

EXODUS

Lesson 6 - Chapters 5 and 6

This week we begin Exodus chapter 5; and I'm going to change up on you a bit. Usually I read from the Complete Jewish Bible, but this time I'll read from a version called "The Scriptures". And, it is for one reason only: everywhere that the *original* Hebrew text included the name of God...YHVH...Yehoveh.....so does this translation. The point of my doing this will, I think, become self-evident. So, please follow along with me in whichever version is your favorite.

READ EXODUS CHAPTER 5 all

Does it surprise you a bit that God's name appears so many times in this chapter? Bible translations, over the years, have tended to obliterate the use of God's name by replacing it with more generic terms like God and Lord. But, by reinserting God's formal personal name we get a clearer picture of just what was transpiring here between Moses and Pharaoh. As I have discussed with you on several occasions, every ancient culture believed in multiple gods and a spirit world. And, every culture had a fairly similar set of gods; it's just that their names varied, and the territory where each god ruled had to be defined. But knowing each god's name was all-important to the ancient mind. For knowing a god's name was key to communicating with that god, and getting that god to do what you wanted.

So, here we see Pharaoh not wondering if there is such a thing as "God", or if there was a "God of the Hebrews", but it was only that he had obviously never heard of Yehoveh. Further, since gods were territorial, and the Hebrews lived in Egypt, Pharaoh was incredulous that there could have existed a god that had some undefined kind of influence within Egypt, and he didn't know about that god. Where did this God, Yehoveh, fit within the hierarchy of the gods? Why had no one introduced Pharaoh to him before now? What was this new god's sphere of influence? And, perhaps most important to Pharaoh, why would he need to be at all concerned with this Yehoveh when he commanded the most powerful gods of Egypt? In fact, the Pharaoh himself was considered to be the incarnation of a god and so was divine; for Pharaoh, Yehoveh was an unwanted rival.

So, Pharaoh skeptical and downright offended. And, indeed, Pharaoh HAD never heard of Yehoveh. After all, it was only recently that the Lord had revealed His name to mankind for the first time; and He revealed it to Moses on Mt. Sinai, in Midian, just a few weeks earlier.

Moses and Aaron go in to Pharaoh and tell him what God demands of the King of Egypt; and it was that Israel should be allowed to go free into the desert for a time (3 days journey), away from their captors, to worship Yehoveh.... or, as it really should be taken in Vs 1: 'to make a pilgrimage festival to Me'. What Moses says is that the Lord wants Israel to make

a **chagag**.....which is Hebrew for pilgrimage festival. Pilgrimage festivals simply mean that the worshippers are required to make a journey, if necessary, to a specified place....usually to where there was a Sanctuary or shrine....to celebrate and pay homage to their God. When we get to later chapters of Exodus, and then Leviticus, we're going to find that of the 7 Biblical Festivals that God will ordain to Israel, 3 of them are chagag....pilgrimages. And, in each case, they involve traveling to the Temple (which, by the way, wasn't always in Jerusalem).

The laughable idea that Pharaoh would allow the Israelites a few days to go worship their God in the Wilderness merely amused Pharaoh; what really chafed him was that the words Moses and Aaron spoke established clearly to Pharaoh that Yehoveh considered the Israelites as belonging to HIM! And, of course, **this** is the crux of the matter because as Pharaoh insists: au contraire, these Hebrews do not belong to this supposed god of the Hebrews.....they belong to ME!

For just a moment, let's detour and zoom in on a small phrase in Vs 1, as it sets up an important principle that helps us to understand key areas of the Bible in general. I would like to call your attention to the use of two little words "my people", which is what God often calls the Hebrews. Interestingly, several hundred years into the future God would call SOME of the Hebrews "NOT my people". What's important to understand is that in the Hebrew Scriptures, going back to a time just after Isaac was born (perhaps 600 years earlier from the time we're at in Exodus), God began referring to the Hebrews as His "ammi".....Hebrew for **my people**. Now, the word ammi, "people", is not to be taken in the sense of random individuals; nor is it used to refer to an anonymous group of individuals such as a crowd of people. For instance, from where you are sitting, turn around and look at all the "people" around you. Ammi is not **people** in that sense.....its not simply some number of generic human beings gathered together. Rather, people, "ammi" is somewhat synonymous with the word "nation". Ammi is a group of humans with a common heritage, whether that heritage is natural or adopted. That is, Israel is a separately identifiable "people", a "nation".

Yet, ammi is not precisely synonymous with "nation". The word used for "nation" in the Bible is "goyim". But, you will NEVER see the word "goyim" used to refer to **Hebrew** people or to the Hebrew nation. Because, as of about the time of Isaac, around 1900 BC, the word goyim came to SPECIFICALLY indicate **gentile** nations.....that is, everybody EXCEPT Hebrews. So, after about Genesis 12, when God is referring to the nation of Israel, it is the word **ammim** that is generally employed, while all other nations of the world are referred to as goyim. I point this out, because it makes both Biblical history AND prophesy much easier to untangle if you know when the terms "people" and "nation" are referring to gentile nations or people, or if referring to the Hebrew people or nation..... a rather significant difference. We first discovered the importance of understanding the word "goyim" back in Genesis because it enabled us to unlock the significance of Jacob's blessing upon Joseph's son Ephraim.....that Ephraim would in some undefined way become a fullness, or blessing, of goyim.....GENTILE nations, as opposed to the Hebrew nation. If you attended my 10 Lost Tribes seminar then you know that Ephraim and the "fullness of Gentiles" are central to understanding end times prophecy. That's why I encourage you to have a good concordance handy when studying the Torah. Just as God's name is now totally obscured in the Bible, so is there unnecessary confusion over the use of the word **nation** as to whether it's speaking of gentiles, Hebrews, or everybody in

general.

It's kind of interesting how the Pharaoh responds to Moses and Aaron's message from God; Pharaoh doesn't deny that a) there IS a god called Yehoveh, nor b) that this Yehoveh is Israel's god. He simply doesn't see what all that has to do with him. I mean, we're in Egypt.....right? Therefore, by all understanding of the people of that day about how gods are supposed to operate, this is the realm of the Egyptian gods. And, Pharaoh thinks, the Egyptian gods are powerful and many so why worry about one measly god, and on top of that, one who is god to a bunch of slaves! After all, if this Yehoveh was so powerful, how could his people be slaves to Egypt? This was de facto evidence to Pharaoh that the Egyptian gods were more powerful than the Hebrew god and that he had no reason to pay attention to Yehoveh.

I wonder about what it was that Aaron told Pharaoh because what we read here in Chapter 5 isn't entirely what we have been told that God instructed Moses to say. Notice that it seems to have been embellished just a tad, as in the last part of Vs 3, the words are "otherwise He (God) might strike us with a plague or a sword!" Where did THAT come from? Did God tell Moses that if Pharaoh didn't let them go into the desert to worship Him, that God would strike down the Israelites? Not that we're aware of. Notice what ordinary men we are dealing with here in Moses and Aaron. So far they're not doing too good. Just about like you or I would do in such circumstances, standing before such a great and imposing man as the King of Egypt, we decide to jazz it up a bit.....I mean, God has such an economy of words, that are so to the point, maybe we can assist Him a little.

Pharaoh responds; and he tells Moses and Aaron to get back to work, that he has NO intentions of letting that enormous group of Israelites, who ARE the laborers of Egypt, the craftsmen who do the bulk of the building, go on a 3 day holiday. And, then Pharaoh sets a precedent that will be repeated ad nauseum in the centuries ahead: he takes the irrational tact of making the Israelites' work, that is so vital to Egypt's well being, almost impossible to achieve! He tells them that they have to go gather their own straw for making the millions upon millions of mud bricks necessary for building more cities. This was disruptive in every way, and would have had the result of fewer bricks, than more.

And, this is attested to in Vs 12 where it says the people had to stop their brick making, and scatter throughout the land of Egypt to fetch the straw that added the necessary strength to the mud bricks.

This is a good time to point out that the Israelites did NOT build pyramids in Egypt. The pyramid-building era was long over, and now Pharaohs and nobles were being buried in hollowed out and magnificently decorated shafts and caves. The primary construction projects of the Israelites were roads, military forts, and storage facilities. And, the primary building material was mud brick, not stone.

In Vs 14, the predictable end result is shown when the Egyptian taskmasters asked the "officers" of Israel, "why haven't you fulfilled your quota of bricks yesterday and today, as you did formerly?" And, the officers of Israel, the foremen so to speak, were beaten for the lowered output. These "officers" were NOT the elders; they were what are sometimes called "scribes". This is the 2nd of the new types of elected or appointed leaders of Israel, who represent the

people.

Of course, the real goal of Pharaoh was to harass and punish, and it was hatred gone wild. In WWII Germany about the only thing the pre-war economy had going for it was the Jews who were the industrialists, bankers, and scientists. And, after the start of the war as the Nazis suddenly turned a demonic rage inward and started exterminating Jews by the millions, all it accomplished was to damage their economy, destroy their best source of technology advancement, and eventually limit their ability to make war. Just as Satan used Hitler as a puppet, so it was with Pharaoh. He had just taken the first step towards Egypt's devastation.....the thing that would be necessary for the release of Yehoveh's firstborn, Israel.

Now, it's interesting to note that in one of the great stores-cities that the Israelites are given credit for building, Pithom, an archeological find confirmed this story of the bricks and straw. In 1883, and later in 1908, two Egyptologists made a startling discovery; they unearthed some mud brick structures in Pithom in which the bottom courses of bricks were made with the normal content of cut straw, the middle courses were made with straw that had been pulled up by the roots, and the final few courses contained little to NO straw at all; just another of the many proofs of the Exodus account.

The scribes, the Hebrew foremen, beaten and now irate, turn on Moses and Aaron. In fact, they go around Moses (and God) and go directly to Pharaoh. He, of course, has no interest in their problems. How quickly faith can disappear, huh? Just a few days earlier they were fully persuaded and prepared to follow Moses, as God's deliverer of His people. Today, with Pharaoh's decree that they will have to gather their own straw, and with the physical punishment upon the foremen for failure to make their quota of bricks, they call on this same God to "judge" Moses..... to punish him. We are told earlier that Moses told them in advance all that God had told him on the Mountain of God.....and included in that would have been that Pharaoh would reject the demands. No doubt they hadn't counted on the consequences. Following God ALWAYS has consequences.

Moses does exactly the right thing, though: he goes to God with the complaint of the people. Moses completely understands the Hebrews' upset at this turn of events and feels terribly responsible. Now, let's be sure we get the correct tone of Moses' inquiry of God in Vs 23: he was humble and he was concerned for the people. Had he done something he was not supposed to do? Was there something he DIDN'T do that he SHOULD have done? Oh, how many times I have asked God this question when a direction I was so sure God had ordained for my life suddenly met with (what seemed to me) a major bump in the road. Moses demanded NOTHING of God. He was NOT angry with God. Really, Moses was seeking reassurance.....confirmation that he was, indeed, obeying. Moses was learning.

Let's continue the story in chapter 6.

READ EXODUS 6 all

Permit me to remind you that the 1st verse of chapter 6 is a direct continuation of the last verse

of chapter 5. As Moses prayed to Yehoveh for an explanation, God immediately gives him the answer: I've got it all under control. No, of course that's not the words of the scripture, but it is the essence of God's response.

God tells Moses that he is to familiarize the Hebrew people with His formal name, YHVH; and that even though He was and is the God of the Patriarchs, He didn't make everything known to them; and one thing that He didn't tell them was His personal name Yehoveh. Instead, V3 says that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (and really, all Hebrews up until now) knew God as El Shaddai; typically, this is translated as "God Almighty". This was NEVER a true translation....it was just a guess at what the term meant. So, to be most accurate, one would have to say that the first part of that name means "the highest God" (which is the meaning of El). And, as I've shared with you, it has recently been discovered that the word Shaddai, which is not in it's strictest sense a Hebrew word, is but a language cognate of the Akkadian word shaddu, which means mountain. So, the Lord is saying that Moses ancestors knew him as the Highest God of the Mountain.

Let me share something with you; something that I am becoming more and more aware of.....and more and more unsure as to why it is; in Vs 2, when God says to Moses "I am (blank)".....most versions will say either Lord or Adonai; I am "the Lord". And, since Lord is simply the English translation of the Hebrew Adonai, Lord and Adonai mean the same thing. But, the original Hebrew is NOT either of those two words: instead, it is YHWH.....Yehoveh. God's personal name. Now, there is no Bible scholar that I'm aware of that would even argue that point. The Hebrew letters Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh are there, and in 6000 other places in the OT. The question is: why is it that the MAJORITY of the time that the original Hebrew uses God's personal name, YHWH that our translations elect to use "Lord" or "God"? I can understand why Jews, even Messianic Jews, do this; it's because they've had a tradition for over 2300 years against uttering, or even writing, the word "God", let alone using his name. But, why do gentile Christians follow suit? Sorry, this is just a pet peeve. Somehow, I think that when God gave us His personal name to use when referring to Him, we ought to use it, even IF we may not know precisely how to pronounce. And, when the Bible uses His personal name, instead of something more generic like "Lord" (which, admittedly, does appear from time to time), we need to know it and read it that way, because in it we see the personal and endearing nature of the Lord and not just a generic title. The reality is that most of the pagan gods were called "Lord", because lord is just a rather ancient and outdated term that is synonymous with "master" and it is but a sign of respect, not an actual name.

We also need know and use YHVH's name particularly in our era because the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has a challenger named Allah. And, Islam and many within the Church want you to believe that Allah and Yehoveh are but two names for the same God. After all, Muslims will tell you that Allah means "God"; and, most are aware that our Bibles invariably call the God of the Bible "God". I've got news for you: the Egyptians also referred to many of THEIR gods simply as "god", particularly when one their gods was the family god. We, Jews and Christians, have brought about this problem ourselves. If we had NOT replaced YHVH with the generic word "God" or Adonai (which is simply Hebrew for lord) so long ago, we'd have little trouble in recognizing that Allah (which is the formal name of the god of Islam), can not possibly be the same god as Yehoveh (which is the formal name of the God of the

Bible), because they are two entirely different names. God, like the word President, is the title of an office: it's not the name of the person who HOLDS that office. Our current president is named "Bush"; his name is not "president". God's name is YHVH, not "God".....and certainly not Allah.

Now, we also need to understand what is actually being communicated to Moses at this point. God says that Moses' forefathers "saw" God as "El Shaddai". Most versions say, "appeared" to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The original Hebrew word used here is "ra'ah"; and it means "see" or "saw" more in the sense of **perceiving or revealing**. That is, we might say to someone in a debate, "Oh, I finally SEE what you're getting at". That is, I finally comprehend, I finally perceive, I finally got it. It doesn't mean, "see" or "saw" like in "Wow, did you just see that great looking car". It's not about our optic nerves operating correctly as much as it is to behold the essence of something.

So, God is saying that He revealed Himself.....that is, made His essence known.... to the Patriarchs in a little different way than He is now revealing Himself to Moses. What's the difference? Well, one difference is in the level of intimacy..... it's like the difference between addressing me as the less personal "Mr. Bradford", than the more personal "Tom". Over time, God was making Himself more known, and more personal, and more accessible. Progressively, God is revealing Himself to mankind. And, this really is what we see throughout the Word. While we get but an OUTLINE of God in Genesis, by the time we reach the end of Torah we have more information on God than we can humanly comprehend. The next to the last revealed manifestation of God that we read about in the Bible, is Yeshua. And, Jesus made the relationship between God and man almost as personal as it gets: He became one of us, walked among us, and shared the woes of fleshly human existence with us. I say "almost", because when Jesus left, we received the Holy Spirit: God no longer walked among us, external to us, He took the next step, and has now set up living WITHIN us. In the most literal possible sense, God dwells with us. Internal to us. In Vs 3 & 4, Moses would have understood that the point God was making was that He was giving more of Himself to Moses than He did to Moses' ancestors..... Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Yehoveh was also going to give more of Himself to Israel. And, we see in Vs 4 and 5 God once more establish His universal reign over all. He reminds Moses that He was the Hebrew's God up in Canaan in V4, just as He is their God down in Egypt; and, He has heard their cry for help. He also makes it quite clear that now, some 600 years after it was established, His covenant with Abraham.....every last detail of it.....still stands.

He gives Moses a message to take back to the people of Israel, who were so discouraged at having their workload increased, when what they thought was about to come was relief from their oppression; a message full of love and hope. And it is this: I, Yehoveh, WILL bring you out of Egypt; I, Yehoveh, WILL rescue you from your servitude to all that is Egypt, and I, Yehoveh, I WILL redeem you. Further, I WILL take you as MY people, I WILL be your God, and I WILL bring you to the land of promise. I WILL give it you, Israel, as YOUR possession. I, Yehoveh, will do it all; Israel only has to receive.

You see, as much as the Egypt of Exodus is real and tangible, it is also a **type**. Egypt, itself,

will be used throughout the rest of the Bible to represent servitude, and a foreign place.....a way of life that was NOT meant for God's people. But, Egypt is representative of the place where we ALL resided BEFORE we cried out to God to rescue us. When Christ came, and made it possible for gentiles to be joined to God's covenants with Israel, this list of promises we just read in verses 6-8....this list of "I wills" became applicable to all mankind who will trust in God's provision. God will bring EVERYONE who trusts the Lord Yeshua out of servitude and out of a foreign place. He will redeem us, He will take US as His people, He will be our God, He will bring us to the eternal land of promise. Every promise of the new and abundant life that we receive through Christ, originates right here in the Torah. And, here's the thing: it is God who does it all.

Moses took the message God gave him to the people but they wouldn't receive it. And, the reason they wouldn't receive the message of their deliverance, their salvation, is contained in Vs 9. Depending on your version, it is generally that their spirits were crushed and they were physically exhausted from their hard labors. It's near impossible to hear God when we are living life constantly out of breath due to hyper activity, and when we are consumed and defeated by our ever-demanding fleshly necessities and the bitterness of our souls. The Hebrews were in servitude to Egypt because they were forced to be. We were in servitude because we were born into that condition. Just as God wanted to rescue Israel, He wants to rescue us. But, the Hebrews couldn't then, and only a few of mankind can now, hear and accept the message of redemption.

So, you say you want to be a Prophet of God, huh? Well, here's Moses, the Pharaoh just laughs at him, and Moses' Hebrew brothers want to skin him. And, God tells him, time to go see Pharaoh again. And, what appeared to be a settled matter with Moses not long ago, once again is in doubt as Moses says to God: "If the people of Israel won't listen to me, why would Pharaoh"? Actually, what Vs 11 literally quotes Moses saying is "I am of foreskinned (uncircumcised) lips!" This is an idiom.....it means that his speech is poor....poor in the sense of inadequate. What Moses is saying is 'God, my ability to speak the words you want spoken is terrible'. God would have none of it: in Vs 12, God speaks to Moses AND Aaron, and makes it clear to them that it is their duty before God to speak to Pharaoh and to the people of Israel, the end result being the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt.

You see, Moses thinks its his words, how he phrases them, how he pronounces them, whether or not he appears confident and well prepared as he speaks to people, that is the key for them getting the message of deliverance. God tried, early on, to convince him that Moses own abilities didn't matter a whit. Out of mercy, for a man who could not yet understand nor fully accept God's ways, God gave Moses Aaron to speak for him.....even though it was not needed. Moses' adequacy was never the issue.

Several years ago, when Becky and I lived in the Florida Keys, I went out on a Church visitation with the assistant pastor of the church we attended. We visited a young couple that had come to church off and on for a few years, and now asked that a pastor come to visit them.

Now, this assistant pastor was one of the most wonderful, decent, and real Believers I have

ever known. But, when he began to speak to this couple about their need for Christ, explaining the Gospel message, I listened in absolute horror as he fouled it up so badly that I couldn't make heads or tails out of what he was saying.....and I already KNEW the points he came there to make. This went on for a solid hour.....one of the longest, most uncomfortable hours of my life.... and I sat there as silently as that young couple did, embarrassed, and wondering if these people would ever come to church again.

Well, after he finished, the assistant pastor said, OK, would you like to pray to receive Jesus as your Lord? And, I'm thinking, yeah, right; let's just get out of here. And, they both leaned forward and said YES!! We prayed with them, and then I watched their lives change and grow over the next several months, as the Holy Spirit became their guide.

Here's the thing: I went home and told Becky this story, and told her I had learned a great lesson that night. It's not our words or abilities that brings anyone to accept deliverance; it's God changing their hearts. Yes, we are indeed commanded to go and speak the message of salvation to the unsaved. But, when we are in God's will, and He has prepared the hearts of those He has chosen for us to speak to, our words cannot fail, because our words were never the key, anyway. Conversely, the most eloquent speech, or perfectly prepared presentation, cannot bring anyone to the Throne; it's a 100% work of God.

This great principle of the Christian life is laid down right here in Exodus. Moses was absolutely inadequate for the job God gave him.....and Moses knew it. You and I are absolutely inadequate for ANY of the tasks, including spreading the Gospel that God gives us. But, it doesn't matter. Because our job is to trust and obey God. If He says, "go", we go; He'll do the rest. Moses didn't understand or believe that, yet.

Beginning in Vs 14, we get a genealogy of the first 3 sons of Israel: Reuven, Shimon, and Levi. But, all the attention is really paid to the Levites. Now, pull out your "Structure of Israel" charts. We talked about the various names for the different levels of the societal structure of Israel, and in these verses, these names and titles are used. Now, I know that various versions use different names, so if your version doesn't use the names and titles I'm about to give you, I encourage you to write them in the margins in your Bibles for future reference.

In vs. 14, it says, "these are the heads of their Father's Houses". Where it says "heads", the Hebrew word is "rosh".....and it indeed means "head". And, if we look a little further in the same verse it says, "these are the families..." The Hebrew word used here is "mishpachah" and should NOT be translated family, but rather, clan. And, because mishpachah is "clan", the title assigned to the "head", the rosh, of each of these clans is Chief.

So, this verse is talking about the Chiefs who are the head of the clans. This is the next tier of Israel societal structure after the Prince who is the head, the rosh, of the tribe. In time, as the current Prince dies, one of these Chiefs (usually the firstborn) will become the new Prince.

The main point of the verses in Chapter 6, beginning at 14 and going to the end of the chapter, is to establish the all-important fact that Moses and Aaron were of the Levite tribe. Further, they were of a specific clan that began with Kohath. Two other clans of Levites are also

named: Gershon and Merari. We're not going to examine all these clan lines, at least for now. What's important to understand is that while the overall tribe of Levi was the tribe of priests, only one clan among the Levites could produce the line of High Priests (the first High Priest will be Aaron).....and that is the line, the clan, of Kohath, which will further subdivide into the line of Aaron. The other Levite clans would be restricted to other specific duties of lesser priests and temple officials. While the Bible hasn't informed us, yet, of which clans will get which duties, the genealogical record is being established, here, so there can be no doubt, later, as to who belongs to each clan.

Next week we'll begin chapter 7.