

# Exodus - Covenant

**OPENING:** How many Falcons fans? How many Patriots fans? How many watch the Super Bowl for the commercials?

The reason a fan is a fan is because of the story - the story of the team, the coach, the players.

## **SERIES CONTEXT:**

So we are reading through the bible in a year and this week we are in Exodus. New story right? **WRONG...** that's the whole point of this series. This is not a new story but the next chapter in the story we've been reading since Jan. 1. Exodus is connected to Genesis, Exodus is connected to Job. I'm going to help you understand how it all fits together. **AND** just as important as seeing the unfolding story of God in scripture - to see how you fit in the story.

Because you see, some of you may be tempted to think - what difference does this make... why not do a series on marriage, or parenting, or finances? Something practical. Simply because all of those things we deem practical are lived out in the context of whatever **STORY** we see ourselves in.

Every single person in this building is either consciously or subconsciously seeing themselves as a integral part of a larger story - philosophers call this story the **META-NARRATIVE**.

NT Wright: "A story...is...the best way of talking about *the way the world actually is.*"

Lesslie Newbigin: "The way we understand human life depends on what conception we have of the human story. What is the real story of which my life story is part?"

Alasdair MacIntyre: ""I can only answer the question, 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question, 'Of what story do I find myself a part?'"

If we are all building upon some story, some narrative the question is, "Which one?"

**The enemy has 1,000's of stories - God has only one** and it is revealed to us on the pages of scripture.

**CONTEXT: Exodus begins with a Genealogy** - One of the things you will notice as you read through the Bible is that several of the books begin or end with a genealogy. That is important because remember we learned in Genesis that God sat His redemptive plan into action through a **COVENANT made with a single individual - Abraham.**

**REMEMBER** - Abraham killed the animals and God passed through the pieces. Saying, if I violate my covenant may God himself be torn asunder.

**So Lineage was directly tied to purpose** - Israel could face anything knowing that God's honor and integrity was on the line.

- So Pharaoh couldn't be the end
- Babylon couldn't be the end
- Assyria couldn't be the end
- Rome couldn't be the end

So while we tend to look at the genealogies as a formality - Israel never did. **It was rooting them in a STORY.**

Genesis ended with the story of Joseph the the Great Grandson of Abraham as the Vice Regent over all of Egypt.

After the death of Joseph, the Hebrews greatly multiplied in Egypt. It is estimated that there was anywhere from 1/2 million to 1.5 million Jews in Egypt by **Exodus 1:7 (ESV)**  
<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.

Remember - the Jew in Egypt are ultimately **refugees**. In light of our current national dilemma it is important to recognize that throughout human history there has always been a fear of the ***citizen against the foreigner***. The fear of America is much like the fear of Egypt - what will happen if they multiply in the land? We will lose jobs, we will lose land, who knows they may ultimately take over?

**But the memory of Joseph was the hope of the Jews** - Joseph had not only saved his brother, he had saved all of Egypt. Because of Joseph the Hebrews were welcome.

But then in **Exodus 1:8–10 (ESV)**

<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."

**Fears were answered with legislation.**

1. **FORCED LABOR** - Great building projects were undertaken and labor was needed that the average Egyptian did not want to provide. Thus, the Hebrews were forced to serve.
2. **POPULATION CONTROL** - An Egyptian model of Planned Parenthood was established where Hebrew Midwives would take every male child and kill him as soon as he was born. The idea was this would eliminate the potential of a Hebrew

Army, and would allow the existing men would live long enough to complete the work projects. The Hebrews midwives fear God and did not comply.

**Chapter 2** tells the very familiar story of the birth of Moses. His mother hides him for three months, then ultimately forms a little boat out of a basket and hid him among the reeds of the river Nile. He's found by Pharaoh's daughter and adopted as her own. Moses's on mother **Jochebed** was paid to nurse him until he was weened and from that point on he was raised as a Prince in Egypt.

**2:11–12** The narrative now jumps ahead approximately **36 years**, skipping completely over Moses' later childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. **At the age of 40** Moses knew who he was and began to identify with his people the Jews.

### **Hebrews 11:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> **By faith** Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

Moses knowingly and intentionally choose to kill an Egyptian in defense of his Hebrew kinsman. This decision would cost most greatly... in the verses that follow we see him move from being a ***Prince in Urban Egypt to being a Shepherd in Rural Midian.***

Another 40 years passes - Moses is a husband and a father - he is now **80 years old** when something remarkable happens - **GOD'S PEOPLE BEGIN TO PRAY.**

### **Exodus 2:23–25 (ESV)**

<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.

**The New American Commentary says** - The best reading of the original, "God looked on them and decided to make himself known to them".

SO remember everything that happens is because of this covenant God made with Abraham.

### **Exodus 3:1–3 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> 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. <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. <sup>3</sup> And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

The term used for this bush, **sěneh**, denotes a relatively small (at most a few feet in diameter) thorny bush/shrub. This would have been the type of material one would use to start a fire, but it would typically burn up quickly if more substantial fuel was not added. But this bush was not consumed. Moses wanted to investigate...

Within this bush resided, "the Angel of the Lord". I won't bore you with the grammatical breakdown of this but it is very likely that this was a manifestation or a theophany of Yahweh himself. So the phrase the Angel of the Lord might best be understood as, "The Angel who is the Lord". Possibly a Pre-Incarnate Vision of Jesus.

### **Exodus 3:4-6 (ESV)**

<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." <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.***"

So notice how God identifies Himself - **I am the God of Covenant.**

6b. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

So at first Moses was amazed that the bush wasn't consumed... ***but now the bigger shock is that Moses is not consumed in God's presence.*** Remember in Job - I've have seen the LORD and survived!

God affirms his love for his people, as well as his intention to deliver them from their Egyptian taskmasters, and he intends to do all of this through the person of Moses.

In the verses that follow Moses essentially asks two questions:

1. **Who am I?** That you would choose me to deliver your people.
2. **Who are you?** People are going to ask who I represent, remember that Egypt worshipped a plethora of deities. Moses couldn't really say, "well the bush told me."

Moses objects and makes excuses about not being eloquent enough and God compromises with Moses and allows him to recruit his brother Aaron as his spokesman. Moses agrees and accepts the mission.

### **Exodus 4:20 (ESV)**

<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.

***We expect the next verse to have Moses in the throne room of Pharaoh - But instead we see this very odd passage...sort of an embarrassing scene... sort of a weird scene.***

### **Exodus 4:24–26 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to put him to death.

NOW - where in the world did that come from? God preserved Moses as a baby, saw him through 80 years, called him into service... now suddenly, unexpectedly God says, I think I will kill Moses.

If that wasn't odd enough - look how Moses's wife responds to her husband being killed by the Lord.

<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.

- *Steven Spielberg didn't include this scene in Moses Prince of Egypt...*
- *This wasn't in Charleston Heston's epic saga the 10 commandments...*
- *You won't see this chapter in your kid's storybook bible.*
- *You don't hold them in your lap while you tell them about the time Zipporah took a flint stone to Junior.*

**But as is often the case the greatest truths sometimes lie in the most obscure passages.** This is a passage that draws into question everything we think we know to be true of God.

OK - ***this is where the main idea of the story makes all the difference.*** Do you remember what the main idea is? **God's Covenant with Abraham.** Do you remember what Abraham had to do to indicate that he accepted God's Covenant? Circumcision.

You see - there are a few things the text doesn't tell us.

In what way did God try to kill Moses? Was it like Darth Vader's death grip?  
Did an Angel appear with a sword drawn?

We don't know... but it was obvious to Zipporah that not only was Moses about to die, God was killing him.

NOT only that - she seemed to know exactly WHY God was killing him.

We know that because she goes and takes a flint knife and immediately circumcised her son and throws the skin at the feet of Moses.

**WHY IS THIS SUCH A BIG DEAL?** Because God wants Moses and everyone who will read Exodus to know - This is not primarily a story about Moses... this is not mainly a story about deliverance from Slavery... ***this is MOSTLY a story about a promise made in blood.***

Here was Moses about to go and lead God's COVENANT PEOPLE and Moses hadn't led his own family to embrace the Covenant.

God says Moses your aren't fit for public leadership until you wrap your heart around private obedience.

WHY HAD THEY NOT CIRCUMCISED THEIR SON?

Perhaps she found it barbaric, perhaps she was embarrassed, perhaps she felt like the world had advanced beyond all of those old bloody ways.

**But God cared more about this bloody Covenant than he did the life of Moses.**

***Zipporah stood as a type of our modern culture.*** A culture that despises the notion of the need for a blood sacrifice or the bloody parts of our religion.

Oh it's fine with our moralism. It's fine with the therapeutic aspects of Christianity... but loose that talk of blood.

The fastest growing churches in our nation preach - Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. But nothing of the blood.

- If Zipporah couldn't stand the thought of the circumcision certainly wouldn't accept the notion of passover.
- If she couldn't accept circumcision how would she embrace a religion built around an alter and death?
- If she despises circumcision what will she do with ***crucifixion?***

Make NO MISTAKE you educate congregation, don't be confused you young men and women of UAH.

The heart of the Christian message is the picture of a bloody, broken, scarred Jew nailed to an old rugged cross.

It's gross, it's bloody, it's supposed to be.

**You see when you see the horror of the cross you are reminded just how sinful you really are. But not only that you see the price God is willing to pay to keep his promise.**

There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;  
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains:  
Lose all their guilty stains,  
Lose all their guilty stains;

And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,  
Lose all their guilty stains.

OH FRIEND - There is a fountain filled with blood

That is the point of this story

That is the point of our story

Your life really isn't about you... or your family... or your money... or your job...

MOSES entire story only made sense when it was folded into the story of God's Promise.. and friend as you think through your life... think about the previous generations that brought you to this point and ask yourself - how does my story fold into God's story?

Your life is about a Covenant Promise written in the Blood of Jesus. If you get that - you will lead your family rightly, you will spend your money wisely, and you will serve in your job properly.