

EXODUS WEEK ONE – September 27, 2020

Background - The book of Exodus is part of a larger story of what is known as the “Pentateuch” (pent-a-took). It’s part of the story of Abraham that started in Genesis 12 with God’s divine promise that Abraham’s descendants would inherit the land which would eventually be known as Canaan and that they would become a great nation. One of Abraham’s descendants, Jacob, earned the name “Israel” while holding his own in a wrestling match against a divine being at the ford of the Jabbok River (Genesis 32).

The 11th son of Jacob’s 12 sons, Joseph, was sold by his brothers to slave traders who took him to Egypt. While in Egypt, he became an influential leader. When a famine fell on Canaan, Joseph invited the inhabitants of Canaan to Egypt to avoid starvation. Genesis ends with Joseph’s death. Exodus begins by stating that generations after Joseph died, the Egyptians made the Hebrews slaves to build their vast Empire. Exodus begins the transition from the family and clan stories of Genesis to the national history of Israel.

Date and Authorship – Although the Pentateuch’s authorship has been traditionally attributed to Moses, it was actually the a compilation of many authors and oral traditions between 922 BCE and 400 BCE.

Questions for Exodus 1-5

1. What made the Hebrew people “special” even though they were slaves in Egypt?
2. What was Pharaoh’s biggest fear concerning the Hebrew people?
3. Why would Pharaoh issue an executive order to have the Hebrew midwives kill all baby boys instead of girls? Wouldn’t that be a threat to the labor pool?

4. Why do you suppose two Egyptian midwives defy Pharaoh?
5. Who were the people instrumental in saving Moses' life, and what does that say about the power dynamics in Egypt during this time?
6. Why did Moses kill the Egyptian slave-driver? What were the consequences?
7. What was Moses' life in Midian like? How is this all tied into God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?
8. What was Moses' response to God's call from the burning bush and why is this important?
9. What is God's name, and why is that important?
10. What is this "mighty hand" that God promises the children of Israel?
11. Why does Moses receive miraculous powers from God? What are they, and how does it relate to the way Pharaoh perceives him? How does Aaron fit into this?
12. Why is Israel's belief in Moses important? Why is Moses still reluctant to carry out God's plan? What is God's solution?
13. How does Moses' trip back to Egypt go? What the heck is going on in 4:21-26? Why does Zipporah cut off her son's foreskin and touch Moses' "feet" with it?
14. How does Moses bring his appeal to Pharaoh? What was Pharaoh's response? What was Moses' response to his failure?