sinai they are given the Law and commissioned to be God’s chosen people who will be part of his plan to rescue the entire world.

So, I think you could say that the biblical story really begins with the second book of the Bible, Exodus. Yet, you cannot understand Exodus without going back to the first book of the Bible, Genesis—the book of beginnings—and seeing how we got here. So, this first week in our reading plan we are going to go back to Genesis and look at some key passages and details that will help us get our bearings.

---

The opening chapters of Genesis tell how God created the world beautiful and good, and then how human and spiritual rebellion led to evil and death and idolatry and slavery, culminating in the account of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11).

Then the very next thing that happens is that God chooses one man—Abraham, called Abram until Genesis Chapter 17—and declares that he will use this one man and his family to rescue the entire world. God chooses one for the benefit of the many. This is the same pattern we will see in Exodus: namely that God chooses Moses to bring blessing to the Hebrew people, and then how God chooses that people to bring blessing to the entire world.

This is the same pattern that God still follows—he will use one person to be his vehicle to bring the blessings of Eden to many other people.

**This year, God wants to use you to bring blessing to others—are you willing? In fact, the reason you are alive today and have seen this new year arrive is because the Lord isn’t done with you yet. Your entire reason for existence is to say to the Lord, “Use me to bring blessing to others.” And when you do that, your ordinary life becomes part of the extraordinary divine mission.**

So, how does one do that, and what does that look like? It begins with saying “Yes” to God in faith and then taking the next obedient step right in front of you. Note that the only thing Abraham has to do is to “Go.” Abraham has to be willing to be obedient and do what God asks, but God is the one who will bring blessing.

When God’s people trust him in faith, wherever they go they are used to bring the blessings of Eden to others around them.

As you look back over the last year, where were you standing in the way of God’s blessings? What might the Lord want to take you *from* and take you *to* as this new year begins?

## **TUESDAY, JANUARY 2**

### **GENESIS 15:1-21**

#### TRUST IS THE ONLY WAY

**15** After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” <sup>2</sup> But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” <sup>4</sup> And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” <sup>5</sup> And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” <sup>6</sup> And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

<sup>7</sup> And he said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” <sup>8</sup> But he said, “O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” <sup>9</sup> He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” <sup>10</sup> And he brought

him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. <sup>11</sup> And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

<sup>12</sup> As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. <sup>14</sup> But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. <sup>15</sup> As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. <sup>16</sup> And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

<sup>17</sup> When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. <sup>18</sup> On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, <sup>19</sup> the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup> the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, <sup>21</sup> the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

---

The Lord has promised Abraham that through his family all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 12:3), but the problem is that Abraham has no children!

So, God cuts a covenant with Abraham and promises that what he has said will come to pass. Here, God tells Abraham that his descendants—and the very fact that God mentions “descendants” means that Abraham will one day have a son—will live for a while as an oppressed people in a foreign land, but that when the time is right, they will come back to the land that God promised to give them.

Note that God promises this to Abraham but that it hasn't yet happened! In other words, the only way Abraham can continue is to *trust* God.

The same is true for us today—there will always be a gap between God's promises and plans and what we currently understand about them. This means the only way to live within God's plan is to *trust*, which is just another way of saying living in faith.

What has you worried today? What would it look like if you trusted God in that area today?

## WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3

### GENESIS 37:1-36

#### HOW ABRAHAM'S GREAT-GRANDSON ENDED UP IN EGYPT

**37** Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan.

<sup>2</sup>These are the generations of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. <sup>3</sup>Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors.

<sup>4</sup>But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

<sup>5</sup>Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. <sup>6</sup>He said to them, "Hear this dream that I have dreamed: <sup>7</sup>Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." <sup>8</sup>His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

<sup>9</sup>Then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." <sup>10</sup>But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" <sup>11</sup>And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

<sup>12</sup>Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. <sup>13</sup>And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." And he said to him, "Here I am." <sup>14</sup>So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word." So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. <sup>15</sup>And a man found him wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" <sup>16</sup>"I am seeking my brothers," he said. "Tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." <sup>17</sup>And the man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

<sup>18</sup>They saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. <sup>19</sup>They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer.<sup>20</sup> Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams.” <sup>21</sup>But when Reuben heard it, he rescued him out of their hands, saying, “Let us not take his life.” <sup>22</sup>And Reuben said to them, “Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him”—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father. <sup>23</sup>So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. <sup>24</sup>And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

<sup>25</sup>Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. <sup>26</sup>Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? <sup>27</sup>Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him. <sup>28</sup>Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

<sup>29</sup>When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes <sup>30</sup>and returned to his brothers and said, “The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?” <sup>31</sup>Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. <sup>32</sup>And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, “This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not.” <sup>33</sup>And he identified it and said, “It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.” <sup>34</sup>Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. <sup>35</sup>All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, “No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.” Thus his father wept for him. <sup>36</sup>Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

---

God's promises are trustworthy, and just as God said, so it happens: Abraham has a son with his wife Sarah. His name is Isaac. And Isaac has twin boys with his wife Rebekah. Their names are Esau and Jacob. (Jacob is also called “Israel.”) And Jacob has twelve (!)

sons with four different women; the eleventh son is his favorite, a brilliant, immature boy named Joseph.

We shall see that when Exodus begins—we'll begin reading Exodus on Monday—that the children of Israel find themselves enslaved in Egypt. How do they end up there? Our text today provides the answer, and the whole saga begins when Joseph is kidnapped and sold into slavery by his brothers; then through a series of strange coincidences, the entire family ends up in Egypt.

Note the cause of the event that ends up with Abraham's family in Egypt: the violent kidnapping of one young man by his brothers. Sin has consequences, and in this case the consequences of the brothers' sin leads to the enslavement of their descendants.

And yet, God is able turn those events into good.

#### **THURSDAY, JANUARY 4**

#### **GENESIS 41:39-49**

#### HOW JOSEPH'S SLAVERY WAS ISRAEL'S SALVATION

<sup>39</sup>Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. <sup>40</sup>You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." <sup>41</sup>And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." <sup>42</sup>Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck. <sup>43</sup>And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, "Bow the knee!" Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. <sup>44</sup>Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." <sup>45</sup>And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On. So Joseph went out over the land of Egypt.

<sup>46</sup>Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt. <sup>47</sup>During the seven plentiful years the earth produced abundantly, <sup>48</sup>and he gathered up all the food of these seven years, which occurred in the

land of Egypt, and put the food in the cities. He put in every city the food from the fields around it.<sup>49</sup> And Joseph stored up grain in great abundance, like the sand of the sea, until he ceased to measure it, for it could not be measured.

---

Through a series of miraculous coincidences, Joseph, who has been sold into slavery in Egypt, rises to become viceroy over the entire kingdom, and his shrewd leadership and management make sure there is food available when famine comes to the region. The famine causes his family—the children of Israel—to come to Egypt in search of succor, and it ends up being Joseph—the brother they sold into slavery—who is their rescuer.

As Joseph says later, *“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today”* [Genesis 50:20].

That’s a verse to meditate on as this new year begins. See, *no matter what happens this year, God will turn it to good.*

Be hopeful!

## **FRIDAY, JANUARY 5**

### **GENESIS 50:22-26**

#### JOSEPH DIES AS A MUMMY IN EGYPT

<sup>22</sup> So Joseph remained in Egypt, he and his father's house. Joseph lived 110 years.<sup>23</sup> And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation. The children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were counted as Joseph's own.<sup>24</sup> And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”<sup>25</sup> Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.”<sup>26</sup> So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

---

Those are the last sentences of Genesis. Like all great stories, Genesis ends with a note of sadness and with a few loose ends. Joseph dies, but unlike Jacob his father, he is not buried back in the Promised Land. Before his death, he tells his descendants that they will need



the help of God to get out of Egypt and return to the Promised Land, and he makes them promise that when that day finally comes they will carry his bones with them back to the land of his fathers. And then he dies, and is embalmed after the custom of the Egyptians.

And so Genesis ends and the last sentence will take your breath away:  
*The book closes with Joseph as a mummy in Egypt.*

---

Genesis concludes with Abraham's family—the children of Israel—living in Egypt, outside of the Promised Land.

Exodus is the story of their rescue, and we begin reading it on Monday!

---

P.S. The children of Israel never forgot their promise to Joseph. And generation unto generation, they were reminded that the day would come when God would bring them out of slavery, and that when that day came, they were to carry the bones of their brilliant ancestor Joseph with them. And so, this is what happens when the long-awaited Exodus finally occurs, so many centuries later:

*<sup>19</sup> Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the Israelites swear an oath. He had said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place"*  
[Exodus 13:19].

I said before that Genesis ends without all the loose ends tied up. That may be true, but you know what?

**In God's time, all loose ends are eventually tied up. There are no details that the author of Creation forgets.**

## **MONDAY, JANUARY 8**

### **EXODUS 1:1-5**

#### **NAMES**

**I** These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: <sup>2</sup> Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, <sup>3</sup> Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, <sup>4</sup> Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. <sup>5</sup> All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt.

---

Exodus begins with a list of names. In fact, in Hebrew that's the title of the book: "Names."

The story of Exodus is how those names become a nation.

God forms a people out of Abraham's family. Here, that family is just 70 people. When the book concludes forty chapters from now, they will have become a nation. What we will see is that God's outcomes have no relation to how things begin. Jesus makes this same point in one of his most-famous parables:

*"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. <sup>32</sup>It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches" [Matthew 13:31-32].*

The good thing is that God controls the outcomes; all he asks of us is just to do the next faithful thing.

In fact, I think that's a good way to think of the Christian life—just taking the next faithful step.

What's your next faithful step today?

## **TUESDAY, JANUARY 9**

### **EXODUS 1:6-7**

#### THEY SWARMED

<sup>6</sup>Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. <sup>7</sup>But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.

---

The language here in Hebrew is the language of Genesis 1:

<sup>28</sup>*And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" [Genesis 1:28].*

Compare with Exodus 1:7:

*But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly [literally, they “swarmed”]; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.*

Here you have Abraham’s family in a foreign land, but the blessing of God is so powerful that despite their circumstances, they are becoming fruitful.

That’s God’s desire for your life, too: that you would be fruitful *regardless of your circumstances.*

What if you decided that nothing about your circumstances could keep you from trusting God and living fruitfully this year?

## **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10**

### **EXODUS 1:8-14**

#### THE NEW PHARAOH

<sup>8</sup>Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. <sup>9</sup>And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. <sup>10</sup>Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” <sup>11</sup>Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. <sup>12</sup>But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. <sup>13</sup>So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves <sup>14</sup>and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.

---

A new, nameless Pharaoh arises who has no connection to Joseph and his first act is to divide between “us” and “them.” He is afraid of the Hebrews and at the same time he needs them for labor. But his oppression is turned back against himself. Not for the last time in Exodus—or the Bible—will we see that evil actions turn back and hurt those that take them. Here, the more Pharaoh tries to hurt the children of Israel, the more they prosper.

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 11**

**EXODUS 1:15-22**

THE MIDWIVES

<sup>15</sup> Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, <sup>16</sup> “When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.” <sup>17</sup> But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. <sup>18</sup> So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this, and let the male children live?” <sup>19</sup> The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.” <sup>20</sup> So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong. <sup>21</sup> And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. <sup>22</sup> Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, “Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.”

---

Pharaoh’s plan is devilishly shrewd—rather than killing the baby girls, he plans to have the boys killed, thereby ensuring that the girls will have to marry Egyptian men when they grow up. In that way, there will be no Hebrew people left—the boys will be dead and the girls’ children will be raised as Egyptians.

Once again, however, the malevolent plans of this all-powerful king are thwarted, in this case by the midwives to the Hebrew women. Note that the midwives are more concerned with pleasing God than they are with pleasing Pharaoh.

Remember that the central theme of Exodus is the forming of God’s people into a nation. Here, we have an important lesson that God will teach the Israelites over and over: namely that God’s law trumps human law. The midwives are a model of faithfulness.

How can you fear God more than man today?

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 12**  
**EXODUS 2:1-10**  
MOSES IN THE ARK

**2** Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman. <sup>2</sup> The woman conceived and bore a son, and when she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him three months. <sup>3</sup> When she could hide him no longer, she took for him a basket made of bulrushes and daubed it with bitumen and pitch. She put the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the river bank. <sup>4</sup> And his sister stood at a distance to know what would be done to him. <sup>5</sup> Now the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her young women walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her servant woman, and she took it. <sup>6</sup> When she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby was crying. She took pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." <sup>7</sup> Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" <sup>8</sup> And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother. <sup>9</sup> And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. <sup>10</sup> When the child grew older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, "Because," she said, "I drew him out of the water."

---

Pharaoh has ordered the drowning of every baby boy born to the Hebrews, and this action will prove his undoing. The strange circumstances of the birth and life of Moses will be exactly what God will use to prepare him to be the leader of the Israelites.

The heroes of this episode are the women: Moses's mother, Moses's sister Miriam (who is about six years old here), and Pharaoh's daughter. Each of them acts courageously in defiance of Pharaoh, and their actions make Moses's life possible. But each of the women (as well as the previously-mentioned midwives) are also just bravely doing what women *do*—they are mothers and sisters and midwives and daughters. Here again we see ordinary people doing ordinary things in a courageous way, and the Lord takes their small actions and makes them matter.

---

Our English translations fail us when they translate the Hebrew word in v. 3 as "basket." In Hebrew, this word is used only one other time

in the entire Bible, and it is the word “ark” from the Noah story. Here, Moses is placed in a little ark! Just as with Noah, here the man the Lord will use to save his people is himself saved from drowning in an ark.

---

Note that Pharaoh has ordered the destruction of the Hebrew boys through the water; later, Pharaoh will lead his armies to destruction in the waters of the Red Sea.

Isn't it interesting how God always allows evil to bring about its own destruction? If Pharaoh hadn't ordered the murder of the Hebrew babies, then Moses would not have been raised to be a leader *in Pharaoh's own household*. Presumably the formation and education Moses receives in Pharaoh's palace were essential for his future leadership.

At the Cross, what seemed like a victory for evil turned out to be its ultimate defeat. What looked like a loss for Jesus was actually proven three days later to be a win.

Be hopeful today: evil will not win in the end.

## **MONDAY, JANUARY 15**

### **EXODUS 2:11-12**

#### **MOSES MURDERS A MAN**

<sup>11</sup>One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. <sup>12</sup>He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

---

There are so many questions this episode raises:

- Did Moses know that the Hebrews were “his people,” or is that just the narrator telling us?
- When did Moses come to know his true identity?
- Did the other Hebrews know he was one of them?
- Why did Moses kill the Egyptian?
- From whom was he trying to hide the body?

What's clear is that there is something about the subjugation of the Hebrews by the Egyptians that provokes something primal in Moses.

That's good, and will be something God uses. What's bad is that Moses then murders the Egyptian.

One of the lessons Moses will have to learn is how to channel his righteous anger into productive and not destructive acts.

It's not wrong to be angry at the evil of the world; what's wrong is to allow anger to drive you to act in sinful ways.

What are you righteously angry about today? What troubles you deeply? How might you turn that anger over the Lord and ask him to turn it into something productive?

## **TUESDAY, JANUARY 16**

### **EXODUS 2:13-15**

#### **MOSES FLEES EGYPT**

<sup>13</sup>When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?" <sup>14</sup>He answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known." <sup>15</sup>When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

---

Some more questions:

- How did the Hebrews know what happened the previous day? Did the Hebrew man Moses saved spread the word about the murder, or did someone else see it?
- Why do they specifically call him "prince and judge"? Are they resenting his Egyptian upbringing?
- Why does Pharaoh want to kill Moses? Does he see Moses as a threat to his rule?

Once again, we see that the events of Moses's life will prove formative. His way of trying to rescue the people isn't working. There is a problem that must be solved and a people to be rescued, and though Moses has the heart for the task, he isn't yet prepared for it. His flight to Midian turns out to be exactly what God needs.

---

Our lives may often seem to be following a winding road, but what the story of Moses shows us is that God is at work in the detours, using them to shape us into whom he needs us to be.

What if all that has happened to you has shaped you into the kind of person the Lord needs you to be?

### **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17**

#### **EXODUS 2:16-22**

#### **MOSES, THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY**

<sup>16</sup>Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. <sup>17</sup>The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock. <sup>18</sup>When they came home to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come home so soon today?" <sup>19</sup>They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock." <sup>20</sup>He said to his daughters, "Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." <sup>21</sup>And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. <sup>22</sup>She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

---

So, Moses ends up in Midian, an region outside of Egyptian territory, on the other side of the Red Sea in the area of the upper Arabian peninsula. He is nowhere and has no identity. Note that the women think he's Egyptian! Are they wrong? Who is Moses? What he names his son—"stranger"—is revealing: Moses is a man without a country.

This lack of clear identity will be important when the Lord calls and commissions Moses. He will receive his identity from God—he'll be God's man.

**I think that each of us feels at times that we don't fit, that we're not totally at home. But what if this isn't a bad thing? What if a sense of rootlessness can set us up to hear from God?**



## THURSDAY, JANUARY 18

### EXODUS 2:23-25

“AND GOD KNEW”

<sup>23</sup> During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. <sup>24</sup> And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. <sup>25</sup> God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

---

Most of us understand that life requires us to persevere through hard things. What makes hard things unbearable is the thought that God isn't with us, that we have been abandoned.

Here, the Israelites cry out because of the evil of their situation and the Bible tells us that “God saw...and God knew” [v. 25].

God sees your struggles today, too, and he is at work to bring good out of what is evil. (see Psalm 10:14)

**Don't give up—keep going. Rescue is coming.**

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 19

### EXODUS 3:1

MOSES THE SHEPHERD

**3** Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

---

How long has Moses been in Midian? Later on in Exodus it will turn out that it's been decades that Moses has been a shepherd in a foreign land (see 7:7).

Just like his great ancestor Abraham, who was rootless and fatherless when the Lord called him (see Genesis 11:31-32), Moses is *in-between* when the Lord finally calls him. All that time wandering in the desert has been preparation.

What if you trusted that everything about your life has been preparation for the Lord to use you *now*? How might you see your life differently?

**MONDAY, JANUARY 22**

**EXODUS 3:2**

NON-COMPETITIVE TRANSCENDENCE!

<sup>2</sup>And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.

---

Allow me to use a ten-dollar term today: “non-competitive transcendence.” I first heard the Roman Catholic Bishop Robert Barron use this term years ago, and I’ve loved it ever since.

If I want to sit in the seat you’re sitting in, you will have to move before I can sit there. If I want to park my car in your parking space, your car will have to move. This is because we live in a finite world and for me to be where you are, you’ll have to give way. We are “competing” so to speak for the finite resources of the world.

In the Greek myths, when Zeus shows up the same thing happens: people have to get out of the way. There is lightning and violence when the gods arrive. Why? Because the gods are part of this world, and so they are also competing for its finite resources.

Note, however, that when the Lord shows up, he is not competing with us. This is because God is not the biggest part of Creation; rather, God is not part of Creation at all—God made creation. In fact, the first sentence of the Bible tells us that there is God, and then there is everything else.

So, when the Lord appears to Moses in the bush, the bush is burning but not consumed. In other words, God’s presence doesn’t take anything away from the bush—God’s presence is a non-competitive transcendence.

Why does this matter?

I’m convinced that the primary reason people today refuse to believe in God is because they are afraid that if they do so, they will lose their freedom. But this is to misunderstand God! When God comes close to us, we become more of who we are—we become more free, not less.

---

In traditional Eastern Orthodox iconography, the Virgin Mary

is sometimes portrayed in the midst of the burning bush? Why? Because she was the vessel that contained the Son of God, but she wasn't consumed by the fiery glory of God! Isn't that a lovely image?

---

Don't be afraid to trust God today—his will for you is freedom and joy, and the only way you'll find it is in him.

P.S. Try to work “non-competitive transcendence” into a conversation today. I'll be so proud!

## **TUESDAY, JANUARY 23**

### **EXODUS 3:3**

HOW WOULD YOU KNOW IF GOD WERE TRYING TO GET YOUR ATTENTION?

<sup>3</sup>And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.”

---

The rabbis asked, “How many times was the fire in the bush on the mountain of God and Moses failed to see it?” It's a fun question.

**Is the Lord trying to get my attention these days, and am I too distracted to notice?**

## **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24**

### **EXODUS 3:4-5**

“HERE I AM”

<sup>4</sup>When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” <sup>5</sup>Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

---

When the Lord calls Moses, Moses responds in exactly the right way:

“Here I am.” In other words, Moses immediately makes himself available to the Lord.

**How are you and I half-heartedly responding to God's call today?  
What would it look like for you and I to be fully obedient and take  
the next faithful step?**

P.S. "Holy" is something set-apart for God's purposes. So, the ground is holy ground because God is using it to commission Moses. And, it will turn out that this same mountain is where Israel will later receive the Law and be commissioned as God's people.

## **THURSDAY, JANUARY 25**

### **EXODUS 3:6A**

WHO IS MOSES'S FATHER?

<sup>6</sup> And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

---

Moses's father is never mentioned in the Bible, apart from this reference to his tribal identity:

*"Now a man from the house of Levi went and took as his wife a Levite woman"*  
[2:1].

Here we have Moses, the rootless man without a country, and look how the Lord addresses him:

*"I am the God of your father"* [v. 6]. The Lord specifically identifies Moses and makes it clear that the strange circumstances of his life are not an accident. This rootless man is given an identity by God.

We become who we need to be when we are defined by God's word to us and not the words of the world. What matters is not what other people say about us, but what we know to be true about us from God's word.

## **FRIDAY, JANUARY 26**

### **EXODUS 3:6B**

AWE-FEAR-REVERENCE

And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

---

What Leon Kass has to say about this verse is helpful:

*We pause a moment over this experience. Awe-fear-reverence (the hard-to-translate Hebrew word is yir'ah) is the central religious passion, and no story I know better exemplifies the phenomenon of its sudden appearance. Yir'ah is called forth by an encounter with overwhelming power, with great authority, with deep mystery, with grandeur and sublimity—in short, with the “awesome,” in its original, nondebased meaning. Awe-fear-reverence is not a congenial passion: it implies, and insists on maintaining, clear distance from the object that elicits it. It acknowledges our weakness and inadequacy before something much greater than ourselves (“do not come closer”; “put off your shoes”). And yet it does not—like simple fear or terror—lead us to flee. On the contrary, despite the evident inequality, the very fact of our recognizing the superiority of the object builds a connection between us. We are both attracted and repelled; we want both to approach and to stand back; we oscillate in place, bound in relation to the thing that defies our comprehension and makes us feel small. We hide our face, but we hold our ground. Paradoxically, thanks to awe-fear-reverence and the bond it builds across the unbridgeable divide, we also feel less small. We are, in fact, lifted up, enlarged, magnified. This surely happened here to Moses.*

—from *Founding God's Nation: Reading Exodus*, by Leon Kass

---

The second half of Exodus will be about what it will take for Israel to live with the awe-fear-reverence of Lord in their midst, and the New Testament will be about what happens when God himself puts on flesh and dwells among us.

(That's worth thinking about over the weekend.)

**MONDAY, JANUARY 29**  
**EXODUS 3:7-9**  
GOD SEES EVERYTHING

<sup>7</sup>Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,<sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them out

of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them.

---

Moses is in Midian because there was something about the oppression of the Israelites that provoked him to murderous action, and his murder caused him to have to flee Egypt. Here, Moses hears that God is concerned about the Israelites' oppression, too. The deep passions of Moses match those of God.

**What is it that really troubles you about the world? Could it be that God put that passion in you so that you would do something about it? How can your passions reflect those of God?**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 30**

**EXODUS 3:10-12**

THE ONLY WAY YOU'LL KNOW IS WHEN YOU KNOW

<sup>10</sup> Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup> He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

---

Note the amazing privilege God is giving Moses:

*"I will send YOU to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."*

Moses gets to be the liberator of Israel!

But Moses wants some proof that this will actually happen. God's answer: "I will be with you, and when you find yourself back here one day, you'll know that it happened."

In other words, the only way he'll know is when he knows!

This is why faith is essential—without trust, we cannot live the lives God has for us.

Where do you need to trust the Lord today?

### **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31**

#### **EXODUS 3:13-14**

##### THE ACTUAL NAME OF GOD

<sup>13</sup>Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” <sup>14</sup>God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

---

“God” is just the generic name for “Spiritual Being.” Moses quite reasonably wants to know the specific identity of this spiritual being with whom he is speaking. Presumably he is familiar with the names of the Egyptian gods—who is this god in the wilderness?

God’s reply is one of the most profound sentences in the Bible, or out of it:

“I AM.”

God’s name—often transliterated in English as *Yahweh*—means “I am” or “I am who I am” or just *being* itself.

God is. And that’s his name.

P.S. In most English Bibles today, when you see LORD printed in all capital letters, that’s the editors’ way of indicating that it’s the actual Hebrew name of God in the text, i.e., “Yahweh.” Be on the lookout for that—it will change how you read the Bible.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1

### EXODUS 3:15-22

#### WHY THE THREE DAYS REQUEST?

<sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The LORD, 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 thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. <sup>16</sup> Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, <sup>17</sup> and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.”’ <sup>18</sup> And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.’ <sup>19</sup> But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. <sup>20</sup> So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. <sup>21</sup> And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, <sup>22</sup> but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians.”

---

Here, God lays out the entire plan:

- How Moses will speak to the Israelites;
- How God will bring them from slavery into the Promised Land;
- How God will show his power and strike Egypt;
- How the Israelites will take wealth with them from Egypt.

But did you notice that strange detail—which we’ll see Moses enact later—when God says that the Israelites are to ask Pharaoh for permission to journey three days into the wilderness? Why?

Remember, Exodus is about God shaping his people for mission. One of the essential things for Israel to learn is that it is God’s power



that brought them out of Egypt and not Pharaoh's kindness nor their stubborn requests. So, God has the people ask for a holiday knowing that Pharaoh will refuse, and thereby proving that God rescued them and that they should trust him.

What, on reflection, in your past should make you trust God *more*?

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2

### EXODUS 4:1-9

YOU \*ALREADY\* HAVE WHAT YOU NEED TODAY

**4** Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." <sup>3</sup>And he said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent, and Moses ran from it. <sup>4</sup>But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand and catch it by the tail"—so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand— <sup>5</sup>"that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." <sup>6</sup>Again, the LORD said to him, "Put your hand inside your cloak." And he put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. <sup>7</sup>Then God said, "Put your hand back inside your cloak." So he put his hand back inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, it was restored like the rest of his flesh. <sup>8</sup>"If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign. <sup>9</sup>If they will not believe even these two signs or listen to your voice, you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground, and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground."

---

Moses again shows his fear at the mission the Lord has for him—he feels inadequate to the task ahead.

Note, however, that the staff the Lord turns into a serpent is already in Moses's hand. That is, Moses already has what he needs to do what the Lord is asking him to do!

The disciples could only come up with five loaves and two fish, but they were enough when put into the hands of Jesus. In fact, they made a feast.

If you have faith in Jesus, then you have what you need today. It might not *feel* like it, but nevertheless it's true. Act accordingly.

P.S. Each of these miracles is showing the Lord's power over the gods—better to say “demons”—of Egypt. Over the serpent god, the Lord has power; over the medical and healing magic of Egypt, the Lord has power; over the fertility god of the Nile, the Lord has power.

## **MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5**

### **EXODUS 4:10-12**

#### WHO YOU ARE IS ENOUGH

<sup>10</sup>But Moses said to the LORD, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” <sup>11</sup>Then the LORD said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? <sup>12</sup>Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.”

---

Moses complains that *he in himself* is just not up to the task. The Lord's response:

*I made you, and I know what I'm doing.*

Life is short and it can be difficult. You may very well feel unable to do what the Lord is asking of you today, namely to be strong and courageous. *But the Lord is only asking of you that which he knows is possible because he made you!*

So, be strong and courageous. The Lord will be with you.

## **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6**

### **EXODUS 4:13-17**

#### MOSES MISSES OUT

<sup>13</sup>But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” <sup>14</sup>Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will

be glad in his heart. <sup>15</sup> You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. <sup>16</sup> He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. <sup>17</sup> And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs.”

---

Some of the rabbis thought that Moses here misses his chance to be THE man God will use. All his complaints force the Lord to involve his brother Aaron in the plan. Aaron, we learn, is already on his way to meet Moses, but perhaps the reason for the Lord’s anger is that Aaron, though a help to Moses, will also cause problems, most obviously in the terrible story of the golden calf.

God’s purposes *will* be realized, but our disobedience and reluctance will cause problems.

How can you be immediately and completely obedient today?

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7**  
**EXODUS 4:18-20**  
MOSES HALFWAY OBEYS

<sup>18</sup> Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, “Please let me go back to my brothers in Egypt to see whether they are still alive.” And Jethro said to Moses, “Go in peace.” <sup>19</sup> And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead.” <sup>20</sup> So Moses took his wife and his sons and had them ride on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the staff of God in his hand.

---

Moses goes back to his father-in-law *but he doesn’t leave for Egypt at once*. Did you catch that? It is only when the Lord again speaks to Moses in v.19 that he finally loads up his family on a donkey and begins the trek back to Egypt.

How many times have I been halfway obedient? Meanwhile, the Lord wants to use me to bring his message of rescue and salvation to other people, and my reluctance to fully obey is delaying the good things God has for others.

## THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8

### EXODUS 4:21-26

TWO OF THE HARDEST AND STRANGEST THINGS IN THE ENTIRE BOOK

<sup>21</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. <sup>22</sup> Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, <sup>23</sup> and I say to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.’”

<sup>24</sup> At a lodging place on the way the LORD met him and sought to put him to death. <sup>25</sup> Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!” <sup>26</sup> So he let him alone. It was then that she said, “A bridegroom of blood,” because of the circumcision.

---

Today's reading contains two of the hardest and strangest episodes in all of Exodus.

1. Why does the Lord say he will harden Pharaoh's heart? Doesn't that just make the entire process more difficult? How is that fair to Pharaoh any way?
2. Why does the Lord try to put Moses to death?

---

Why does the Lord plan on hardening (The Hebrew word translated “hardening” means “to make strong,” i.e. to strengthen Pharaoh's resolve.) Pharaoh's heart? Doesn't that seem to undermine the purpose of Moses's mission? Leon Kass is helpful:

*These questions, if they occurred to him, do not detain Moses from beginning his journey. But we will tarry over them a little, for they can illuminate the meaning of subsequent events in Egypt. Our perplexity diminishes once we recognize that getting the Israelites out of Egypt is not the only goal or even the most important one. How they are delivered, and by whom, matters almost as much: If Pharaoh freely and easily let them go, would not he, rather than the Lord, be seen as their deliverer? There are also considerations of justice: shouldn't the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt involve retribution for their lengthy oppression? Finally, there is a decisive*

*issue of knowledge: shouldn't the Israelites—and the Egyptians, and also we readers—learn from their deliverance about the powers that be? Shouldn't they (and we) learn who or what is highest and mightiest, and who or what governs the world and the people in it?*

*For hundreds of years, the Israelites have lived and suffered in a society ruled by a single human master—an autocrat who is both feared and revered and who thinks and acts as one of the gods—atop the world's most advanced civilization. To correct their way of thinking, they need to witness a protracted contest between the Lord and Pharaoh through which he and all of Egypt are compelled to acknowledge the superiority of the Lord. Only in this way can the enslaved Israelites learn that Y-H-V-H, their God, is indeed God Almighty.*

*But if the contest is to be conclusively revealing, there must be no easy victory over Pharaoh. He must be at the top of his game and must not fold his cards too early out of fear or weakness. Pharaoh must remain Pharaonic at the highest level, both to reveal the full meaning of Egypt and his despotic rule and to provide knowledge of the Lord needed for founding the nation of Israel. Thus, Pharaoh must not become dis-heart-ened. If he cannot strengthen or harden his heart by himself, the Lord must help him stay true to himself to the bitter end. Only in this way can the differences between Egypt and Israel, and between the rule of the Lord, be brought clearly to light.*

—from *Founding God's Nation: Reading Exodus*, by Leon Kass

So, the Lord is giving Pharaoh over to himself, not making Pharaoh act against his will. To put it another way, Pharaoh is becoming more of what he already is. The ambiguity in the language reflects this: ten times (including here) we are told that the Lord hardened (or “strengthened”) Pharaoh’s heart; three times we’re told that Pharaoh strengthened his own heart; six times we are just told that “Pharaoh’s heart remained strong.”

---

The key to understanding the strange episode of the Lord trying to put Moses to death and the circumcision of the son is to note the mention of the “firstborn” in the passage. The Lord calls Israel his firstborn and says that if Pharaoh refuses to let Israel go, then he will

kill Pharaoh's firstborn. When the event comes to pass, it is the blood of the Passover lamb that protects God's people. Here it is the blood of the covenant of circumcision that protects Moses's family, and it is his (non-Hebrew) wife who saves him!

*“Once again it is a woman who, by her quick-wittedness and insight, saves Moses. [Zipporah] stands in the train of the midwives, Moses' mother and sister, and the daughter of Pharaoh. Moses owes his very life to a series of actions by women, two of them non-Israelites. ... Moses is thus revealed as one who does not himself stand without need of mediation with God.”*

—from *Exodus: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, by Terence Fretheim

What Zipporah does here is fully pledge her and Moses's family to the covenant of Abraham. They are now fully God's people, ready to be used to free God's people.

## **FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9**

### **EXODUS 4:27-31**

#### EVERYTHING IS PREPARED

<sup>27</sup>The LORD said to Aaron, “Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.” So he went and met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. <sup>28</sup>And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD with which he had sent him to speak, and all the signs that he had commanded him to do. <sup>29</sup>Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the people of Israel. <sup>30</sup>Aaron spoke all the words that the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. <sup>31</sup>And the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped.

---

Moses was afraid that the people would neither receive him nor listen to him, but when he and Aaron arrive back in Egypt, everything goes just as the Lord promised!

Everything is prepared. Now is the time when God will save his people.

Exodus Part 1 concludes here, and Part 2 picks up on Monday. In the meantime, remind yourself, God always does what he says.

Be not afraid.

**“Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated into any other language. The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, is adapted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.”**