

EXPERIENCES OF MOSES IN DELIVERANCE OF ISRAEL FROM THE EGYPTIANS.

(By Ted Smith.)

To start our thinking in the right channel I would like to draw on James 5th chapter, verses 10 and 11: “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction; and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” I notice that in some translations, instead of saying “we count them happy which endure,” they say “we count them blessed which endure.”

I particularly want to put emphasis upon the word “example” in the 10th verse. Haven’t we all admired the example of certain outstanding characters in the Old Testament? We have even been thrilled as we studied their lives and noted their staunch faith in God when they went through their trying experiences.

And we have been deeply impressed as we noted the circumstances of their lives—no band playing to urge them on to be faithful to God; no encouragement from their neighbors or the world. The bare realities of life were the setting for their acts of faith and loyalty to God. They endured when their surroundings were even grim in some cases, and in a few instances, their circumstances were fraught with danger to their natural lives and welfare.

I think we can draw strength from the examples set by faithful characters in the Old Testament. And in some cases those examples were set us in the very ordinary affairs of life. This was particularly true in the case of Moses. He had to flee for his life and leave a luxurious home and then live for forty years as an obscure shepherd. We too, are surrounded by the ordinary affairs of life, and our time in the Narrow Way is stretching out more than we ever expected. We must draw heavily on the encouragement provided for us in the precious promises of God, and not become weary in well doing. I think there is much in the life of Moses that can be an inspiration to us if we think deeply and carefully and see lessons for our learning. The natural surroundings in the life of Moses had nothing in them to buoy him up. It was God’s dealings with him that made the difference in his life. So with us—our natural surroundings have nothing in them to buoy us up. It is only when we take strong hold upon God’s dealings with us, can we make progress and win out in the end.

It is interesting to notice that the life of Moses was divided into three 40-year periods. The first period was from his birth to the time when he reached ripe manhood. He was brought up in the home of an Egyptian princess and was educated in all the learning of

Egypt. The second 40-year period was from the time when he fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian task-master for his abuse of one of his Israelitish brethren who were slaves in Egypt. For 40 years he was a shepherd for his father-in-law. The third period was from the time when he received a message from God at the burning bush to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. During this period he was a shepherd to guide the children of Israel. (R3989-3)

When we consider the meaning of the names of Moses' father and his mother, we conclude that his parents were strongly religious and were true Israelites, it was a family in the tribe of Levi. Moses' father's name was Amram (Exod. 6:20), and the meaning of his name was "high people" or "exalted people" (Young's Concordance). Moses' mother's name was Jochebed (Num. 26:59) and this name had the meaning of "Jehovah gloried." Amram married his father's sister which would make her his own aunt.

At the time of Moses' birth, the Israelitish people were going through a very tragic period. According to Exodus 1:7 "the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them." A new king of Egypt arose at this time, and he did not know Joseph. This king was alarmed at the growth of the Israelites, and he was afraid that the Israelites might join with the enemies of Egypt. So he suggested a plan to wear out the Israelites. Taskmasters were set over the Israelites and they were compelled to build treasure cities for the Egyptians. We find this recorded in the first chapter of Exodus.

These taskmasters were instructed to "inflict the Israelites with their burdens." "But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." The taskmasters made the lives of the Israelites "bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field." It is not hard to imagine how tired the Israelites were after a day's labor, how they would drag themselves home and their wives would be alarmed over the condition of their husbands. But this king of Egypt was a beastly man, and he called for the midwives and instructed them to kill every male child born to Israelitish women. How the people must have felt when they learned of the king's decree. There must have been a dark cloud of fear over the lives of Israelitish women. But the midwives refused to do as the king decreed; and when the king called for a report from the midwives they said "the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them." (Exodus 1:19) But this Pharaoh was a very determined man and sent out a message to the people, "Saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive." (Exodus 1:22). What a terrible shock this must have sent into the hearts of the Israelites—they were to cast their baby boys into the river and save only the girls that were born. How their hearts must have sank to think of drowning their baby boys. And woe unto anyone who would disobey the edict of the king! What a predicament they were in!

In the second chapter of Exodus we read of a son born to Amram and Jochebed. The mother saw that he was a “goodly child and she hid him three months.” We can imagine how careful Jochebed was to keep this child quiet whenever any Egyptians might be passing by. Finally she could no longer hide him, and being a very resourceful woman she made a little ark of bulrushes and made it water-proof and laid it in the flags by the river’s brink. Little sister Miriam “stood afar off” to see what would happen. No doubt this little girl would be tense and excited. “The daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself in the river, and her maidens walked along the river’s side.” Miriam was watching intently to see what would happen. Pharaoh’s daughter spied the little ark, and she sent her maid to fetch it to her. And when she opened the ark, she saw the child and the “babe wept.” Pharaoh’s daughter was touched by the sight and took compassion on the babe, saying “This is one of the Hebrew’s children.” No doubt this was what Jochebed had in mind and her little plan of action worked perfectly. And Miriam was right on hand and said “Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?” Very likely Miriam was in on her mother’s plan and she cooperated perfectly, for this weeping child was her own brother.

Well Jochebed was called for and Pharaoh’s daughter “said unto her, Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.” We can imagine that Jochebed kissed this little baby with great joy for now she had her own son back in her own home to nurse and care for. And she got paid for it too!

According to Exodus 2:10 “the child grew and Jochebed brought him unto Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son.” Pharaoh’s daughter named her adopted son “Moses, and said, Because I drew him out of the water.” We doubt if anyone else in the whole world from Adam’s day to now ever got that same name, Moses, for the same reason Moses got his name: “Drawn out of the water.” Moses was “educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds.” (Acts 7:22. Smith’s Bible Dictionary, 429:2)

And it came to pass, when Moses was grown (he was 40 years old at the time) that he “went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.” Just think of it—all this time, forty years, the Hebrews were under taskmasters and suffering harsh treatment as slaves! When Moses saw one of his Hebrew brethren being abused, “he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.” Moses was in a favorable position as the adopted son of Pharaoh’s daughter, well treated and well fed and well educated; but he did not forget his own people but went to the extreme of defending one of his brethren to the point of endangering his own life, for the Egyptians would not take kindly to the killing of one of their own people for the sake of a Hebrew slave.

The next day Moses went out among the Hebrews and he saw two of them striving against one another. Moses attempted to set these two men a good example, but he got the shock of his life, for one of them said “Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?” Instead of receiving thanks for his act of the previous day, Moses was challenged and rebuked. “And Moses feared, and said, [to himself, no doubt] surely this thing is known.” “Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.”

We think Moses deserves credit for his loyalty to his Hebrew brethren. What a sacrifice was his, to flee from Egypt, leaving all the comforts and position that were his. What a change for him!

When he arrived in this new land, he had an interesting experience. The priest or prince of Midian had seven daughters and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father’s flock. However the shepherds came “and drove them away.” “But Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock.” Moses must have been a very brave man to challenge these shepherds, and he must have been very kind and sympathetic too, to assist these seven women in watering their flock. After the sheep were watered the women went home and the father asked “How is it that ye are come so soon today?” And they replied “An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock.” And Reuel, their father said, “And where is he? why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread.” These daughters thought Moses was an Egyptian, so he must have been dressed as an Egyptian. And verse 21 and 22 informs us that “Moses was content to dwell with the man; and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter, and she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom; for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.”

According to Exodus 3:1 Moses became a shepherd in the employ of his father-in-law, Jethro. What a tremendous change this was for Moses. For forty years he had lived under very favorable conditions in Egypt. He was the adopted son of an Egyptian princess. He had all the comforts and privileges of royalty. He was well educated in “all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds.” This is the way Acts 7:22 described the life and experiences of Moses during the forty years in the home of royalty. But now what a change! He was in a strange land, isolated from his previous associates and living the simple life of a shepherd. Can we imagine how this might have affected him?! All the activities and social relationships of Egyptian life were gone, left behind. In its place he had the simple quiet life of a shepherd, caring for sheep that did not belong to him, but belonged to his father-in-law. Under the stars at night, while caring for the sheep, he would witness the grand display of the handiwork of God. He would observe the moon and its constant changing positions every night. He would

observe the planets as they successively appeared in the brilliant starry sky, for in desert lands, the stars seem so bright and close enough to almost reach out and touch. No doubt he would think about the Creator and wonder what his purposes were for him personally, and for his people, the Hebrews under the domination of the conditions of slavery. No doubt his thoughts would be elevated under such circumstances. He would be in training in self-control, in maintaining faith in a supreme God, and in patient endurance when he would be unable to fathom the future in any way.

Time marched on for forty years, and we read in Exodus 2:23 to 25 that “It came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died; and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect for them.”

Now a tremendous change was about to come into the life of Moses. We pass now into the 3rd chapter of Exodus. “Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.” (Horeb was Mt. Sinai.) Little did Moses know what was to happen to him now. “And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside [he must have said this in his thoughts], and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.” (Then something astounding happened!) “And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses.” And Moses replied, “Here am I.” Then Moses got a striking lesson in reverence: “Draw not nigh: hither; put off thy shoes, from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” Apparently this was the first communication Moses ever received from God. We can well imagine the feelings of Moses. He must have been tense and all alert to see what would happen next and what would be said to him. “Moreover God said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Moses no doubt was startled, as we would be too, if we had a like experience as natural men and women. “And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.” “And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land, flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites and Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”

Next we notice Moses' reply and we note what a changed man he was from forty years ago. He was ready to defend his Hebrew brethren and had the courage to actually kill a taskmaster who was maltreating one of the Hebrew slaves. We read on, beginning with the 11th verse: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Then God spoke words of encouragement to Moses—"Certainly I will be with thee: and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain." This showed God's foreknowledge and power—that he knew he was going to deliver the Israelites and that he would make a covenant with them at the very place where he was talking with Moses.

But Moses wanted more assurance—"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?" At this point we are thinking how God has his own ways and reasons in selection of his servants to carry out his designs. It would be easy to assume that God would select some strong minded man with an abundance of self-push to send as his servant to bring Pharaoh to his knees. But no, God selects someone miles and miles away from Egypt and urges an obscure shepherd who has been away from Egyptian civilization for forty years, and who is very reluctant to be sent to Pharaoh to deliver the Hebrew people, even though we would suppose Moses was still loyal to his own race of people.

Then God speaks to Moses and instructs him in the plan of action to bring Moses to the point of willingness to respond to God's urging and act as God's agent to deliver the Israelites. Now we read again from the third chapter, starting with verse 14, and let us keep in mind that Moses was very reluctant to respond: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt; and I have said, I will bring you up out of the afflictions of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. And they shall hearken to thy voice; and thou shalt come thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us; and now let us go, we beseech thee, three day's journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst

thereof; and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty. But every woman shall borrow of her neighbor, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment; and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.” What a message of foreknowledge this was! God had power and wisdom and he knew exactly what he was going to do and he knew exactly what the results would be. Was Moses now convinced? Was he all enthused to go and deliver his people and be God’s chosen and honored agent? Not at all! He was still reluctant and we are amazed at the patience and persistence of God in dealing with this unwilling man.

But God knew what he wanted done, and he knew this man, Moses was the one to do the job. We read now starting with the 4th chapter: “And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.” May it not be possible that Moses remembered the rebuff he received from his Hebrew brother 40 years previously, and he might have feared he would receive the same treatment again, and would have to flee for his life. Actually this was a dangerous mission that was proposed to Moses and being a shepherd for 40 years may not have contributed to bravery to confront a powerful Egyptian monarch.

Now God changed his tactics in dealing with Moses’ reluctance. He used a different method altogether. “And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it.” Now Moses knew a dangerous serpent when he saw one. No doubt he killed many a serpent as he took care of his father-in-law’s sheep. So, when he saw this serpent on the ground, he was alarmed and ran away from it.

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand and take it by the tail.” It would be interesting to know what Moses thought at this point—pick up this dangerous serpent by the tail? He might have thought, If God is able to change a rod into a serpent, he must have wisdom and power to protect me from the serpent’s bite. And so Moses “put forth his hand, and caught it.” Then what happened? “It became a rod in his hand.” This must have had a powerful effect upon Moses. Then God said “That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.”

But the Lord had something else to impress Moses to bring him to the point of willingness to go as commanded. “And the Lord said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.” It would be easy to suppose that Moses would be horrified to see his hand turned white with leprosy. Then the Lord said, “Put now thine

hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.” Moses must have heaved a sigh of relief when his hand was restored to its normal color. Then the Lord said that Moses would be given power to bring about another sign—the water of the river would be turned into blood.

But Moses was still reserved about going. “And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.” We will shorten the story now. The record said the Lord was angry with Moses and this might have meant that the Lord spoke with considerable force to Moses and told him that Aaron his brother would speak well, and that he was coming to meet Moses, and Aaron would be the spokesman for Moses. Moses was commanded to take his rod to be used for signs to Israel and Pharaoh.

After all this urging upon Moses we find him going to his father-in-law asking for his permission to return unto his brethren in Egypt. He apparently did not tell Jethro what he had just gone through at the burning bush, but merely said he wanted to “See whether they be yet alive.” And “Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.”

We next read Exodus 4:19 and 20, “And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt; for all the men are dead which sought thy life. And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt; and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.” Yes, his rod was now called the “rod of God” as it was to be used as the Lord’s instrument in the performance of the miracles before the Israelites and before Pharaoh.

Continuing on now with the 27th verse we read, “And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him. And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.” We can imagine Aaron listened with rapt attention. After all these many sorrowful years, now God was planning on the deliverance of the children of Israel from their cruel slavery. Aaron would now have great responsibility as the spokesman for his brother Moses, and would be Moses’ companion to confront the powerful Pharaoh of Egypt to deliver the Israelites. Before Moses began this journey the Lord told him to tell Pharaoh that if he would not let the Israelites go his son would be slain, his first born; for God regarded the Israelites in the same sense as a firstborn son. So these two brothers shouldered the responsibility of being God’s representatives to challenge Pharaoh. No doubt they would pray for the necessary faith to do as the Lord commanded. It was an extremely dangerous mission from a natural standpoint, and these two brothers were sensible men and they knew they would have to have the utmost confidence in God’s power and wisdom to carry out their mission. They were not to fear man—neither their Hebrew brethren, nor Pharaoh. No doubt they talked things over

together and were keenly aware that in their own power they could not deliver their Hebrew brethren; but only by God's power and wisdom would their mission be accomplished. The record does not say anything about earnest prayer on the part of these two brothers, but we can easily believe they prayed to the Lord with great fervency. They would go on their mission believing that God would be with them to give them strength and courage to do just as the Lord commanded. And they would follow the Lord's commands to the very letter.

First "Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel." These elders must have wondered what this was all about as they had been subject to Egyptian bondage for so many years when nothing happened out of the ordinary. "And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped." What a great change this would bring about—at last God was showing an interest in their affairs, and indicated that efforts would now be made in their behalf and that finally they would be delivered from Egyptian bondage. The elders must have been thrilled with what Aaron had told them and they would go back to their homes and tell the good news—God is now going to deliver us!

Finally the big day arrived, to start negotiations with Pharaoh. It is interesting to note that God has his own methods of accomplishing his purposes. In this case, he did not exercise his power in a slam-bang manner or display his power by instantly crushing Pharaoh, and delivering the Israelites in a strikingly miraculous manner. We might reason on the matter and conclude that certain great lessons are being taught mankind by God's methods. One lesson would be that God has all kinds of wisdom and power and time to accomplish his purposes. We can think of another lesson in this particular instance. Pharaoh was a very stubborn man and God's method brought this out clearly. May it not teach the lesson that mankind have in them extreme selfish tendencies and they may tend to oppose God and eventually it will be necessary to blot them out of existence. Satan is a good example of this fact.

We turn now to the 5th chapter of Exodus. Moses and Aaron were ushered into the august presence of Pharaoh; and no doubt he would have his officers of state with him. Moses and Aaron were not introduced as representatives of some foreign country, but as two obscure men having no titles of any kind, and Hebrews at that! There were no preliminaries such as "Live forever, O king." No they came to the point immediately; Aaron speaking no doubt as he was supposed to be Moses' spokesman. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." I suppose Pharaoh could hardly believe his ears. "And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will

I let Israel go.” But Aaron proceeded: “The God of the Hebrews hath met with us; let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.” “And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens. And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.” So Pharaoh was blaming Moses and Aaron for trying to release the Israelites from their burdens.

Pharaoh’s reaction was vindictive and he “commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying, Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore; let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of bricks, which they did make theretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish aught thereof; for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words.” The “vain words” were the words spoken by Aaron to Pharaoh to let the Israelites go to sacrifice to their God.

And the taskmasters went out and instructed the Israelites to do more work and they were to gather their own straw to make their bricks; and they were to make as many bricks as formerly when straw was furnished them. Archeologists have found evidence of this fact in that the upper walls of these Egyptian cities had inferior bricks as compared with the lower level of bricks when the Hebrews had straw furnished them.

The officers of the Hebrews were beaten for not turning out the same number of bricks as before. “Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants?” But Pharaoh was unyielding and cruel and replied, “Ye are idle; therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord. Go therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.” Well this would not endear the people toward Aaron and Moses. While Aaron and Moses were making an effort to get them free from Egyptian bondage, Pharaoh increased their burdens and they were worse off than ever. And this is evident as we examine the record further. We read Exodus 5:20 and 21: “And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh: And they said unto them, The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred [in the margin it says stink] in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.” Moses was indeed in a tight spot with his Hebrew brethren and he “returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.” We can enter into the feelings of Moses and understand why he felt so dejected and disappointed. Moses might have been inclined to throw up his hands and go back to

being a shepherd. This was indeed a severe test upon Moses' faith in God's power and faithfulness to his chosen people.

Would we suppose that God was being unnecessarily hard on Moses, putting him through such a difficult experience? No, we are sure God understood how disappointing this was to Moses. And he did tell Moses at the burning bush that Pharaoh would reject his efforts—perhaps Moses forgot this for the time being. In the end Moses became a strong character fitted to be the leader and Mediator between God and the Hebrews. And we know too he will have a choice place when the Ancient Worthies are awakened for their work as representatives of God's Kingdom on earth.

We go on now into the 6th chapter. "Then the Lord said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh; for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land. And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord; and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them. And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant."

The 9th verse reads, "Moses spake so unto the children of Israel; but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." Not knowing how God would exercise his power, Moses could be very discouraged when the children of Israel heeded not his message. And he knew too, that the children of Israel were having a tough time of it as they had to endure cruel bondage from Pharaoh's taskmasters. The Lord spake more unto Moses and Aaron, but we shall not quote everything as it would take too long. We read Exodus 7:6 and 7, "And Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded them, so did they. And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh."

We will read further beginning with the 8th verse: "And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you; then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent." They did as they were commanded. "Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments." The 14th verse reads, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go."

Next the Lord instructed Moses and Aaron to go the next morning and demonstrate to Pharaoh another miracle. The rod was used to stretch out over all the land of Egypt and wherever there was water, it was turned to blood. In the rivers and ponds, and even water

in their vessels in their homes was turned to blood. The fish died and the rivers stank with dead fish. But the magicians were able to perform the same miracle. But Pharaoh turned his back upon Moses and Aaron and refused to let the people go. And the Egyptians had to dig new wells for they had no fit water to drink. This miracle lasted seven days.

In the 8th chapter we read that the Lord threatened to bring a plague of frogs upon the whole land of Egypt, and there were frogs everywhere. Pharaoh's magicians were able to perform the same miracle. This was a severe plague and Pharaoh was duly impressed and called for Moses and Aaron and asked them to "Entreat the Lord that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord." "Moses cried unto the Lord because of the frogs," and the frogs "died out of the houses, out of the villages and out of the field. And they gathered them together upon heaps; and the land stank." What a mess that must have been—dead frogs everywhere. No wonder the land "stank." But Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go. (8:15)

The 16th verse reads: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt." The magicians attempted to perform the same miracle but were unsuccessful. "Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said." Apparently the magicians were willing to acknowledge a superior power to their own, but Pharaoh was a very hard man and would not yield.

The next morning there was another plague instituted—a swarm of flies in the houses of the Egyptians and upon the ground. It was at this time that a difference was established between the Egyptians and the Hebrews—no flies would be in the land where the Israelites dwelt. The 23rd verse reads, "And I will put a division between my people and thy people, tomorrow shall this sign be." "All the land of Egypt was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies." Pharaoh was impressed and asked for relief from the swarm of flies, and he said the Israelites could sacrifice to God in the land. But Moses said No, we will not sacrifice in the land of Egypt, but we must go three days journey into the wilderness as commanded by God. And Pharaoh promised this liberty, but, he said, don't go too far away. Moses entreated the Lord after he said to Pharaoh, "but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the Lord." When all the flies left "Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go." Pharaoh would lie if it suited his purpose, but little did he know the power of the Lord, and how grievously he would pay for his perfidy.

Next there was a plague of a "very grievous murrain" upon all the animals in Egypt. There was no plague upon the animals belonging to the Israelites. The dictionary says

murrain was an infectious and fatal disease upon animals. We would suppose Aaron and Moses might be stronger in courage as they saw that no plague was upon the land of Israelites—it would be evidence that God was with his people in sparing them from the plagues that were inflicted upon the Egyptians. The 7th verse said, “And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.” This shows what blind pride and selfishness can do to a man’s heart. Pharaoh was going to have his own way, no matter how much his own people were suffering from the plagues.

But the Lord had some more surprises for Pharaoh. The 9th chapter tells about a plague of boils and blains upon man and beast in the land of Egypt. Exodus 9:10 reads, “And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.” So the Egyptians must have had a miserable time of it, all because Pharaoh was hard and determined to have his own way, regardless of how much suffering this brought upon others. The 12th verse says, “And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had spoken unto Moses.” We read that Pharaoh’s mummy showed he had an unusually hard face.

Moses was instructed to rise up early in the morning and deliver another message to Pharaoh. The same request was repeated, “Let my people go, that they may serve me.” Again Pharaoh was threatened with further plagues. Then a very peculiar statement was made: “And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.” Then Moses delivered another message—on the morrow there would be a “very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now.” Pharaoh was instructed to gather all the animals and mankind into proper shelters, otherwise they would die under the terrific hailstorm. Some of the servants of Pharaoh heeded the instruction and were saved from the ravages of the hail storm. Moses stretched forth his rod and “So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.” “Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.” “And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time; the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.” Moses responded and entreated the Lord to stop the plague. But he said to Pharaoh, “But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the Lord God.” Again Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not relent. It is amazing the selfish stubbornness of the man. Apparently Moses did not trust the word of Pharaoh and did

not expect that the people would be released. Nevertheless he entreated the Lord to stop the plague.

In the 10th chapter we have more of the story of the plagues. We find something very interesting in the first two verses: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him” (now notice the 2nd verse) “and that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son’s son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the Lord.” Apparently the Lord wanted these things told to the posterity of Moses, so they would know who was the true God and not be influenced away to the worship of heathen deities.

Aaron and Moses were instructed to confront Pharaoh again and tell him that if he would not let the people go, on the morrow there would be a plague of locusts which would be so dense that the earth would be entirely covered and they would eat up everything that the hail had not destroyed. The servants of Pharaoh were becoming alarmed, and they suggested that Aaron and Moses be called back, and an offer would be made to release the men of Israel to hold a feast to the Lord. But Moses did not take the bait, but said that all must go and not just the men only. Pharaoh was angry and Moses and Aaron were driven from the presence of Pharaoh. Then Moses stretched forth his rod and this brought on a terrible plague of locusts. The plague was so grievous that Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and used his same old line—“I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my son only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that he may take away from me this death only.” The plague must have been pretty bad for Pharaoh to call it a “death.” But just as soon as Moses prayed to have the plague stopped, true to form, Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and he refused to let the people go. Moses and Aaron must have wondered just how long this thing was to be continued.

Following this there was a plague of complete darkness over the land of Egypt and it lasted three days. (Exodus 10:22) It was said to be a darkness that could be felt; “but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” Pharaoh called for Moses and offered to let all the people go, only the flocks and herds must not go along. But Moses refused, saying they needed the animals to offer as sacrifices to the Lord. The last three verses of chapter 10 indicated that a crisis had been reached: “But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go.” And Pharaoh said unto him, “Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.” “And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more.”

Exodus 11:1 suggested that the ordeal was almost over: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence; when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.”

Moses was instructed to inform the people that they would “borrow jewels of silver and jewels of gold from their Egyptian neighbors.” Leeser and Rotherham use a different word—they used the word “ask.” And the Egyptians responded generously for “the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants, and in the sight of the people.” The Egyptians certainly owed the Israelites these jewels considering the way the Israelites had been treated as slaves for these many years.

Verse 4: “And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die . . . and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.”

Chapter 12 starts out: “And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, this month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.” Then elaborate instructions were given for the eating of the passover lamb. Very specific details were given to the Israelites for their firstborns were to be passed over on Passover Night while the destroying angel would be taking the life of all the firstborns in Egypt. We find a record of this event starting with the 29th verse: “And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on the throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.”

At last the deliverance was imminent. It must have been a great moment to the Israelites; and surely it must have rejoiced the hearts of Moses and Aaron. They did all that the Lord commanded and now, at last, the resistance of stubborn Pharaoh was finally broken and all the Egyptians were alarmed, and true to the Lord’s prophecy, the Egyptians fairly thrust the Israelites out of their land. They wanted them to go and go quickly. The Lord had touched a very sensitive spot—their lives were in danger!

Verses 40 to 42 provide us with some interesting history: “Now the sojournings of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was 430 years. And it came to pass at the end of the 430 years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt; this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the

children of Israel in their generations.” The 14th chapter records the passing of the Israelites over the sea; Moses used his rod to divide the sea for them.