



Exodus - Chapter Six

I. Exodus 1:1-18:27 - The Exodus of Israel from Egypt (continues)

I.c Exodus 5:1-7:7 - Moses and Aaron: The Initial Request (continues)

Summary of Chapter Six

God told Moses that he remembered his covenantal promises to the patriarchs and had heard the groaning of the enslaved Israelites. He confirmed to Moses that he would deliver the people by his own strength out of slavery and into the land he had promised their forefathers. God then instructed Moses and Aaron to return to Pharaoh to demand the release of the Israelites but Moses once again doubted.

The author provides a brief genealogy of the Israelites, particularly focusing on Aaron and Moses being of the tribe of Levi, and listing the descendants of Aaron who would later become the priests of Israel.

Again, God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh and let him know that it was God who commanded him. However, Moses stated that he was a poor speaker and Pharaoh would dismiss whatever he said.

I.c.ii Exodus 6:1-6:13 - Israel's Deliverance Assured

After the first audience with Pharaoh results in his defiance and further hardship for Israel (5:1-21) and Moses asked the Lord why he has done this (5:22-23), the Lord responds by emphasising that he will be present with his people and will bring about their deliverance in faithfulness to his covenant.

Introduction to vv. 1-9

The Lord reaffirms to Moses that he will bring his people out of Egypt, which is emphasised throughout this section by the numerous first-person statements, e.g. "I will free you," "deliver you," and "I will redeem you" (v.6).

¹ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh: Indeed, by a mighty hand he will let them go; by a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land.’

Exodus 6:1

Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. Carrying on the story from the previous chapter, Moses was discouraged by what he thought was God’s lack of action and help. God’s reply to Moses showed that he wanted him to know that the Lord was in control of it all. Moses was discouraged because he was too impressed by Pharaoh and not impressed enough by God.

By a mighty hand refers to what the Lord will do in order to bring Israel out of Egypt, which 3:19-20 and 13:3 make explicit, and not to the manner in which Pharaoh will send them.

The Hebrew verb translated he will drive them out is also translated <<*he will let you go*>> (3:20b), and is the same verb, *shallakh*, used repeatedly in the command to Pharaoh, <<*Let my people go*>> as, for example, in 8:1b.

² God also spoke to Moses and said to him: ‘I am the Lord. ³ I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name “The Lord” I did not make myself known to them. ⁴ I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens. ⁵ I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. ⁶ Say therefore to the Israelites, “I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. ⁷ I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.”’ ⁹ Moses told this to the Israelites; but they would not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery.

Exodus 6:2-9

The repeated declaration of God’s presence and identity, I am the Lord, frames the section and emphasises the significance of the plagues for Israel: the same God Almighty who made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (vv.3-4) has heard the cries of their descendants and remembered his covenant (v.5); he is the one who revealed himself to Moses, refer to 3:14-15, and who will bring them

out of Egypt into the land he had promised to their fathers (vv.6-8). With regard to the stress here on the Lord's faithfulness, refer back to <<***I will be with you***>> (3:12), and the comment made on 3:14.

I appeared. God did indeed appear to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as indicated in a number of places in Genesis, for example Genesis 24:3-12, 26:22, 27:27 and 28:21.

But by my name "The Lord" I did not make myself known to them. In light of this statement, some have suggested that the patriarchs did not actually know the name Yahweh. It is probably best, however, to understand this statement as explaining that the patriarchs did not fully understand and experience the essential character of God as represented by the name Yahweh, **"The Lord"**, as this was first understood more fully by Moses when the Lord appeared to him at the Burning Bush as described in Exodus 3:1-22. This was later more fully expressed as in: <<***Your name, O God, like your praise, reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with victory***>> (Psalm 48:10), and: <<***Let them know that you alone, whose name is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth***>> (Psalm 83:18). Thus in 3:12-15 God had revealed himself to Moses in a far deeper way, promising Moses, <<***I will be with you***>>, and revealing the significance of his covenant identity as Yahweh, **"The Lord"**. Here then, God reaffirms his commitment to his people and his covenant identity in repeated affirmations, stating three times that he is **the Lord** – that is, he is the God of the covenant who will act in a decisive way on behalf of his people: **I will free you**; I will **deliver you**; **I will redeem you**; **I will take you as my people**; **I will be your God**; **I will bring you into the land**; and **I will give it to you for a possession.**

Redeem. This term refers to God's dealings for the sake of his people, rescuing them from danger and fostering the conditions in which their faithfulness may flourish. This can be seen in other texts such as: <<***Remember your congregation, which you acquired long ago, which you redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage. Remember Mount Zion, where you came to dwell***>> (Psalm 74:2), and: <<***Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem***>> (Isaiah 52:9).

I also established my covenant with them. The patriarchs had only the promises, not the things promised. This generation would now be given the opportunity to reap the reward of God's promises, although they would relinquish this opportunity through lack of faith. It would be their children and their descendants that would receive the reward of the promise. In addition, although the patriarchs knew **God Almighty**, 'El Shaddai, they did not know him as extensively and intimately as he would reveal himself to Moses and his generation. They knew the power of God, but did not have the same personal relationship and revelation Moses would come to know.

Say therefore to the Israelites. The previous statement seemed to be more for Moses himself (vv.2-5). This following word was given for the benefit of Israel as a whole.

When the Lord says I will take you as my people, and I will be your God, he is expressing the central idea of Israel's relationship with him: <<*But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron-smelter, out of Egypt, to become a people of his very own possession, as you are now*>> (Deuteronomy 4:20), and: <<*For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession*>> (Deuteronomy 7:6). He will bring them into a personal relationship with himself, a relationship of great blessing, protection, and joy. When he says You shall know that I am the Lord your God, he is indicating that he will reveal himself to Israel through his acts on their behalf, as indicated by: <<*and that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I have made fools of the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them – so that you may know that I am the Lord*>> (Exodus 10:2). This expression, common in Exodus, is called the 'recognition formula'; refer to the comment made on 7:5. Although it is addressed to Israel here, several similar statements, without the designation your God, are directed to Pharaoh during the course of the plagues.

But they would not listen to Moses. After Moses spoke what God told him the children of Israel were still stuck in miserable unbelief. They probably would have said that they did not doubt God, but they doubted the messenger - Moses.

Because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery. This is why Israel doubted both God and his messenger. Their centuries of slavery made them think like slaves instead of people of the covenant. Pharaoh was bigger in their eyes than God was.

Many Christians find themselves in the same place. They find it hard to trust God and believe that he is for them. This is why Paul says: <<*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds*>> (Romans 12:2a). The children of Israel needed their minds renewed, and today's believers do also. Ezekiel 20:5-9 shows why God was so small and Pharaoh was so big in Israel's heart during this time. Ezekiel explained that they trusted the gods of their oppressors, worshipping the gods of the Egyptians. This is why they did not trust God, and his messenger Moses. The reason why God did not judge Israel at the time was because he did not want his name profaned among the Gentiles.

¹⁰ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, ¹¹ 'Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his land.' ¹² But Moses spoke to the Lord, 'The Israelites have not listened to me; how then shall Pharaoh listen to me, poor speaker that I am?' ¹³ Thus the Lord spoke to Moses and

Aaron, and gave them orders regarding the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt, charging them to free the Israelites from the land of Egypt.

Exodus 6:10-13

The content of this section is repeated in vv.26-30, but reversed in sequence:

- Moses (vv.10-12)
- Moses and Aaron (v.13)
- Their genealogy (vv.14-25)
- Aaron and Moses (vv.26-27)
- Moses (vv.28-30).

Aside from highlighting the genealogy, the shape of this frame also appears to emphasise the particular role of Moses as the one who interacts directly with the Lord (vv.10-12 and vv.28-30) in addition to his role with Aaron in carrying out what the Lord commands (v.13 and vv.26-27).

How then shall Pharaoh listen to me. God told Moses to repeat what he had unsuccessfully done before (5:1-2). Moses felt this approach had failed once, so there was no sense in repeating it. This approach failed to persuade even the people of Israel; it seemed that it would never work with Pharaoh.

Poor speaker that I am or I am of uncircumcised lips is repeated in v.30. It is difficult to determine whether Moses intends something significantly different from his plea of being <<*slow of speech and slow of tongue*>> (4:10b). The vocabulary may be meant to evoke the incident involving circumcision in 4:24-26. If so, Moses could be implying that he feels not only physically unable to speak but also personally unfit or 'unclean' to fulfil the task, as reflected upon by the prophet: <<*And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'*>> (Isaiah 6:5).

Thus the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them orders. God wanted Moses and Aaron to be persistent in their obedience; not to look at Pharaoh, not to look at the children of Israel, not to look at even themselves - but to look at God and God alone. Moses wanted to quit after the first setback. God had much to do in his heart before Moses would be ready to deal with all the discouragement ahead as he led Israel to the Promised Land. God was building endurance in Moses, the ability to stick with God's plan and will even when it did not seem to work. This is faith; this is patient endurance in the Lord.

Orders regarding the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt. Moses had to understand that this was God's will, not merely a few suggestions for Israel and Pharaoh. This was his divine command that would be accomplished, one way or another.

I.c.iii Exodus 6:14-27 - The Genealogy of Moses and Aaron

The genealogy of Moses and Aaron (vv.14-25) is framed by opening and closing sections, which nearly mirror each other (vv.10-13 and vv.26-30). The function of the genealogy is to preserve the particular history of Moses and Aaron as the ones through whom the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, as vv.26-27 make clear, and also of Aaron's sons who would become the heads of the priestly line in Israel.

¹⁴ The following are the heads of their ancestral houses: the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben. ¹⁵ The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the families of Simeon. ¹⁶ The following are the names of the sons of Levi according to their genealogies: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, and the length of Levi's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years. ¹⁷ The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their families. ¹⁸ The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, and the length of Kohath's life was one hundred and thirty-three years. ¹⁹ The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their genealogies. ²⁰ Amram married Jochebed his father's sister and she bore him Aaron and Moses, and the length of Amram's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years. ²¹ The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. ²² The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri. ²³ Aaron married Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab and sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ²⁴ The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the families of the Korahites. ²⁵ Aaron's son Eleazar married one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the ancestral houses of the Levites by their families.

Exodus 6:14-25

The beginning of the genealogy looks as if the sons or heads of the household of Jacob's sons will be listed in the order of their birth. However, after naming the sons of Reuben and Simeon, it stops to focus on the sons of Levi and in particular on Aaron, Moses, and Aaron's sons. The genealogy functions primarily to preserve:

1. The family history of Moses and Aaron as the ones through whom the Lord led Israel out of Egypt.
2. The history of Aaron's sons as those who were called to be priests in Israel, refer to 28:1.

Other figures in the genealogy are likely included because of their roles in events narrated in the Book of Numbers: the sons of Korah eventually become jealous of

Aaron's role as priest and rebel (Numbers 16:1-50); and Aaron's grandson Phinehas is later noted for his act of faithfulness in relation to Israel's Baal worship at Peor (Numbers 25:1-9).

Like many Biblical genealogies, this one does not aim to include every single generation. It only lists four generations from Jacob to Moses (Levi-Kohath-Amram-Moses); compare this to 1 Chronicles Chapter 7, which lists 12 generations from Jacob to Joshua.

²⁶ It was this same Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said, 'Bring the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, company by company.'²⁷ It was they who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt to bring the Israelites out of Egypt, the same Moses and Aaron.

Exodus 6:26-27

It was this same Aaron and Moses. These verses are structured to highlight the central statement that it was this particular Moses and Aaron who went before Pharaoh on the direct instructions of the Lord: <<*You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron*>> (Psalm 77:20).

I.c.iv Exodus 6:28-7:1-7 - Moses and Aaron Obey God's Commands

The Lord reaffirms several things from his earlier conversations with Moses: he has provided Aaron to act like Moses' prophet in speaking to Pharaoh; he will harden Pharaoh's heart; and he will bring Israel out of Egypt by his hand.

²⁸ On the day when the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, ²⁹ he said to him, 'I am the Lord; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I am speaking to you.'³⁰ But Moses said in the Lord's presence, 'Since I am a poor speaker, why would Pharaoh listen to me?'

Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I am speaking to you. God previously commanded Moses to speak to Pharaoh. After the first disappointing experience, Moses now hesitated in his obedience.

I am a poor speaker. This may refer to Moses' idea that he had a speech problem, or it may be his understanding that he was a sinful man, and therefore unworthy to be used. Moses' feeling may be similar to that of Isaiah, later recorded in Isaiah 6:1-8. Isaiah knew that he was a sinner in God's presence, and sensed that the centre of his sin was in his lips, as in speaking and communicating in a way that did not glorify God. God could deal with Isaiah's unclean lips, and he was more than able to deal with Moses' uncircumcised lips as some translations put it. God was also perfectly able to deal with the things in the lives of each believer, whether real or imagined, that hinder them from being used by him.