

## Plan and Purpose Bible Lesson #III-12—Exodus 4-11

As we left Exodus 3 in our last lesson, God was giving Moses a brief outline of how he was going to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt. However, Moses was busy trying to think up reasons why he wasn't qualified to be the one through whom God was going to deliver the Israelites. He continues to make excuses in chapter 4.

(Read Ex. 4:1-5) Moses argues that the elders of the children of Israel won't believe him. God then gives him three signs by which He says the elders will believe him. The first of these was when Moses casts his walking rod to the ground, it became a serpent, obviously a poisonous serpent as Moses fled from it at first. But when Moses caught it by the tail, it became a rod again.

(Read Ex. 4:6-9) If they would not believe Moses based on the first sign, the next two signs God gave Moses was that when Moses put his hand in his bosom and pulled it out it was obviously very leprous, but would return to natural skin when he again put his hand in his bosom and pulled it out. The third sign was that when he took water from the river and poured it on the dry ground, it became blood.

Moses then came up with a new reason that he wasn't qualified. (Read Ex. 4:10-17) Moses argues that he is not a good public speaker. He says he never has been a good speaker, nor has it seemed to improve while he is now talking to God. God's answer is to remember who the Creator is. God tells Moses to go and leave it up to God to be Moses' mouth and to teach him what to say. Moses is still skeptical. The Ferrar Fenton Translation make verse 13 a little clearer, **"But he answered; "Indeed, my LORD, send I pray You by some other hand!"** At this point God becomes angry with Moses and tells him his brother Aaron is coming to meet him. He tells Moses to tell Aaron what to say and God will teach Moses what to tell Aaron, Aaron will be Moses' spokesman. Moses finally understands that God has chosen him and there will be no other.

(Read Ex. 4:18-23) Moses then goes to his father-in-law and asks permission from him to return to Egypt and Jethro grants permission. Moses has two sons by this time. He took his wife and sons and begins his return to Egypt.

Strangely, God tells Moses to go to the Pharaoh and to show him the miracles that God has just shown Moses, but then God tells Moses that He will harden Pharaoh's heart so that he will not let the Israelites go. It is important that we understand this story of Moses' encounters with the Pharaoh and God's hardening the heart of Pharaoh as this teaches us of God's sovereignty. Finally, He tells Moses to tell Pharaoh that Israel is His first born son and if the Pharaoh will not let Israel go, He will slay the Pharaoh's first born son. This is ultimately what happened, but keep in mind that God said He would harden Pharaoh's heart to cause this. Once we have completed our study of the plagues, we will discuss the sovereignty of God

further as this is a very important concept that we need to understand.

(Read Ex. 4:24-26) This story appears to be unrelated to what was going on and we aren't given a reason for it. The book of Jasher says that Moses did not circumcise his first born son, Gershom, because his father-in-law commanded that it not be done. We aren't told why, but there is inference that it might have been because Zipporah did not want to do it. However, when their second son was born, Moses did circumcise him. If we go back to Gen. 17 where God commanded Abraham to keep the covenant of circumcision, we read in verse 14, **"And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."** This was something that had to be corrected before Moses could take on the job God had planned for him. I am not sure whether the "him" in verse 24 that God was seeking to kill was Moses or Gershom. With the above information, it could well have been Gershom. Zipporah realized the error that had been made and did the circumcision herself. Though the book of Jasher indicates that Zipporah was a very righteous woman, on the level of Sarah, Rebekkah, and Rachel, the tone of the story as it appears in the King James indicates that she objected to this ritual of blood.

(Read Ex. 4:27, 28) We read earlier that God told Moses that Aaron was coming to meet him. Here we see that God told Aaron to go meet Moses which he did and they met in the mountain of God (Mt. Sinai) as Moses was preparing to return to Egypt.

(Read Ex. 4:29-31) After Moses told Aaron all that God had told and shown him at Mt. Sinai, Aaron was in apparent agreement with Moses and when they had gathered the elders of the children of Israel together, Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people. As God had told Moses, the people believed Moses and Aaron and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

(Read Ex. 5:1-9) This first encounter of Moses and Aaron with the Pharaoh went as God had told Moses it would in that the Pharaoh refused to let the people go. However, not only did he refuse to let them go, he increased the labor output that the Israelites were expected to produce each day. Recall that we said that the Israelites built some of Egypt's treasure cities, thus the need to make brick. Straw was a major component in these bricks for the same reason that fiberglass fibers are used in many concrete projects today, to help strengthen the integrity of the concrete. Up to this point, the Pharaoh was furnishing the straw, now the people had to gather their own in addition to maintaining the same tally of bricks each day.

(Read Ex. 5:10-19) When the tally of bricks each day dropped by reason of the Israelites having to gather their own straw, the Israelite men whom the Egyptians had appointed as foremen were beaten, and the demand was again made that they not diminish the tally. These officers of the people then went before the Pharaoh to plead their case, but the Pharaoh was even more insistent that they maintain their assigned tallies.

(Read Ex. 5:20-23) The people blamed Moses then for the impossible position that they were now in. Moses went before God and asked Him why He had, instead of delivering the

people out of the hand of the Pharaoh, actually increased their burden. Moses seemed to feel the problem was at least partly due to his own ineffectiveness and asked God why He had sent him for this job.

(Read Ex. 6:1-8) God, in effect, told Moses, “you haven’t seen anything yet, just wait.” He again tells Moses that while He was known as God Almighty to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He was not known by the name JEHOVAH until now. Recall from our last lesson that JEHOVAH signifies God as a covenant keeping God with the people He has created. This is emphasized here as God reiterates to Moses that He made a covenant with the children of Israel to give them the land of Canaan and that He has heard the groaning of the people. In very strong language, He tells Moses to tell the people that He is JEHOVAH, or YHWH, (keep in mind that when you see “LORD” in the King James translation, it should be translated JEHOVAH) that He is going to bring them out from under the hand of the Egyptians, and will redeem them with an outstretched arm, but He is going to do so with great judgments. Store this information in your mind until we discuss the sovereignty of God as it is important to our understanding. At times, things might appear to not be fair until we understand the whole picture. God had used Egypt here for a special purpose, but now because they had acted in accordance with that purpose, but probably with the idea that it was by their own will, God is going to bring great judgments upon them.

God assures Moses that in keeping with the promises that He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He will be God to Israel and they are going to know it by what He is going to do to the Egyptians. But He is going to keep those promises and bring the people into the land of Canaan and give it to them for a heritage.

(Read Ex. 6:9-13) The Moses that we will see at the end of the Exodus is going to be a very different man from the man we are seeing here as he attempts to get the Pharaoh to let the people go. Here he is still trying to get out of the job as he feels that he simply is not the man for the job. He tells God that the children of Israel won’t listen to him, and asks, how does He expect the Pharaoh to listen to him? Moses has not yet learned that it is not who he is or what his capabilities are, it is God that is in charge and is working His plan.

(Read Ex. 6:14-27) I often hear people complain that genealogies are boring so they don’t read them. I have to agree to a certain extent, but they do need to be read as very often we will be dealing with people later in Scripture that if we know where they come from, it is much easier to understand their importance to the story. In this genealogy, our first importance is to learn Moses and Aaron’s background. We see that Levi was their great grandfather on their father’s side and their grandfather on their mother’s side since their father married his father’s sister. Some of the names that we are going to encounter later include Korah, another great-grandson of Levi; Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, sons of Aaron; and Phinehas, a grandson of Aaron. If you can’t remember the names, I recommend the use of a concordance, when we study an individual, that will refer one back to earlier Scriptures that tell

us who that person is. It is important.

(Read Ex. 6:28-30) This is basically a repetition of what we read in verses 11-13)

(Read Ex. 7:1-7) We see more detail in God's plan to deliver Israel out of Egypt. Moses, as inept as he thinks he is, is being made a god before Pharaoh. This does not mean that Pharaoh is going to do what Moses tells him to do, but he is going to reverence him and hear him and Aaron when they come before him. At the same time that God is making Moses a god before Pharaoh, He tells Moses that He is also hardening Pharaoh's heart so that he won't let the people go. God reveals His purpose for this. It is so **"that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments."** Not only is Israel going to know that God is JEHOVAH, but Egypt is going to know this as well.

At this point, Moses is 80 years old. He spent 40 years learning the ways of a king, and 40 years learning the ways of a shepherd, two very different jobs, the former to be served and the latter to serve. Both are essential, as we will see, to complete the mission God has planned for Moses. His brother Aaron is three years older than Moses.

(Read Ex. 7:8-13) This was the first action that began to make Moses look like a god to the Pharaoh. Although the king's magicians were able to duplicate the casting of their rods to the ground and the rods becoming serpents, though probably viewed as a small matter by the Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron still prevailed with the upper hand when Moses' rod turned serpent swallowed up all the magician's serpents.

Incidentally, for what it might be worth, the book of Jasher describes the Pharaoh as a very small man who was very intelligent, but in appearance, very ugly.

(Read Ex. 7:14-25) This is the first of the ten plagues that God would ultimately bring on Egypt. It is hard to imagine what this plague would have been like. Apparently, the Egyptians were able to dig wells that had good water, but with all other water sources turning to blood, one can only imagine the smell.

(Read Ex. 8:1-7) A few years ago, for some unknown reason, several places in our area suddenly had a very large influx of a small worm. Almost before people realized what was happening these worms were everywhere in their houses, in their clothes, in their food, literally everywhere. There were places on the highway where they crossed where it looked like a huge grease spot. We talked at the time of how this compared to the plague of the frogs in Egypt. Though people were soon able to control the worms with sprays and poisoned bait, there was no such control of the frogs, plus the frogs were not just in some areas, but over all of the populated area of Egypt. Remember that nearly all of the populated area in Egypt was in the Nile River basin.

(Read Ex. 8:8-15) This plague got the attention of the Pharaoh and he asked Moses to take the plague from them, promising that if they did so, he would let the Israelites go. Moses asked when he wanted them to do this and the Pharaoh told them tomorrow. Moses agreed

and entreated God to on the morrow rid the land of the frogs. Sure enough all of the frogs on dry land died the next day. One problem—what to do with millions of dead frogs. The Egyptians gathered them together into huge piles and then these piles began to stink. When the Pharaoh saw this, he did an about face and refused to let the people go. So it was with plague number two.

(Read Ex. 8:16-19) In the first two plagues, like with the rod turning into a serpent, the magicians were able to duplicate what Moses and Aaron did. However, with this plague of lice, they were unable to duplicate this plague. I'm sure that there was a certain level of arrogance among these magicians and the Pharaoh himself. With this plague, the magicians began to realize who they were dealing with, and told the Pharaoh what their thoughts were. However, the ego of the Pharaoh caused him to still not let the people go.

(Read Ex. 8:20-32) Apparently the children of Israel were affected by the first three plagues along with the Egyptians. However, with this fourth plague, the plague of the flies, God told Moses to tell the Pharaoh that He would put a division between the land of Goshen where the Israelites were and the rest of Egypt and the land of Goshen would not be affected.

Moses had been asking that the Pharaoh would let the people go three days into the wilderness to sacrifice unto God. This time, the Pharaoh told Moses to take the people and sacrifice in the land of Egypt. Moses objected to this saying in effect, that if the Israelites sacrificed in the presence of the Egyptians after all that God had done to the Egyptians, the Egyptians would stone the Israelites. Finally the Pharaoh agreed to let them go into the wilderness, but when Moses intreated God to remove the flies and God did so, the Pharaoh changed his mind again and refused to let them go.

(Read Exodus 9:1-7) Though all of the Egyptian cattle, horses, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep were affected by this very severe pestilence, we're told that only the cattle died. When the Pharaoh found out that none of the Israelite cattle were affected, it made him mad and he again refused to let the Israelites go.

(Read Exodus 9:8-12) The word "blains" means swelling. These boils with swelling not only affected all of the people and animals, but affected even the magicians that had been previously standing before Moses so that they could not continue to stand before him. Still the Pharaoh refused to let the people go.

(Read Exodus 9:13-35) Each of the plagues is getting progressively worse and more destructive. However, with this seventh plague, God issues a warning that some of Pharaoh's servants heeded and protected their livestock and servants by bringing them into shelter. This plague of hail also helps us understand some timing later on in our study. We're told in verse 31 that the flax and the barley were destroyed as the barley was in the ear, i.e. was headed out. But verse 32 tells us that the wheat was not destroyed. Later on in our study we will learn that there are three harvest feasts that God commanded the Israelite men to keep. Because of what we are told here in these verses establishing the time of the year of this plague of hail, we know

that the first of these feasts, the Passover Feast, or the Feast of First Fruits was the harvest feast for barley. This also lets us know that the second feast, the Feast of Weeks, later known as Feast of Pentecost, was the harvest feast for wheat as the wheat ripened almost two months later than the barley.

(Read Exodus 10:1-20) God told Moses to warn the Pharaoh what would happen with the next plague which is the plague of locusts. When Moses and Aaron came before the Pharaoh and told him what was going to happen next, Pharaoh's advisers advised Him to let only the men go and serve God in the wilderness. When the Pharaoh offered to do this, Moses rejected it saying that they would take all of the people, young and old, along with their flocks. The Pharaoh refused to allow this, so God brought on the plague of locusts. The advisers to the Pharaoh had become aware that it wasn't just what happened at the moment of the plague, but these plagues were going to have long term effects as all of the crops were being destroyed and many of the animals had died.

Again, the Pharaoh recognized his sin and asked forgiveness, but as soon as the locusts had been blown out into the Red Sea, he again changed his mind and refused to let the people go.

(Read Exodus 10:21-29) This brought on the plague of darkness. Yet the children of Israel had light. This time the Pharaoh said he would allow all of the people to go, but the flocks and herds must be left behind. Again, Moses rejected this as he said they didn't know with what they would need to serve the Lord until they had gone into the wilderness, so they needed to take all of their animals with them. The Pharaoh then refused to let them go. This time he threatened Moses and Aaron saying that if he saw their face again, they would die. Moses agreed, telling the Pharaoh that he had spoken well, they would not see each other again.

(Read Exodus 11) God had showed Moses what He was going to do next, so before Moses left the Pharaoh, he warned the Pharaoh what was going to happen and then he left. All of the first born of man and animals were going to die in the middle of the night. There would not be a household that was not affected. Moses told the Pharaoh that the people themselves would come to him begging him to take the Israelites and go.

It is important to note that God is hardening the Pharaoh's heart so that he won't let the people go. In the book of Romans, Paul uses this fact to teach of the sovereignty of God. Man likes to think that he has free will; most of us believe that we are the ones who have made the decisions that have been made. For us to understand the plan of God that He outlines in Scripture, it will be important for us to understand the sovereignty of God. We are His creation. He owns us. He can do with us whatever He so desires. The Bible is the story of what God desires and how He carries it out. There will be times when we will think God is not being fair. But once we learn the whole story, we will see that the overall plan He has for man is something beyond our imaginations in its glory and goodness and there will be no man that

doesn't benefit. So as we discuss the history as presented in Scripture, note that things happen because God plans them that way, but His ultimate intent is for our benefit, even though we might feel sometimes that God is not being fair to us. We just have to know the whole story.

Numbers in Scripture have meaning. According to Dr. Bullinger in his Companion Bible notes, he says that the number 10 "denotes Ordinal perfection. Another new first; after the ninth digit, when numeration commences anew." In our story, Israel is getting ready to begin a completely new phase in their national and personal lives. So it is appropriate that it begins with the tenth plague. JRL