

Exodus 4:19-6:27

Overview

The first four chapters of Exodus anticipate the more detailed experiences of Israel in chapters 4-40 (Table 1). Now we begin the amplification of these summary events in the second panel.

4:19-31, Moses Returns to Egypt

The first panel begins with the descent of Jacob and his family into Egypt. One of those descendants, Moses, has left Egypt, but now it is time for him to return, with his family, to rejoin his kinsmen. There are four scenes, marked by changes in time, location, and characters: the Lord's instruction to Moses as he leaves Midian; his chastisement of Moses at their first night's stop; Moses' interaction with Aaron in Sinai, and their meeting with the elders of the people in Egypt.

Theme	First Panel, 1:1-4:18	Second Panel, 4:19-40:38
Entering Egypt	1:1-7, The eleven tribes go to Egypt and multiply	4:19-31, Moses returns to Egypt with his family
Oppression	1:8-22, Pharaoh oppresses Israel	5:1-6:1, Pharaoh increases the oppression
Leaders raised up	2:1-4, Moses born	6:2-27, Moses and Aaron commissioned by God
Moses in Pharaoh's Palace	2:5-10, Moses in Pharaoh's palace as the son of Pharaoh's daughter	6:28-13:16, Moses in Pharaoh's palace as deliverer
Travel to Horeb	2:11-15, Moses flees from Egypt to Midian	13:17-17:7, Israel travels from Egypt to Sinai
Conflict	2:16-17, Moses overcomes the shepherds	17:8-16, Moses overcomes Amalek
Moses and Jethro	2:18-22, Moses' Midianite family	18:1-27, Moses' Midianite family
Encounter with God at Horeb	2:23-4:18, Moses called to "serve God upon this mountain," 3:12	19:1-40:38, At Horeb, Israel enters covenant with God

Table 1: Moses as the Forerunner of Israel

Scene 1: 19-23, God briefs Moses

In the first scene, in Midian, Moses finally prepares to go, and God gives him final instructions.

4:19 And the LORD had said unto Moses in Midian, Go,—The verb should be translated as a pluperfect.¹ The reference is to the previous commands to "Go" (3:10, 16; 4:12).

Repetition of the place name, like reintroduction of the name of a conversant in a dialog, marks a break in the discourse.

return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.—In 4:18, Moses expressed concern to Jethro that perhaps his kinsmen were dead. In fact, it is his enemies who have been taken out of the way. We've known this since 2:23ff.

Exo 2:23 And it came to pass in process of time, that **the king of Egypt died**:

At some point in his interactions with the Lord, the Lord made him aware of this detail.

20 And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt:—His intention is to return with his family. We'll see that this gets modified.

¹ See note on pluperfect use of *wayyiqtol*

and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.—Up until this point, it is simply “the rod,” which Moses as a shepherd would naturally carry. But now God has taken it over as the instrument of miracles. In addition, as a mark of personal identity, calling it “the rod of God” shows Moses’ authority. The rod he carries is really God’s rod, and identifies him as God’s messenger.

21 And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.—This is the first reference to the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, which will be a major theme through the rest of the book (see notes on 7:3).

3:18-20 describes four steps in the engagement with Pharaoh:

1. request for three-day leave to sacrifice
2. Pharaoh’s rejection, known but not caused by the Lord
3. Display of mighty signs
4. Release from Egypt.

4:21 places the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart after Moses’ signs (#3 in the list above; Table 2). Thus he has already rejected the Lord’s authority in refusing the requested long weekend, and God’s hardening simply confirms him in this sinful disposition.

	3:18-20	4:21	ch.5-12
Request for 3-day holiday	18 let us go 3 days journey		5:1 Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.
Pharaoh refuses	19 the king ... will not let you go		5:2 And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?
Signs and wonders	20a I will smite Egypt with all my wonders	Do all those wonders before Pharaoh	7:1-12 first sign (rod to serpent)
Pharaoh's heart hardened		I will harden his heart	7:13 [God] hardened Pharaoh's heart
Israel released	20b after that he will let you go		12:31 Get you forth

Table 2: The Road to Hardening

22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn:—This appears to be the first place in the Bible that the Lord calls Israel his son. “Firstborn” does not mean that this is the first nation whom God has created. Other nations existed before them (e.g., Sumer, Egypt). The title indicates status, not order.

The introduction of the title “my son” reflects the introduction of “my people” in 3:7, 10 (chart).²

Exo 3:7 And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of **my people** which are in Egypt, ... 10 ... I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth **my people** the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Before sending Moses to redeem them, God was their God:

Gen 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, **to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed** after

² See note on “my people” in https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/exodus/notes/Exod_2b_4a.pdf

thee. 8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and **I will be their God.**

But not until he appears to Moses does he claim them as “my people,” and not until he sends Moses to demand them from Pharaoh do they become “my son.”

The order is important. God first gives himself to us as our God, and then requires us to submit to him as his people, his children. Redemption precedes service. We do not gain God’s support by what we do, but we recognize his provision and care for us, and then joyfully submit to him.

23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me:—Because Israel is God’s son, he owes his service to God, not Pharaoh. This dominant theme of Exodus comes to its climax in the second commandment, not to serve other gods or their images.

and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.—From the beginning, God warns Pharaoh of the ultimate judgment: if you withhold my firstborn from serving me, I will see to it that your firstborn will never serve you.

Scene 2: 24-26, The Lord Chastises Moses

The second scene is marked both by a change in location (from Jethro’s home to the inn), and in participants (Zipporah was only in the background in 19-23, but now she is the focal character).

24 And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him.—These three verses swarm with uncertainty and problems.

- Whom is the Lord attacking?
- At whose feet does Zipporah cast her son’s foreskin?
- What is the meaning of her expression, “bloody husband”?

We will not study these in detail,³ but summarize the main point. Moses has allowed one of his sons to remain uncircumcised, perhaps due to objections from his wife or father-in-law. Circumcision was widespread in the ancient world, but usually in preparation for marriage, not in infancy. His Midianite family may have resisted its application to new-born infants. Zipporah certainly seems to be upset with the need for the ritual

Now, Moses is returning to Egypt, to lead the covenant people, but his own family is not in conformity with God’s covenant. The principle that Paul gave Timothy applies here as well:

1Ti 3:5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

When God prescribed the sign of circumcision to Abraham, he specified,

Gen 17:14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be **cut off** from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

God threatens Moses with death for not circumcising his son. Probably, he appears in the form of the angel of the Lord, as on similar occasions. When Jacob returns from Haran to Canaan,

Gen 32:24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled **a man** with him until the breaking of the day. ... 30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for **I have seen God** face to face, and my life is preserved.

³ See note for further discussion.

When Balaam goes to meet Balak,

Num 22:22 And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him.

In fact, the LXX in 4:24 says that it is the angel of the Lord who met Moses.

These three incidents (Jacob, Moses, and Balaam) all prepare people whom the Lord is sending on a mission. Each faces a temptation to sin. Jacob fears his brother Esau. Moses has neglected circumcision. Balaam's motives are carnal. All three must recognize that God is watching them, and they face serious consequences if they do not obey him.

25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet,—Moses is disabled by the attack, so Zipporah circumcises the son. In our version, she then throws her son's foreskin at somebody's feet. But note that "it" is in italics. The Hebrew construction means simply, "she reached to his feet." The LXX reflects this insight, translating, "she fell at his feet." It is most natural to understand that she is imploring the angel of the Lord, who is holding her husband in a death-grip, to release him.

and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.—The expression translated "bloody husband" appears only in these two verses. The word translated "husband" is used most often in the OT to describe a son in law, but once (2 Ki 8:27) it refers more generally to an in-law, a sense that the cognate noun also has in Akkadian and Syriac. Allen suggests the translation, "bride-father." She is describing, not Moses, but the Lord who is enforcing what she considers to be an inhumane ritual over his covenant son Moses and his family.

The previous paragraph introduced the idea of a family relation between the Lord and his people (4:22, "Israel is my son, even my firstborn"). Zipporah was happy to be Moses' wife while he lived in Midian, and might be happy to be the wife of an Egyptian. But to find herself married into a spiritual family whose membership is sealed with blood is offensive to her.

26 So he let him go:—Now that the requirement of the covenant has been satisfied, the Lord releases Moses.

then she said, A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.—This is the moral of the story: God insists on circumcision as the sign of the covenant with Abraham.

At this point we hear no more of Zipporah or her sons until he meets Jethro again in ch. 18:

Exo 18:2 Then Jethro, Moses' father in law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, **after he had sent her back**, 3 And her two sons; ... 5 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God:

18:2 says that Moses sent her back, probably after this episode in the inn. The son, newly circumcised, would not be able to travel comfortably for some days. (Compare the practice that God accepted during the wilderness wanderings, of delaying circumcision—Jos 5:5, 7.)

Scene 3: 27-28, Moses and Aaron in Sinai

The third scene is marked again by a change in characters and location. Zipporah and Moses' sons are gone, and now Aaron joins Moses. Moses has moved from the inn to Mt. Horeb.

27 And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.—In 4:14, when appointing Aaron as Moses' prophet, God said, "Behold, he cometh forth to meet thee." Now,

having confirmed Moses and his family in their relation with him, he sets Aaron on his way.

And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.—Aaron would probably follow the caravan route from Egypt to Midian (Figure 1, chart), putting the mount near Khashm et-Tarif, not in the south of the peninsula. This location is also close enough to Midian for Moses to have grazed his flocks there.

Aaron’s kiss to Moses contrasts with his last encounter with his kinsmen,

Exo 2:14 And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?

The next three verses show Aaron and Moses in the roles that the Lord instituted (Table 3).⁴

28 And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.—God had said, “Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth,” and now they have a long walk for Moses to bring Aaron up to date. When Israel leaves Egypt, they arrive at Sinai “in the third month” (19:1), so Moses and Aaron will have a few weeks to catch up with each other.⁵

Scene 4: 29-31, Moses and Aaron in Egypt

In the fourth scene, Moses and Aaron have arrived in Egypt, and meet with the elders.

29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:—In 3:16-22, the Lord outlined Moses’ mission, beginning with his meeting with the elders (Figure 2, chart). We will see that entire plan unfold as we move from 4:29 through chapter 12.⁶ Table 4 (chart) shows the first part of this correspondence, with 4:29-31.

Obedient to this plan, as soon as they arrive, they gather the elders.

30 And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.—As instructed in 4:16, Moses communicates with Aaron (v. 28), who then conveys the information to the people.



Figure 1: Sinai trade routes and possible sites for Mt Sinai

(<https://biblemapper.com/blog/index.php/2022/01/17/proposed-locations-for-mount-sinai/>)

Plan, 4:15-16	Execution, 4:28-30
15 And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth:	28 And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.
16 And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people:	30 And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

Table 3: Execution of God's instructions to Moses when he meets Aaron

4 These two sets of verses are a discontinuous form of what Longacre calls an execution paragraph (*Notes on Translation* 15 (July, 1980), pp. 5-22, <https://cyber-chapel.org/Longacre1980.pdf>)

5 In Jewish tradition, the law was given 50 days after the Passover

6 This is another discontinuous execution paragraph.

Mode	Question, Positive		Statement, Negative
Focus	God Said ...		The LORD Said ...
Moses	3:11-12 Moses: Who am I? God: I will be with you.		4:10-12 Moses: I cannot speak The LORD: Go, I will be with your mouth
The People	3:13-15 Moses: (They will ask) What is his name? God: The LORD God of your fathers		4:1-9 Moses: They will not believe The LORD: Three signs
3:16-22 Go + God's Purpose			

Figure 2: God Outlines his Plan to Moses

31 And the people believed:—God gave Moses the signs in response to his complaint, “they will not believe” (4:1). Now, hearing his message and seeing the signs, they believe.

and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction,—These were the points that God gave Moses in 3:16.

then they bowed their heads and worshipped.⁷—This spiritual “high” is followed by a series of discouraging events in Exodus 5. This sequence embodies an important spiritual lesson. God’s promises are glorious, but the means by which he accomplishes them maximize his glory, and are often painful for his people. Rom 5:1-5, John 16:33, and Acts 14:22 show that this process is to be expected (Table 5, chart). Romans 5 marks these by repeating the word “hope.”

Plan, 3:16-18a	Execution, 4:29-31
16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together,	29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:
and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers ... appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: ...	30 And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.
18 And they shall hearken to thy voice:	31 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.

Table 4: Execution of God's plan for speaking to the elders

Stage	Exodus 4-6	Romans 5	John 16:33	Acts 14:22
Believing God's promises	4:31 the people believed , and ... worshipped	1 Therefore being justified by faith , we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.	These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace exhorting them to continue in the faith ,
The road is painful ...	5:1-22 increased oppression	3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope :	In the world ye shall have tribulation :	and that we must through much tribulation
... but leads to glory	6:1 now shalt thou see what I will do	5 And the hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.	but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.	enter into the kingdom of God .

Table 5: Parallels among Exodus 4-6, Rom 5:1-5, John 16:33, and Acts 14:22.

⁷ This expression (קָדַד qadad H6915) appears here, after Moses gives instructions for the passover (12:27), and when Moses hears the Lord declare his name and promise to bear the sin of his people (34:8). Another verb (זָוַה Hishtafel hishtachawa H7812) occurs in eight other places, of prostration both before men and God.

First, we receive God’s revelation by faith. Israel received Moses’ good news. In Romans, we are justified by believing God’s promise. Our Lord spoke the words of the upper room discourse so that we might receive them in faith. The disciples in Acts 14:22 are “in the faith.”

In the second stage, bad things happen—the turmoil of Exodus 5, the tribulations of Romans 5, John 16, and Acts 14.

In the third stage, God glorifies himself by bringing victory out of apparent defeat.

5:1-6:1, Pharaoh Increases Oppression

In the first panel, after Jacob and his family enter Egypt, they are oppressed (Table 1, 1:8-22). Now that oppression increases. Rom 5:3, John 16:33, and Acts 14:22 show that those who have by faith received God’s promises should expect such tribulation.

This chapter is a series of duologues (Figure 3, chart). Each exchange upsets one party, who complains to someone else. The process starts and ends with Moses, who finally goes to the Lord. Table 6 (chart) summarizes these conversations. Each teaches a principle about the tribulation believers should expect. In each section, we summarize the history, then explore its principles.

1-5, Moses and Aaron meet with Pharaoh

History

5:1 And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh,—This meeting with Pharaoh differs from those reported later, which are all either directly commanded by God⁸ or requested by Pharaoh. Here he and Aaron just barge in, on their own initiative. Compare (chart):

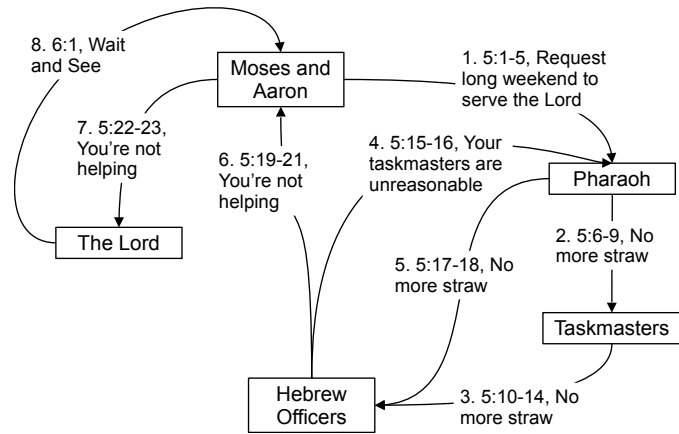


Figure 3: Cascading Conversations

Ref.	Participants	Conversation	Principle
1-5	Moses and Pharaoh	Moses requests a feast; Pharaoh refuses	God’s people live in a world ruled by a wicked personal adversary, who seeks to frustrate their faith
6-9	Pharaoh and Taskmasters	Pharaoh tells the taskmasters to withhold straw	Satan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stirs up his servants against believers • leads God’s people to question God’s word
10-14	Taskmasters and Officers	Taskmasters implement the policy through Hebrew officers	God’s people are sometimes part of the opposition
15-18	Officers and Pharaoh	Officers plead with Pharaoh, who refuses	We can engage oppressing powers, but should not expect success
19-21	Officers and Moses	Officers complain to Moses	Spiritual leaders should expect to be the focus of believers’ discontent
22-23	Moses and the Lord	Moses goes to the Lord, who encourages him	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We must cast our cares on God • He will bring victory

Table 6: Scenes and Spiritual Principles in Exodus 5

8 Cassuto

6:10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 11 **Go in**, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt,
...

7:14 And the LORD said unto Moses, ... 15 **Get thee unto Pharaoh** in the morning ... (1,
water to blood)

8:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, **Go unto Pharaoh**, and say unto him, ... (2, frogs)

8:8 Then **Pharaoh called** for Moses and Aaron, ...

8:20 And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and **stand before**
Pharaoh; ... (4, flies)

8:25 And **Pharaoh called** for Moses and for Aaron, ...

9:1 Then the LORD said unto Moses, **Go in unto Pharaoh**, ... (5, murrain)

9:8 And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the
furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven **in the sight of Pharaoh**. (6, boils)

9:13 And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and **stand before**
Pharaoh, ... (7, hail)

9:27 And **Pharaoh sent, and called** for Moses and Aaron, ...

10:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, **Go in unto Pharaoh**: (8, locusts)

10:16 Then **Pharaoh called** for Moses and Aaron in haste; ...

10:24 And Pharaoh called unto Moses, ... (9, darkness)

Every plague except the third and the last brings Moses before Pharaoh, and in every case either God sends him, or Pharaoh invites him. The lack of either a divine command or a royal invitation in this case suggests that Moses is running ahead of the Lord. This impression is reinforced by the description of the meeting that follows.

Moses' conduct warns us of the weakness of the flesh. At first, he refuses the Lord's commission, incurring the Lord's anger. Now, back in Egypt, the enthusiastic reception of his message by the Israelites energizes him, and he rushes into a confrontation with Pharaoh before the Lord tells him to. His overeagerness is evident in the meeting that follows.

There is a principle here. The world is too complex, and our adversary too subtle, for us to run open-loop. The Lord promises step by step direction, and we should listen carefully for it, neither rejecting his commands nor running ahead of him.

Gen 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; **walk before me**, and be thou perfect.

Isa 30:21 And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, **when ye turn** to the right hand, and **when ye turn** to the left.

In general, Moses' first meeting with Pharaoh follows the plan in 3:16-22 (Table 7, chart). The sequence of request and refusal is executed twice, emphasizing Pharaoh's recalcitrance. But Moses' brashness in rushing in to Pharaoh without a specific instruction from the Lord continues to show itself in his attention, or lack of attention, to the details of the plan.

Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.—As instructed in 3:18c, they come to him using the name, "LORD"

Plan, 3:18b-19	Execution, 5:1-4	
18b And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come , thou and the elders of Israel , unto the king of Egypt,	1 And afterward Moses and Aaron went in ,	
18c and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us :	and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel,	3 And they said , The God of the Hebrews hath met with us :
18d and now let us go , we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness [H4057] , that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God.	Let my people go , that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness .	let us go , we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert [H4057] , and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.
19 And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go , no, not by a mighty hand.	2 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 .	4 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 . 5 And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.

Table 7: Execution of God's plan for testing Pharaoh

(YHWH, Jehovah) that God emphasized to Moses in 3:15-16. But their approach to Pharaoh differs from the plan in several details.

First, God commanded them to go with the elders:

Exo 3:18 ... thou shalt come, **thou and the elders of Israel**, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, ...

But the elders do not appear here, or in any of Moses' meetings with Pharaoh.⁹ Jewish tradition (Exod. R. 5:17) suggests that they started out with Moses, but lost their nerve on the way to the palace. Perhaps their reluctance should have cautioned Moses to wait for explicit instructions from the Lord.

Moses and Aaron could not rectify the absence of the elders at this point, but their repetition of the request is an attempt to fix the second and third.

The second discrepancy is that their first request is phrased as a direct command from God. That was not the pattern he gave them. They were to present this as a personal request. Framing it as a demand is a good way to polarize the situation from the start.

Third, they identify him, not as the God of the Hebrews, the name by which Pharaoh knew them, but as the God of Israel, a foreign and rival identity. This title goes with the phrase, "Let my people go," which God did not authorize them to reveal to Pharaoh at this point. They are demanding from Pharaoh as peers, not making a polite request.

Fourth, they were to ask for a limited recess, but did not.

Fifth, God told them to ask to offer sacrifices, but they ask for a feast, emphasizing their own comfort, rather than the need to obey the Lord.

⁹ Houtman thinks that 5:4, 8 show that the elders were in fact there, but this seems weak. The officers who go to complain to him in 5:15-18 may represent the elders, but they are not going with Moses, as instructed.

Moses' words, like his hasty intrusion on Pharaoh, show his fleshly eagerness. But the Lord works through the stumbling efforts of his weak servant to reveal Pharaoh' heart.

2 And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD,—This becomes a refrain through the account of the plagues (chart):

Ex. 7:17 Thus saith the LORD, In this **thou shalt know that I am the LORD**: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

Ex. 8:10 And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: **that thou mayest know** that there is none like unto the LORD our God.

Ex. 8:22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end **thou mayest know that I am the LORD** in the midst of the earth.

Ex. 9:14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; **that thou mayest know that there is none like me** in all the earth.

Ex. 9:29 And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; **that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD'S**.

neither will I let Israel go.—As God predicted in 3:19, Pharaoh turns them down. He has his hands full satisfying the gods of Egypt,¹⁰ and doesn't have time to deal with an unknown deity worshipped by his slaves.

At this point, Pharaoh has fulfilled God's prediction in 3:18-19, demonstrating his rebellious spirit, and justifying the subsequent hardening of his heart.

Moses is taken aback by the refusal. He appears to reconsider, and try again, following the script more closely.

3 And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us:¹¹—In the face of this point blank refusal, Moses returns to the script that God gave him, but he does not use the name "LORD," which Pharaoh has just thrown back in his face.

let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God;—Now the request is framed as coming from the people, limited to three days, and for sacrifice, rather than a feast, conforming to the original instructions.

lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.—This caution is an addition to the script that God gave Moses in 3:18. But, like Pharaoh's protest "I know not the Lord," it makes an important point. Moses warns Pharaoh that this God is not to be trifled with. He judges those who disobey him. Two of the plagues involve "pestilence" (דֵּבַר *deber* H1689). The fifth plague was a "pestilence" (AV "murrain") upon the cattle (chart):

Ex. 9:3 Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous **murrain**.

10 Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Egyptian_deities) lists 27 major gods, 25 major goddesses, and six that are hermaphroditic or appear in both male and female forms, and hundreds of lesser deities.

11 In fact, God met with only Moses. But we have seen (4:1-9) that the signs that God gave Moses effectively bring Aaron and the elders into the scope of the theophany.

The seventh plague, the hail, is also described as pestilence:

Ex. 9:15 For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with **pestilence**; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.

Pharaoh would do well to emulate the fearful respect with which the Hebrews regard their god.

4 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.—This time, Pharaoh’s objection is not to the Lord, but to Aaron and Moses, who have framed the request in their own names.

The command “get you” is literally “go” (הלך *halak* H3212). We can trace God’s dealings with Pharaoh in his repetitions of this command (Enns on 5:18). Here and in 5:18 (to the officers of the people), he is being dismissive. “Go back to work.”

Ex. 5:18 Go therefore now, and work

After the plagues start, the command takes the form of permission for their holiday, but with restrictions, which are successively lifted:

Ex. 8:25 **Go ye**, sacrifice to your God **in the land** [not into the wilderness].

Ex. 10:8 **Go**, serve the LORD your God: ... 11 ... **go now ye that are men**, [not your children]

Ex. 10:24 **Go ye**, serve the LORD; **only let your flocks and your herds be stayed**: let your little ones also go with you.

Finally, after the death of the firstborn, his dismissive command becomes a request for blessing:

Ex. 12:31 And he called for 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. 32 Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and **be gone**; and bless me also.

But at this point, Pharaoh is far from such obedience to the Lord.

5 And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.—“Rest” שבת *shabat* H7673 (here *hifil* or causative) is the verb that describes the Lord’s rest after creation in Gen 2:2, and the root of the noun “Sabbath.” He is instinctively opposed to values that God sought to teach from the beginning.

To release such a large work force for three days would bring an unacceptably large loss of production, so they must be kept working. It’s one thing if Moses and Aaron want a few days off, but it’s quite another to shut down a large segment of the economy.

Historically, the request is not unreasonable. A highly respected Egyptologist¹² writes:

In Egypt, journals of work preserved on ostraca of this period¹³ from Deir el Medineh and the Valley of the Kings at Thebes show vividly how many days were claimed as 'days off', not least for religious purposes. One ostrakon (dated to Year 40 of Ramesses II) gives a full register of the working days and absences of fifty men; another (Year 6 of Sethos II)? shows gangs of workmen idle for eight or fourteen days at a time, and several documents mention

12 K.A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*. Chicago: InterVarsity, 1966, p. 156.

13 Kitchen holds to a 13th century Exodus, and has in mind the Ramesside period.

men who go 'to offer to their god', while another records four days of festivity enjoyed by the workmen of the royal necropolis at a local festival.

The difference is that Pharaoh does not recognize the deity whom Moses intends to honor. He might have accepted a sacrifice to the Egyptian gods, but he is naturally hostile to the true God:

Rom 8:7 ... the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Principle

The fundamental principle illustrated in Moses' first interview with Pharaoh is that God's people live in a world ruled by a wicked personal adversary, who seeks to frustrate their faith. Recall the first sign God gave Moses, of power over the serpent, and the centrality of the serpent in characterizing Pharaoh, as part of his crown (Figure 4, chart). It is appropriate for him to represent Satan in his attacks against God's people. The NT warns of this personal adversary:

Eph 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the **wiles** of **the devil**. 12 For **we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.** 13

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

1Pe 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary the devil**, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

As long as we are unbelievers, under his power, he pays little attention to us. But when we shift our allegiance to the Lord, he becomes jealous, and seeks to turn us back to himself.

He is a methodical adversary. Eph 6:11 warns of his "wiles" (scheming plans or methods, *μεθοδεία methodeia* G3180). Elsewhere Paul warns of his "devices" or thoughts:

2Co 2:10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; 11 Lest **Satan** should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of **his devices** (*νόημα noēma* G3540).

As we go through the conversations in this section, we will see a number of these "wiles" or "devices." We should note them, so we can recognize and respond appropriately to attacks.

We are not without resources in this battle. Ephesians 6 describes the spiritual weapons at our disposal. Our Savior has proven these weapons in his earthly ministry (Isa 59:17), and we should exercise ourselves in using them when Satan attacks us. Our victory is pictured in the evolution of Pharaoh's command to "Go," starting as a rude dismissal ("go back to work"), and ending as a desperate plea, "Go, and bless me also." Pharaoh was finally broken, showing God's great power and glory. And Satan will one day be broken. Pharaoh sends Moses and Israel out of Egypt into the wilderness, but God will send Satan out of his presence into the lake of fire.



Figure 4: Mask of Tutankhamun, showing cobra (goddess Wadjet) and falcon (god Horus)

6-9, Pharaoh commands the Taskmasters

History

6 And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers,—Egyptian records¹⁴ substantiate this organization of Egyptian labor.

The Lord mentioned the taskmasters before, when the Lord met Moses at the bush (chart):

Ex. 3:7 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;

The name means literally “oppressors.” These were the Egyptian managers.

The “officers”¹⁵ are associated with “the people,”¹⁶ the children of Israel (14, 15, 19). These are Hebrews whom the Egyptians have assigned to supervise groups of workers. One would expect them to be recognized as leaders by the people. Perhaps they were recruited from the elders who did not accompany Moses to his meeting with Pharaoh. If that’s the case, their relatively privileged position over their brethren might explain their reluctance to join Moses in petitioning Pharaoh for a radical change in the Hebrews’ condition. While they were still slaves, they enjoyed a position of privilege that they did not want to jeopardize.

saying, 7 Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves.—The bricks that the Israelites made were not clay baked in an oven, but sun-dried mud from the Nile.¹⁷ By itself, this material would dry slowly and be brittle. Adding straw speeds drying and increases its strength. The same composite forms the adobe that is used throughout the American southwest.

To understand Pharaoh’s decision about straw, recall how grain grows and is harvested. The kernels are in a cluster, at the top of a long stalk. Figure 5 shows this long stem, from roots in the ground up to the cluster of kernels.

Workers harvest the grain with a sickle, leaving the root and some of the stem in the ground. Figure 6 shows the standing grain, piles of stems that have been cut, and the roots and short-cut stems that remain in the field. This residue is called “stubble.”

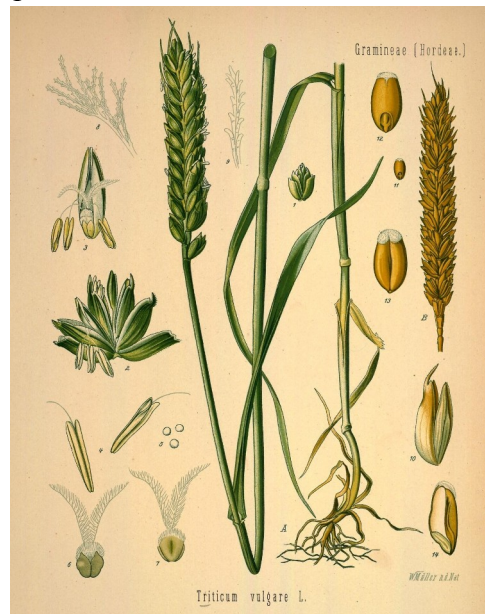


Figure 5: Parts of a wheat plant (from Wikipedia)

14 A. Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*. London: Macmillan, 1894. pp. 123-124.

<https://archive.org/details/lifeinancientegy00ermaiala>

15 “Officers” comes from a root meaning “to write.” These lower-level managers would monitor the production of the slaves, record their performance, and report to the taskmasters. Their title implies that even slaves were able to read and write. From its birth in Egypt, the nation Israel was literate, able to take advantage of the written Scriptures that Moses left to them. The vocabulary here reinforces the evidence from the Egyptian turquoise mines of Serabit el-Khadim, where Semitic inscriptions (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serabit_el-Khadim_proto-Sinaitic_inscriptions) show the literacy of foreign, specifically semitic, laborers.

16 Here and in v. 10, “their” is singular, referring to the singular “people,” not the plural “taskmasters.”

17 There is no clear reference to oven-baked clay bricks in the OT. “Brickkiln” מלבן *malbēn* (2 Sam 12:31; Jr 43:9; Nam 3:14) refers to a rectangular space or tool (such as a brick mold), not an oven—see Driver on 2 Sam 12:31.

The cut stems are taken to a threshing floor, and beaten to knock the grain kernels off the stems and out of their hard sheath. Then they are tossed into the air (Figure 7, chart), so the wind can blow away the useless part, straw (bits of the stem), and chaff (the fine residue from the hulls of the kernels). The figure shows the pile of kernels directly in front of the workers, piles of straw around the edges, and the chaff blowing away. Now we can distinguish the four results of the process: the grain itself, the chaff blown away by the wind, the heavier straw, and the stubble left in the field.



Figure 6: Harvesting grain, showing standing grain, bundles for collection, and stubble

So straw is a natural by-product of grain production. In the usual production cycle, this straw would be delivered to the brick makers. Now they must gather straw themselves. In 4:12, this material is more precisely identified as “stubble,” which is what remains in the field after harvesting. So instead of having cartloads of straw delivered to the worksite, the slaves now must go out into the harvested fields and pull stubble from the ground.



Figure 7: A threshing floor, showing grain, chaff, and straw

8 And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof:—“Tale” is the count, the quota (compare our use of “teller” for someone in a bank who counts money). In spite of the additional work, they must produce as many bricks as they did before.

for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.—Pharaoh accuses the people of originating the request for a holiday. He knows that the request originates with Moses and Aaron, but he is trying to stir up popular opposition against the leaders. The Hebrew “officers” are among those who hear this accusation and learn of its consequences, threatening to alienate them from Moses and Aaron.

9 Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words.—“Vain words” דְּבָרֵי־שֶׁקֶר are “lying words.” He is referring to the ideas that Moses and Aaron gave him from the Lord, what 4:30 called “the words which the Lord had spoken.” Pharaoh is calling the Lord a liar, confirming his rejection of the Lord’s authority.

Principle

This interchange illustrates two ways in which Satan attacks God’s people.

First, Pharaoh sets the Egyptian taskmasters to carry out his attack against the Israelites. One of Satan’s “wiles” or “devices” is to stir up unbelievers against God’s people. Recall when Barnabas and Saul preach to Sergius Paulus, the Roman procounsel of Cyprus:

Act 13:6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: 7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. 8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. 9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, 10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou **child of the devil**, thou **enemy of all righteousness**, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

Barjesus, though ethnically Jewish, dealt in sorcery, like Simon in Samaria (Acts 8:9, 11), a practice forbidden by the law of Moses:

Deu 18:10 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, 11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. 12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: ...

It is because he is a “child of the devil” that he is the “enemy of all righteousness,” Acts 13:10.

We should be under no illusions that the world at large is sympathetic with our God:

Jas 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the **friendship of the world is enmity with God**? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

The age in which we live is characterized as “evil” (Gal 1:4, “this present evil world”), and is more likely to support Satan in opposing the work of God than to be a refuge for us.

The second example of Satanic attack is reflected in Pharaoh’s final exhortation in 6:9, “let them not regard vain [lying] words.” This attack echoes the serpent’s words to Eve in Eden,

Gen 3:1 ... And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, ... ? ... 4 ... Ye shall not surely die:

Satan always challenges the truth of God’s word. He urged Eve to ignore God’s warning about death. He urges unbelievers to reject God’s offer of salvation, just as here Pharaoh urges the people to reject the promise of God through Moses and Aaron of release from their bondage. If we would be victorious in our spiritual combat, we must “hold[] fast the faithful word as [we have] been taught” (Titus 1:9).

10-14, The Taskmasters go to the People

History

In this section, the taskmasters give the order to make bricks without straw twice. The first time, the Hebrew officers are grouped with the taskmasters in oppressing the people. But in v. 13, the command is repeated again, and this time the officers are on the receiving end of the oppression rather than delivering it.

We have suggested that the officers prized their cushy position with the Egyptians, and the superiority it gave them over their brethren. Here we learn the futility of such compromise.

10 And the taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spake to the people,—Now the people at large feel the effect of Moses’ intervention with Pharaoh. In this

summary, the taskmasters and officers are described as a single group confronting the people. From the standpoint of the people, the officers are oppressors. The result is that instead of Israel’s being united in rejoicing in God’s gracious promises, they are set at odds with one another, and led to question his faithfulness.

saying, Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw. 11 Go ye, get you straw where ye can find it: yet not ought of your work shall be diminished.—The leaders deliver the detail of Pharaoh’s new requirement to the people. They must get their own straw, and still produce as many bricks as before. The taskmasters do not explain Pharaoh’s reason for this new restriction (the request for a holiday), but simply impose it.

12 So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.—Instead of unloading carts of straw from the threshingfloor, they must crawl around in the fields, gathering stubble from the ground. Production naturally slows.

This works for a while, but of course the people are unable to match the production levels demanded, and when this happens, the taskmasters direct their anger against the officers. Now the officers have moved from those in control, to those being controlled (Table 8, chart).

	High Level View	Zooming In
The Oppressors	10 And the taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers , and they spake to the people, ...	13 And the taskmasters hastened them, saying, Fulfil your works, your daily tasks, as when there was straw.
The Oppressed	12 So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.	14 And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten , ...

Table 8: The Futility of Compromise

13 And the taskmasters hastened them, saying, Fulfil your works, your daily tasks, as when there was straw.—Now only the taskmasters are speaking. Where are the officers?

14 And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them,—We are reminded of the detail of the organization. The taskmasters don’t bother themselves with the people directly, but work through the officers. And when the people fall short, the officers get the blame. Now, instead of giving orders, they are subject to them.

were beaten, and demanded [questioned],¹⁸ Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and to day, as heretofore?—When the productivity falls below quota, the taskmasters discipline the Hebrew officers. What looked like a privileged position has become one of great discomfort.

Principle

The “wile of the devil” here is to maneuver God’s true people into opposing his work. The position of the officers was comfortable while the system was running smoothly. But compromise with the adversary is never a secure position, and when difficulty comes, Satan quickly abandons those who have compromised with him.

Paul faced such opposition from compromised believers. Corinth is a good example (chart). Under the influence of false teachers, the Corinthians, though believers, were being divided.

18 Hebrew לאמר, “saying.” The demanding is by the taskmasters to the officers, not the officers to the people. The KJV uses “demanded” in the archaic sense of “questioned,” which was common c. 1150-1500.

He considers the Corinthians to be believers. These correspond to the Hebrews in Exodus.

1Co 1:4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; 5 That in every thing **ye are enriched** by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; 6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: 7 So that **ye come behind in no gift**; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: 8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But they have been misguided by the false teachers, who correspond to the taskmasters.

1Co 4:14 I write not these things to shame you, but as **my beloved sons** I warn you. 15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus **I have begotten you** through the gospel.

2Co 11:13 For such are **false apostles, deceitful workers**, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if **his ministers** also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

In 1 Corinthians, the false teachers challenge Paul's authority as an apostle (chart):

1Co 9:1 Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? 2 If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. 3 Mine answer to **them that do examine me** ...

The result of this was division and party spirit, as the believers grouped around rival leaders, whom we might compare with the Hebrew officers in Exodus:

1Co 1:11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that **there are contentions** among you. 12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

1Co 4:18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. 19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. 20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. 21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

In 2 Corinthians, the issue has moved beyond his authority to the content of their faith. The attackers were actually teaching falsehood:

2Co 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so **your minds should be corrupted** from the simplicity that is in Christ. 4 For if he that cometh **preacheth another Jesus**, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive **another spirit**, which ye have not received, or **another gospel**, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

Again, Paul believes that the Corinthians are saved, but others are turning them against him.

It is important to contrast this opposition with 19-21, where the officers deliberately attack Moses and Aaron. Here, they have been lured into oppressing their own people by the taskmasters, just as believers may be led astray by false teachers. Later, they are rising up in direct personal rebellion against the Lord's appointed leaders.

15-18, The Officers go to Pharaoh

History

15 Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying,—We have suggested that the officers were selected from among the elders, and that they did not join Moses in his appeals to Pharaoh because of the privileged position they occupied as officers under the taskmasters. But now that they are sharing in the oppression felt by their kinsmen, they are compelled to appear before Pharaoh, the role that they did not fulfill previously.

Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants?—Note their image of themselves. They see themselves as the servants of Pharaoh, not (like Moses in 4:10) of the Lord.

Recall that a major theme of Exodus is that God's people should serve him, not other masters. This principle is highlighted in the second commandment, concerning idols:

Exo 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:

They have not heard this commandment yet, but their attitude shows their need for it. They are content to be the servants of Pharaoh, and do not think of their allegiance to God coming first.

16 There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people.—The taskmasters didn't mention the request for a holiday. The people see the increase in demands as arbitrary.

17 But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the LORD.—It is Pharaoh who explains Moses' request for a sacrifice in his decision. They should have been with Moses when he made the request. Now they perceive his attempt to honor the Lord as bringing them pain.

18 Go therefore now, and work;—Pharaoh repeats to the officers his command to Moses in 5:4, "Go." As we noted, Pharaoh will ultimately tell them to go and leave Egypt.

for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.—The instructions stand. They must gather their own straw, and yet be as productive as before.

Principle

The officers' appeal to Pharaoh has interesting parallels in the experiences of God's people. Earthly kings are under Satan, the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4), and we should not be surprised when they oppose God and his people. Yet there are cases when God's people appeal successfully to them for deliverance from oppression:

- Esther appealed to Xerxes to reverse the decree of Haman against the Jews (chart):

Est 4:15 Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, 16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. 17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him. 5:1 Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. 2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing

in the court, that **she obtained favour in his sight**: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. 3 **Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.**

- Nehemiah appealed to Xerxes' son, Artaxerxes, for permission to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem:

Neh 2:5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. 6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? **So it pleased the king to send me**; and I set him a time. 7 Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; 8 And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And **the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.**

- Paul appealed to Caesar to evade Jewish plots against his life in Judaea (chart):

Act 25:9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? 10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. 11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. **I appeal unto Caesar.** 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? **unto Caesar shalt thou go.**

In these cases, God granted them favor in the eyes of the pagan authorities. But sometimes, these appeals fail. The officers do not obtain what they want, and Moses and Aaron themselves are repeatedly rejected by Pharaoh until the Lord breaks him through the plagues. We can discern two reasons for such failures.

The first is that God has a higher purpose to achieve through the evil that he allows to come on his people. This explains why even the repeated petitions of Moses and Aaron are not fruitful, and no doubt applies to the request by the officers.

The second is spiritual shortcoming. This was the case when the Corinthian Jews appealed to the Roman governor Gallio against Paul:

Act 18:12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and **brought him to the judgment seat**, 13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. 14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: 15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. 16 And **he drave them from the judgment seat.** 17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

If the officers were indeed compromising by their support of the taskmasters, the second explanation, of spiritual shortcoming, may apply to them as well.

19-21, The Officers Complain to Moses

History

19 And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task.—The evil is not just that they have more work to do, but that this work results from the message that Moses has brought them, and that they so enthusiastically received (4:31). They are like some new converts, enthusiastic at first in receiving the gospel, but now realizing the persecution that it brings.

20 And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh:—Moses and Aaron are waiting for them when they emerge from the royal presence. Commendably, they don't try to hide themselves or make excuses when their decisions lead to undesirable results, but they are willing to face their constituency.

21 And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge;—The people are not only unhappy, but presume to know the mind of God better than their leaders do, and ask God's judgment on them for the position they have taken.

because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.—Moses claims to represent the God of their fathers, who has promised to deliver them. But their lot is now worse than before, and they fault Moses for misrepresenting the Lord's intention, or failing to carry it out appropriately.

When they first learned of God's appearance to Moses, they responded in faith and worship:

Exo 4:30 And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, ... 31 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.**

“All the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses” included the prediction,

Exo 3:19 And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

Now, in the midst of tribulation, their faith is failing, and they ask God to judge Moses and Aaron. Not until Moses announces the final plague and the passover do they again worship:

Exo 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. ... 26 And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? 27 That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. **And the people bowed the head and worshipped.**

Principle

Spiritual leaders should expect to be the focus of believers' discontent. We saw in 10-14 that believers can sometimes be pressured by circumstances into opposing other believers, but here the officers are deliberately criticizing Moses and Aaron.

This protest is the first of a series of episodes in which Israel is described as tempting (נסה *nasah* H5254) or murmuring against (לון *lūn* H3885) the Lord or his servants (chart; see note).

Num 14:22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and **have tempted me now these ten times**, and have not hearkened to my voice; 23 Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

At the shore of the Red Sea,

Ex 14:12 For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

At Marah, where the water was bitter,

Ex 15:24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

In the wilderness of Sin,

Ex 16:3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; ...

At Rephidim,

Ex 17:3 Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

At Sinai, after they had seen the display of God's glory,

Ex 32:1 Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Once on the march, the complaining continues. At Taberah,

Num 11:4 Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:

On their first visit, to Kadesh Barnea, after hearing the report of the spies (chart),

Num 14:2 Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

After the count of ten rebellions in Numbers 14, Korah led a major rebellion:

Num 16:3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?

And when the Lord judged the rebels,

Num 16:41 But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.

When they return to Kadesh Barnea at the end of their 40 years of wandering,

Num 20:2 And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. 3 And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! 4 And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?

And on the final leg of the journey, around Edom,

Num 21:5 Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

Not only the people, but even Aaron and Miriam, complain against Moses:

Num 12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.

Throughout the Bible, younger believers are to respect the judgment of their elders, not curse them. In Leviticus, this duty is ranked with other very basic ones (chart):

Lev 19:32 Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.

The NT echoes this principle in describing the roles of older and younger believers in the church. Paul exhorts the Thessalonian believers,

1Th 5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to **know them** which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to **esteem them** very highly in love for their work's sake. And **be at peace** among yourselves.

And Peter, who echoes Paul at many points, urges,

1Pe 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. 5 Likewise, ye younger, **submit yourselves unto the elder**.

Note the long list of instructions for the elders, but the simple instruction to the youngers, “submit yourselves.”

5:22-6:1, Moses Returns to the Lord (chart)

History

22 And Moses returned unto¹⁹ the LORD,—The last time he spoke with the Lord was in chapter 4, before returning to Egypt. There is no record of his interacting with the Lord since then. Why not?

Ever since Eden, man's sin leads him to hide from communion with God, and fellowship between God and man has been problematic. Moses' hesitancy to come before God illustrates this challenge, and a major thread throughout Exodus describes his increasing communion with the Lord (see note). The NT standard is “pray without ceasing” (1 Thes 5:17) and “abide in me” (John 15:4). But that intimacy presumes our assurance of the Lord's favor because of our Savior's finished work, and the New Covenant presence of the indwelling Spirit.

19 Durham suggests translating “turned against,” based on an adversarial meaning of אָדָּאָ documented in BDB p. 40 §4, but this does not appear to be used with שׁוּב *qal*.

and said, Lord,—He doesn't address him by the name YHWH, but as Lord. The address as YHWH does not occur until 15:6, when God has delivered the nation from Egypt at the Red Sea. Recall the explanation in 3:14, "I will be what I will be." Moses has not yet learned the meaning of God's covenant name.

Moses raises two complaints, each explained (ABAB, Table 9). Each refers to what the Lord promised him at the burning bush.

Promise	Questions	Statements
3:7 I have surely seen the affliction of my people ... I know their sorrows	22 wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people?	23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people;
3:8 And I am come down to deliver them ...	why is it that thou hast sent me?	neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.

Table 9: Moses complains to the Lord

wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this

people? ... 23a For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people;—First, Moses blames God for Pharaoh's abuse. The Lord promised (3:7), "I have surely seen the affliction of my people ... I know their sorrows." But all they have experienced is evil (רעע *ra-ah hifil* H7489). The same verb, meaning "do evil," describes the Lord and Pharaoh. "Lord, you're no better than Pharaoh!"

22b why is it that thou hast sent me? ... 23b neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.—God also promised, "I am come down to deliver them." But Moses sees no evidence of this. He shares the disillusionment of the people. He knows what the Lord promised, but in the face of Pharaoh's opposition, he is having doubts.

How shall we evaluate Moses' comments here? On the one hand, as in 4:1 ("they will not believe me"), he has forgotten the detailed plan that God outlined in 3:16-22. There, God promised, "they shall hearken to thy voice" (3:18), but also, "I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go." He ought to have expected initial rejection by the king.

But on the other hand, instead of complaining to Aaron, or to Pharaoh, or to the people, he takes his concerns to God. This open, candid expression of his concerns to God characterizes his interactions throughout his career, and anticipates the frankness with which other OT leaders interact with the Lord. Compare

- David: Psa 142:1 I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication. 2 I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble
- or Elijah at Mount Horeb: 1Ki 19:10 I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away
- or Jeremiah: Jer 12:1 Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?
- or Habakkuk: Hab 1:2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! 3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance?"

Like a loving parent, God delights to hear his children, even when they cry out in agony. Moses has been silent toward God for too long. This complaint begins a healthy pattern of more candid and open interaction with the Lord.

6:1 Then the LORD said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh:—The Lord does not lose patience with him, but reassures him that this is all part of the plan.

This is a recurrent theme in Exodus, and throughout the Bible. God delights to place his people in apparently hopeless situations, in order to demonstrate his power and get glory for himself. We will see it again at the shore of the Red Sea:

Exo 14:13 And Moses said unto the people, **Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD**, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. 14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

Six hundred years later, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, faced invasion from a powerful coalition of Ammon, Moab, and Edom (Mount Seir) (2 Chr 20:1-2, 10). The nation was terrified, but Jehoshaphat proclaimed a national fast, and led the nation in calling on the Lord for help (20:3-13). The response God gave him echoes Exod 6:1 and 14:13:

2Ch 20:14 Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation; 15 And he said, ... 17 Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: **set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you**, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.

for with a strong hand shall he let them go [send them out], and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.—Whose strong hand is in view? Pharaoh's? He is absolutely defeated when he tells them to go. Rather, the Lord:

Ex. 13:9 And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in thy mouth: for **with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt**.

Principle

We see two important principles here. First, we must be willing to bring our cares to the Lord.

Jer 33:3 Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

Luk 18:1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

1Pe 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: 7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Second, remember the three-step sequence in Romans 5 (Table 5).

1. 5:1-2, We believe God's promises, "being justified by faith," and "rejoic[ing] in hope of the glory of God," just as the Israelites rejoiced in the hope that Moses brought them.
2. 5:3-4, Then we can expect tribulations, but these develop our spiritual character.
3. 5:5, Ultimately, "hope maketh not ashamed."

In 6:1, the Lord is declaring to Moses that the time has come for the promised deliverance.

6:2-27, Moses and Aaron commissioned by God

The next section in the first panel (2:1-4) introduced Moses, the deliverer, by describing his birth. Now that section is amplified as God commissions him and Aaron to deliver the people. The section has three parts (Figure 8).

1. At the start, vv. 2-5 identify the one giving the commission, asserting for the first time a statement that will be often repeated throughout the book, “I am the LORD,” and explaining what that means.
2. At the end, vv. 14-27 identify the ones receiving the commission, ending with “This is that Aaron and Moses.”
3. In the center, vv. 6-13 are the commission itself, marked with two commands, the first to speak to the children of Israel (6-9), the second to speak to Pharaoh (10-12). 6:13 summarizes these two parts.

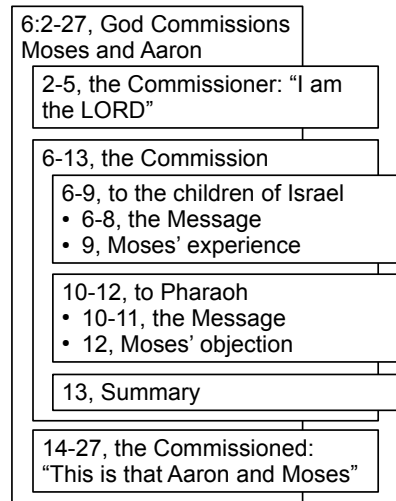


Figure 8: God Commissions Moses and Aaron

2-5, Defining God (the Commissioner)

First, our attention is drawn to the one giving the commission. Contrast 2:1-4, where God is not named at all, working from the shadows. Now he begins to reveal himself.

2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, **I am the LORD**:

—This section introduces a statement that appears 17 times in Exodus: “I am the LORD.” Ten times it appears as the object of the verb “to know” (יָדָע *yada* H3045) (Figure 9). Note the extreme concentration here in chapter 6.

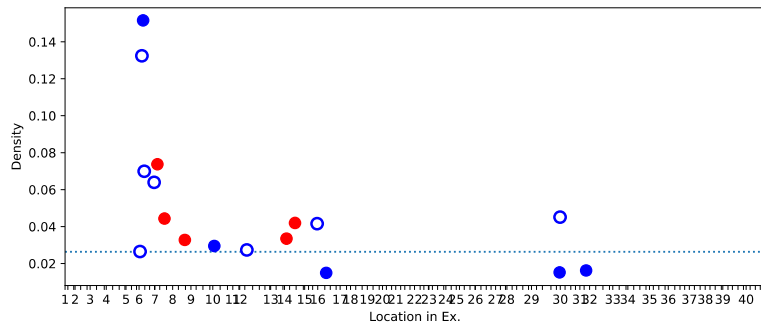


Figure 9: “I am the LORD” in Exodus. Solid: with verb “to know.” Blue: Israel. Red: Egyptians.

“LORD,” all upper case, is the name YHWH (יהוה, H3068), sometimes rendered “Jehovah”

(6:3), or in modern versions “Yahweh.” God emphasized this name at the burning bush:

Exo 3:13 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? 14 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. 15 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.

LORD is a form of the verb “to be,” used in 3:14, “I am that I am,” or “I will be what I will be.” The point of this phrase is that the meaning of God’s name is to be learned by observing his

actions, and in this section, God begins to make this point by calling attention to his covenant faithfulness. The rest of the book describes these actions, toward Israel and toward the Egyptians. God states that he has done four things with respect his people: appeared (v. 3), established (v. 4), heard, and remembered (v. 5).

3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God

Almighty אֵל שַׁדַּי,—The meaning of this name, *el shadday*, is not entirely clear (chart). *Shadday* appears most often by far in Job, where the LXX translates it παντοκράτωρ *pantokratōr* G3841 “almighty,” leading to this English translation. But the name with *el*, “God Shadday,” appears only seven times: here, once in Ezek 10:5, and five times in Genesis. All five of these are associated with fruitfulness:

Gen. 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the **Almighty God**; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and **will multiply thee** exceedingly.

Gen. 28:3 And **God Almighty** bless thee, and **make thee fruitful, and multiply thee**, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;

Gen. 35:11 And God said unto him, I am **God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply**; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins;

Gen. 43:14 And **God Almighty** give you mercy before the man, that he may send away **your other brother, and Benjamin**. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

48:3 And Jacob said unto Joseph, **God Almighty** appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, 4 And said unto me, Behold, **I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people**; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.

And in Genesis, the LXX translates the term, not “Almighty,” but “your God” (e.g., Gen 17:1, “I am your God”), following the promise of Gen 17:7, “to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” It translates Exodus 6:3 the same way,

Ex. 6:3 And I appeared to Abraam and Isaac and Jacob, **being their God**, but I did not manifest to them my name Lord.

So by usage, El Shadday refers to God as the one who gives himself to his people and multiplies them. His gift of himself to his people is seen in his repeated personal appearances to them, while he fulfills his promise to multiply them. Both Abraham and Lot (Gen 13:6) and Jacob and Esau (Gen 36:7) could not dwell together, because of the fruitfulness of their flocks. And in Jacob’s twelve sons, the foundation is laid for their personal fruitfulness.

but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.—This verse has long been a puzzle to commentators. Clearly, the patriarchs *did* know the name Jehovah. From the earliest times, they called upon him by this name in worship (chart):

Gen 4:26 And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to **call upon the name of the LORD**.

All three of the patriarchs know this name:

Gen 12:7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there **builded he an altar unto the LORD**, who appeared unto him. 8 And he removed

from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he **builded an altar unto the LORD**, and **called upon the name of the LORD**. (cf. 13:4; 21:33)

Gen 26:25 And he [Isaac] builded an altar there, and **called upon the name of the LORD**, and pitched his tent there: ...

Gen 49:18 I [Jacob] have waited for thy salvation, **O LORD**.

God utters this statement, "I am the LORD," twice in Genesis, and both time in connection with his covenant. The first time is when he made his covenant with Abraham:²⁰

Gen 15:6 And he believed in the **LORD**; and he counted it to him for righteousness. 7 And he said unto him, **I am the LORD** that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. ... 18 In the same day **the LORD made** a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

The second is when he renewed it with Jacob at Bethel:

Gen. 28:13 And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, **I am the LORD** God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

The association with his covenant anticipates its use here in Exodus 6.

The contrast between verses like these and Exod 6:3 has led some to suggest that the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch, the books of Moses) were assembled from different documents, known as J, E, D, and P. J and E used different names for God.²¹ The J document used the name Jehovah, while the E document used the name Elohim ("God"). The compiler clumsily overlooked the contradictions (such at Exod 6:3) that resulted from his mechanical combination of these different sources.

Our analysis of these books clearly shows a compositional skill that goes far beyond a mechanical splicing of different segments. And this desperate theory is not necessary. In the OT, to know a person involves more than merely knowing a name. It sometimes emphasizes understanding the characteristics implied by that name. For example, Isaiah writes around the year 700 BC, seven hundred years after the Exodus (chart). The Egyptians certainly recognized his name YHWH by this time, but Isaiah, looking forward to the future day of the Lord, writes,

Isa 19:21 And **the LORD shall be known** to Egypt, and the **Egyptians shall know the LORD** in that day, ...

Critics may debate whether Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew the name, but nobody will challenge that Israel knew it from the time of Joshua, around 1400 BC, on. Yet Isaiah, again looking into the future, writes,

Isa 52:6 Therefore **my people shall know my name**: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I.

20 The name appears 17x in Exodus, 0.66/K. It is more common in later books, notably Ezekiel (87x, 2.89/K where it explains the lesson to be learned from God's coming judgments), Leviticus (52x, 2.78/K, which it is the motive for Israel's obedience), and Isaiah (22x, 0.86/K, all but once in 40-66, promising deliverance).

21 In this theory, D and P are later revisions of J-E, and so use both names. El Shaddai (Exod 6:3) is supposed to be characteristic of P.

God’s statement in 6:3 is best understood to claim that the patriarchs knew God in his character as El Shadday, the God who gives himself to his people and makes them fruitful. But though they knew his name Jehovah, they did not know him in the character represented by that name. As Exod 3:14 emphasizes, he will be what he will be. They must walk with him to learn what his name really means. And as in Genesis, the emphasis of this name is on the fulfillment of his covenant promises.

This understanding of what it means to know God’s name is supported by what God goes on to say, describing his subsequent actions.

4 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.—In Genesis, God repeatedly promises that he will establish (future) his covenant (singular) with the patriarchs (see note). The verb “establish” translates Hebrew קָוַם *hifil, qoom* H6965, meaning to make firm or cause to stand (chart). It means to carry out the terms of what has been promised in the covenant (see note).²²

Note three things about this statement.

First, only a single covenant is in view, the covenant with Abraham, though it is repeated to Isaac and Jacob. God made the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15,

Gen. 15:18 In the same day the LORD **made** a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

The verb that describes making a covenant is “cut” (כָּרַת *karat* H3772), referring to the ceremony of cutting animals in two and walking between them. This is the only time in Genesis that God is said to “make” a covenant with man.²³

We will learn later in Exodus of another covenant, which God makes (cuts) with Israel at Sinai (24:8), but that is subsidiary to this covenant, which continues. We can see that the covenant at Sinai does not supercede the covenant with Abraham from a second observation about v. 4. A central feature of the covenant with Abraham is the promise that Abram and his descendants will possess the land of Canaan. Repetitions of this covenant also promise a numerous offspring and dominion over the nations (Table 10). The conquest of Canaan, which doesn’t come until Joshua, is in reference to the covenant with Abraham, not the intervening covenant of Sinai.

That continuity is true not only of the promise of the land, but also of the seed, as Paul emphasizes to the Galatians,

Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Gen. Chapter	12	13	15	17	18	22
Land of Canaan: Numbers	x	x	x	x		x
Seed: Genesis	x	x	x	x	x	x
Blessing: Exodus, Leviticus	x		x	x		x
Nations: Deuteronomy	x			x		x

Table 10: The Four Facets of the Promise

22 Note in particular the extended form, “to establish the words (of the covenant)”, the only place in which people (as opposed to God) are the subject of the verb with reference to a covenant: 2 Kings 23:3; Jer. 34:18; Neh. 9:8

23 The verb is often applied to covenants among human parties.

A third observation about v. 4 is its reference to God's promise in Genesis to *establish* this single covenant with the patriarchs.

Gen 17:7 And **I will establish my covenant** between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, ...

Gen 17:19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and **I will establish my covenant** with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. ...21 But my covenant will I **establish with Isaac**, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

But throughout Genesis, it appears only in the future tense.²⁴ In fact, by the end of Genesis, none of the patriarchs enjoyed any of the blessings promised in the covenant.

- They were promised the land of Canaan, but the only portion of it that they possessed, the cave of Machpelah, Abraham had to buy from Ephron the Hittite.
- They were promised that they would be a numerous seed, yet when Jacob went down into Egypt, the entire clan numbered only 70 souls.
- They were promised dominion over the nations, yet throughout Genesis and the beginning of Exodus, they are clients of the nations around them.

Now, by contrast, God says, "I have established my covenant with them." The promise made more than four centuries before, is now in the process of being fulfilled.

In Genesis, the patriarchs know God as one who enters into covenant with his people. They do not know him as one who fulfills his promises. In this sense, "by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them." This chapter's repeated "I am the LORD" begins a series of episodes through which Israel (and the Egyptians as well) will learn the meaning of that name.

The last two steps are a repetition of what we read at the end of Exodus 2, when God stepped out of the shadows, and began to show himself as the redeemer of Israel (chart):

Exo 2:23 ... 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. 24 And God **heard their groaning**, and God **remembered his covenant** with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage;—God not only appeared to the patriarchs in ancient times, and has now come to carry out the promises he made, but he has done so in response to their groaning. This statement poses a tension with the nature of God elsewhere in the Bible. He is omnipresent, everywhere at once:

Psa 139:7 **Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?** 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

Jer 23:24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. **Do not I fill heaven and earth?** saith the LORD.

Why should he have to hear the cry of the children of Israel to know of their suffering? He is everywhere, and knows everything instantly.

24 Suffix verbs with *waw* relative.

and I have remembered my covenant.—For four hundred years, it has appeared that he was unmindful of his covenant, but now he will show that he has it in his mind, and is acting on it. Again, this statement contrasts with God elsewhere in the Bible, who is eternal:

Gen. 21:33 And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, **the everlasting God.**

Is. 40:28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that **the everlasting God**, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

He is not subject to time, but stands above it, and sees all before him.²⁵ This is the heart of his challenge to false gods in the second half of Isaiah:

Isa 46:10 **Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done**, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

How does it make sense for him to remember his covenant? Or even more remarkably, for him to forget our sins?

Is. 43:25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and **will not remember thy sins.**

Jer. 31:34 ... I will forgive their iniquity, and I will **remember their sin no more.**

Statements like these are instances of the figure of speech called “anthropopathism,” describing God’s feelings in human terms. Indeed, if he did not describe himself in this way, we could not interact with him. That is why the heathen invented deities who were local in time and space. Only the God of the Bible is eternal and omnipresent. But to interact with us, he presents himself as hearing, coming down, and remembering. It is significant that this language appears when he steps onto the stage in 2:23-24. These expressions show his willingness to condescend to our limitations so that he can interact with us, a condescension that reaches its fullest expression in the incarnation of the Son of God, when

Jhn 1:14 ... the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, ...

6-13, Twofold Commission

Now that God has identified himself and his covenantal purposes, he gives Moses and Aaron a twofold commission, to the people and to Pharaoh (chart). The summary in 6:13 shows that the commission is to both of them, but in keeping with the pattern promised in 4:15-16, he delivers it directly to Moses, who then passes it on to Aaron.

After God gives each commission, we read of Moses’ response.

6-9, to the Children of Israel

The commission to Israel consists of three promises: deliverance, relationship, and blessing. Each is associated with the claim, “I am the LORD.” All three are integral to the covenant, and

25 From the standpoint of special relativity, this is a consequence of his omnipresence. Time is not absolute, but differs for observers in different inertial reference frames, because information moves at a bounded speed, the speed of light. Thus two events that appear simultaneous to an observer in one frame may appear asynchronous to a second observer moving relative to the first. But an omnipresent God is not constrained to any single inertial reference frame. Signals do not take time to reach him. All is one eternal present.

as God's introduction of himself shows, his establishment of that covenant is at the heart of understanding what it means for him to be the LORD. As we have suggested, they will learn the meaning of this name through the actions that are unfolding in the book.²⁶

The first promise to Israel is to deliver them from Egypt.

6 Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage,—God will deliver them from their bondage and service to the Egyptians, so that they can serve him.

God's covenant with Israel follows the ancient pattern of a suzerainty treaty, by which a vassal is bound to a lord.²⁷ An essential part of this relation is that the vassal will serve the overlord, rather than any other master. For example, a treaty from around 1600 BC between the Hittite king Mursilis and a vassal king named Duppi-Tessub of Amurru specifies,

When I, the Sun, sought after you in accordance with your father's word and put you in your father's place, I took you in oath for the king of the Hatti land, the Hatti land, and for my sons and grandsons. So **honour the oath (of loyalty)** to the king and the king's king. ... But you, Duppi-Tessub, **remain loyal** toward the king of the Hatti land, the Hatti land, my sons (and) my grandsons forever! ... **Do not turn your eyes to anyone else!**

The use of vocabulary for service (the verb עבד *abad* H5647 and the noun עבדה *abodah* H5656) in Exodus emphasizes that Israel should no longer serve Pharaoh and the Egyptians, but rather serve the Lord, just as these secular treaties demand.

In return, the high king binds himself to defend his vassal from attack or oppression.

and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:—A later Hittite treaty, between Muwattalli and Alaksandu, provides,

If some enemy arises for you, **I will not abandon you**, just as I have not now abandoned you, I will kill your enemy for you.

In Exod 6:6, this promise includes his proposed mechanism: “with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments.” He purposes to use this deliverance to show his power, which explains why he allows Pharaoh to resist them so hard.

Here is a lesson for us: when God does not answer our prayers immediately, it may be because he is preparing a response that will bring him more glory than an immediate band-aid would provide. We must remember the principle of 6:1, repeated in Exodus 14 and 2 Chronicles 20. God has not forgotten us. He wants us to trust him, stand still, and see his glorious salvation.

The second promise is a special covenant relation with himself.

7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God:—Ever since Gen 17:7, God has offered himself to Abraham and his descendants as “your God”:

Gen 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, **to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.**

²⁶ This repetition of his name also characterizes God's interactions with Pharaoh through the plagues (Ex. 7:17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29). Both sets of actions define who God is. To Israel, they are acts of grace and love. To Egypt, they are acts of judgment.

²⁷ <https://www.julianspriggs.co.uk/pages/HittiteTreaty>; <https://russmeek.com/2020/10/the-suzerain-vassal-treaty-covenant-in-the-old-testament/>

But he does not call them “my people” until Exodus,²⁸ for example,

Exo 3:7 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;

Now, for the first time, he brings the two titles together, a combination that is common in the prophets. But we should never forget the order in which it emerges. First he gives himself to them as their God. Only then does he claim their allegiance as his people. Our relation to him is based on his prior love to us in the Lord Jesus:

1Jn 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.

and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.—Like the promise of deliverance in 6:6, the promise of the covenant is punctuated with the statement, “I am the LORD.”

The third promise is the gift of the land (chart):

8 And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD.—Once more, the promise is marked with the key phrase, “I am the LORD.”

The ancient secular treaties ensure the territorial rights of the vassal. The Hittite king Mursilis writes to Duppi-Tesub,

I, the Sun, put you in the place of your father and took your brothers (and) sisters **and the Amurru land** in oath for you. ... When you take a wife, and when you beget an heir, **he shall be king in the Amurru land** likewise.

These three promises of deliverance, covenant, and land were characteristics of the treaties that great kings made with their vassals. God associates each of them with his claim, “I am the LORD.” This association, and the introduction of this claim in the covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:7) and his reminder to Jacob (Gen 28:13), marks this name as the seal of his covenant.

9 And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.—Contrast the response of the people when Moses and Aaron initially delivered this same message:

Exo 4:30 And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. 31 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.

The change is because of the turmoil in Exodus 5, when Moses unsuccessfully confronted Pharaoh. We saw the series of interactions that resulted from that encounter. Interestingly, this is the first time that Moses is said to have spoken to the people since then! We might have expected him to brief them after his unsuccessful meeting, and encourage them that Pharaoh’s rejection was according to God’s prediction in 3:19,

Exo 3:19 And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

He did anticipate the rebuff they received from Pharaoh, but he might have prepared them for that disappointment if he had told them earlier what happened.

28 Ex. 3:7, 10; 5:1; 7:4, 16; 8:1, 8, 20-23; 9:1, 13, 17, 27; 10:3-4; 12:31; 22:25. See supplementary note on 3:7, 10 in https://cyber-chapel.org/sermons/exodus/notes/Exod_2b_4a.pdf.

10-12, to Pharaoh

10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 11 Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.—God next commissions Moses to speak to Pharaoh. The first time, he went in to Pharaoh, he had neither explicit instruction from the Lord nor an invitation from Pharaoh. Now the Lord sends him.

Unlike the message to Israel, the message to Pharaoh does not include the declaration, “I am the LORD.” Pharaoh will hear these words frequently, during the plagues (Figure 9), but he has already rejected the name as its own authority, when Moses first met with him:

Exo 5:1 ... Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, **Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, ...** 2 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.

Now he will have to learn the hard way.

12 And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold, the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips?—Moses replies to the Lord just as he did at the bush:

Exo 4:10 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.

13, Summary

13 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.—This verse summarizes the commission of 6:6-12, making two points.

1. It emphasizes the common purpose of both parts of the commission, “to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.”
2. Since 6:2, we have been told that the Lord is addressing Moses. Now, Aaron is included. This doesn’t necessarily mean that the Lord repeats the whole speech to the two of them. Rather, the pattern specified in 4:15-16 is that Aaron is to be Moses’ mouth, delivering to the people what God has given him.

Exo 4:15 And **thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth:** ... 16 ... **he shall be to thee instead of a mouth,** ...

This pattern is emphasized again at the start of chapter 7,

Exo 7:2 Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and **Aaron** thy brother **shall speak unto Pharaoh**, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.

14-27, Defining Aaron and Moses (those commissioned)

The chapter closes by identifying Aaron and and Moses, those who receive the commission, just as it began by defining God, who gave the commission. This definition takes the form of a partial genealogy of the children of Israel.²⁹ It has three interesting features (Figure 10, chart)

²⁹ Compare Gen 46:9-26, which covers all 12 sons, but only down to the time of Jacob’s entry into Egypt.

14 These be the heads of their fathers' houses: The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel; Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi: these be the families of Reuben. 15 And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman: these are the families of Simeon. 16 And these are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations; Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari:—

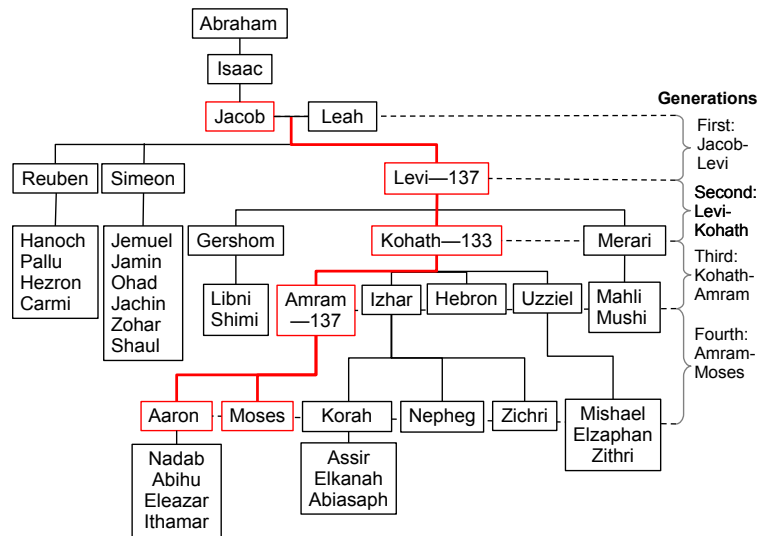


Figure 10: Fulfilling Gen 15:13-16

Merari:—First, it covers only the first three of Jacob's sons, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. These were the eldest, all born to Leah. Leah bore three more sons, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulon, and Rachel and the handmaids bore seven more, but they are not mentioned. The purpose of this genealogy is to lead us as far into Jacob's family as we need to go to get to Moses' family.

and the years of the life of Levi were an hundred thirty and seven years. 17 The sons of Gershon; Libni, and Shimi, according to their families. 18 And the sons of Kohath; Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel: and the years of the life of Kohath were an hundred thirty and three years. 19 And the sons of Merari; Mahali and Mushi: these are the families of Levi according to their generations. 20 And Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were an hundred and thirty and seven years. 21 And the sons of Izhar; Korah, and Nepheg, and Zichri. 22 And the sons of Uzziel; Mishael, and Elzaphan, and Zithri. 23 And Aaron took him Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Naashon, to wife; and she bare him Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 24 And the sons of Korah; Assir, and Elkanah, and Abiasaph: these are the families of the Korhites. 25 And Eleazar Aaron's son took him one of the daughters of Putiel to wife; and she bare him Phinehas: these are the heads of the fathers of the Levites according to their families.—The second feature is that for Reuben and Simeon, it gives only sons who entered into Egypt with Jacob, but it then expands Levi's family as it developed during the captivity. It lists only immediate sons for Gershon and Merari, but extends the line of Kohath down to Aaron and Moses. It also expands selected grandsons of Kohath (Aaron, Korah), because of their importance in the subsequent history of the wilderness wanderings. Thus the genealogy is preparing us for the central role that the Levites are to play in the tabernacle worship.

Third, along this branch from Jacob to Moses, it tells us how long each family head lived.

These features focus our attention on the line from Jacob to Moses, showing four generations from Jacob (who entered Egypt) to Moses and Aaron (who led the nation out of Egypt). The three ages recorded for the intermediate fathers, Levi, Kohath, and Amram, total just over 400 years. These details align the history with God's promise in his covenant with Abraham (chart):

Gen 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them **four hundred years**; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 But **in the fourth generation** they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

The details of the genealogy (four generations, ages totaling over 400 years) are intended to remind us of the promise to Abraham. They are a mnemonic, not a computation. For example, we're given the total years for the father of each generation in the captivity, not the age when the next son in the line was born, and there is evidence that some generations are missing. A note discusses the details.³⁰ The point is to remind us that God is now fulfilling his promise to Abraham

The last two verses emphasize this purpose of the genealogy. The chapter that starts with repetitions of "I am the LORD" ends by repeating "These are that Aaron and Moses."

26 These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom the LORD said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies.

**27 These are they which spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt:
these are that Moses and Aaron.**

This concludes the expansion of the element of the book that describes God's provision of the deliverer. We are now ready for the next element, which describes Moses' interaction with Pharaoh and his family.

³⁰ See note

Notes

Tense of “said” in 4:19

The *waw relative* suggests that this divine command is distinct from those in 3:10, 16; 4:12, but this suggests that Moses delayed after getting Jethro’s permission to depart. A strict consecutive reading would also break the summary-detail nature of the two panel structure.

Collins has an excellent study on pluperfect uses of *wayyiqtol* (*Tyndale Bulletin* Vol. 46, Issue 1, 1995 May 01, 117-140, <https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.3040>), summarizing many earlier studies. He gives three situations in which the pluperfect is appropriate:

1. Some anaphoric reference explicitly points back to a previous event.
2. The logic of the referent described requires that an event presented by a *wayyiqtol* verb form actually took place prior to the event presented by a previous verb.
3. The verb begins a section or paragraph.

Actually, all three can be seen as operating here.

1. The imperative “Go” is emphatically anaphoric to the Lord’s three imperatives, reinforced by Jethro.
2. The reference has been seen as required by many commentators.
3. This is the start of the second panel.

At the same time, I’d be a lot more comfortable had the text read וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה וְגַם יְהוָה וְגַם instead of וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה וְגַם

Stuart, Enns, and Waltke-O’Connor accept the pluperfect, with NIV. Cassuto, Houtman, KD, Sarna, and many others insist on a strictly consecutive reading.

4:24-26, Circumcision at the Inn

This brief episode leaves many points of ambiguity.

1. 24, whom did the Lord meet and seek to kill?
2. 25, who is “her son”—Gershom, or Eliezer? Both sons set out with Moses (4:20)
3. 25, at whose feet did Zipporah cast her son’s foreskin?
4. 25, 26, what is the meaning of the phrase “a bloody husband”?

24, Whom did the Lord meet and seek to kill?

Moses?

- Houtman, Childs (noting that it would otherwise be anomalous to specify “her son” in the next clause);
- Cassuto (comparing God’s challenge to Balaam as he is about to set out on his mission)

- Durham (Moses was previously uncircumcised; by touching Gershom's foreskin to Moses' genitals, he become circumcised by proxy)
- Kaiser (to identify whose son is in view)
- Allen (compares God's wrestling with Jacob as he is about to return to Canaan—this parallel deserves amplification)

His son?

- Stuart (noting the parallel with the threat in 4:23 to slay Pharaoh's firstborn; Gen 17:14, doomed to death because uncircumcised)
- Sarna

25, Which Son?

Gershom?

Eliezer? Allen, KD

25, Whose Feet?

Expositors vary as to whether “feet” is euphemism for genitals, or to be taken literally.

The son: Stuart, who sees the touching and the statement as Zipporah's attempt at the appropriate liturgy

Moses

- Cassuto, Durham: proxy circumcision of Moses (but Allen: "Vicarious circumcision" is as unlikely a category as "vicarious baptism." This is a theological oxymoron.)

YHWH?

- Allen (see Propp for reference to dissertation by Schneeman making this point)
- LXX (has Zipporah prostrating herself at the feet of the angel of the Lord)

Syntax of “Touched his feet”

In favor of the LXX version: There are 11 instances of נגע C with actor and a complement with ל within 4 words. None of them governs an explicit direct object. In three cases (Ex 4:25; Lam 2:2; Isa 25:2) translators have assumed that the verb is parallel to previous verbs which do have a direct object.

Ex. 4:25: וַתִּקַּח צִפּוֹרָה צֵר וַתִּכְרֹת אֶת־עַרְלַת בְּנֵיהּ וַתִּגַּע לְרַגְלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי חֲתוּמֵי דַמִּים אֵתָהּ לִי:

Is. 25:12: וּמִבְצָר מִשְׁגָּב חוֹמֹתַיִךְ הַשָּׁחַ הַשְּׁפִיל הַגִּיעַ לְאַרְצֵךְ עַד־עֶפְרַיִם:

Lam. 2:2: בָּלַע אֲדוֹנָי לֵא [וְ]לֵא [חָמַל אֶת כָּל־נְאוֹת יַעֲקֹב הָרַס בְּעֶבְרָתוֹ מִבְצָרֵי בְּתִי־הַיְוֹדָה הַגִּיעַ לְאַרְצֵךְ חָלַל מִמְּלָכָה וְשָׁרִיָּה:

In Isaiah 25 and Lamentations 2, the clause הַגִּיעַ לְאַרְצֵךְ is semantically parallel to the verbs that govern the proposed object מבצר, which all describe tearing down or flattening. This semantic continuation is not present in Exodus 4.

But in the other eight cases, the verb is intransitive, and means that the actor reaches to the complement. For example:

In 2 Chr 3:11 (2x), 12, the wings of the cherubim touch the walls of the house.

2 Chr 28:9, the wrath of Israel against Judah has reached to heaven (slightly different syntax, בְּזַעַף עַד לְשָׁמַיִם הִגִּיעַ)

Ps 88:3, my life draweth nigh unto the grave

Job 20:6, his head reaches to the clouds

Est 4:14, Esther has come to the kingdom for such a time as this

Dan 12:12, blessed is he who comes to the 1335 days

This construction is certainly reasonable in Ex 4:25 as well. Zipporah cuts off her son's foreskin, then prostrates herself before the Lord in petition.

25-26, Meaning of “Bloody Husband”

The expression appears only here. Whom does it describe? Ought to be the one to whom she falls down or presents the foreskin.

Moses? A bloody bridegroom.

Gershom/Eliezer? Perhaps in general sense of related to me by blood.

The (angel of) the Lord? Allen, translating “bloody bride-father” (with tacit emendation of הַתָּן to הַתָּן). Or else following semantics of Syriac and Akkadian, meaning relative by marriage.

Motive for the Attack

Allen, others: Moses' failure to meet the covenant responsibility of circumcision for his children

Propp: Moses' blood-guilt over killing the Egyptian (noting regular user of the plural דָּמִים to represent either the blood shed by a killer, or the guilt that attaches to the shedding of blood)

My Synthesis:

The Lord attacks Moses because he has allowed one of his sons to remain uncircumcised, probably because of the objections of his wife. (Circumcision was widespread in the ancient world, but usually as a ritual in preparation for marriage, not in infancy.) He cannot lead the covenant people without bringing his own family into conformity with God's covenant. Moses is disabled by the attack, so Zipporah circumcises the son, then falls down before the (angel of the) Lord. She must be applying הַתָּן-דָּמִים to the Lord, either

- in the generic sense of marriage-relative (cf. 2 Ki 8:27) or
- with the emendation of הַתָּן to הַתָּן.

The Verb יָדָה in Exodus

Sort by subject

Pharaoh

Object: Joseph

Ex. 1:8 Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.

Object: the Lord

Ex. 5:2 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.

Ex. 7:17 Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

Ex. 8:10 And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God.

Ex. 8:22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.

Ex. 9:14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.

Ex. 9:29 And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD'S.

Object: the Condition of Egypt

Ex. 10:7 And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?

Egyptians

Ex. 7:5 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

Ex. 11:7 But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

Ex. 14:4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.

Ex. 14:18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

Israelites

Ex. 2:4 And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.

Ex. 6:3 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.

Ex. 6:7 And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

Ex. 10:2 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.

Ex. 10:26 Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God; and we know not with what we must serve the LORD, until we come thither.

Ex. 16:6 And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt:

Ex. 16:12 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.

Ex. 16:15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

Ex. 18:16 When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.

Ex. 18:20 And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

Ex. 23:9 Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Ex. 29:46 And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God.

Ex. 31:13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.

Ex. 32:1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Ex. 32:23 For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

Ex. 36:1 Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded.

Generic (passive)

Ex. 2:14 And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.

Ex. 21:36 Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own.

Ex. 33:16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

God

Ex. 2:25 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.

Ex. 3:7 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;

Ex. 3:19 And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

Ex. 4:14 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.

Ex. 9:30 But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God.

Ex. 33:5 For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiffnecked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

Ex. 33:17 And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.

Jethro

Ex. 18:11 Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.

Moses

Ex. 32:22 And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.

Ex. 33:12 And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.

Ex. 33:13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.

Ex. 34:29 And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.

The Officers of Israel (5:6, 10, 14-15, 19)

שׁוֹטֵר (*shōṭēr*, H7860) is the *qal* participle of the verb שָׁטַר (unattested in other forms in the OT), meaning “to write.” It appears only here in Exodus, but is commonly associated with other terms in the OT. The most common are elder, head, captain, and judge.

In general, elders and heads are defined organically: the older men, and the heads of families.

Officers, captains, judges, and heads (in a functional rather than organic sense) are said to be “made” or appointed: Deut 1:15; 16:18; 20:9.

Num. 11:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the **elders** זְקֵן of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the **elders** of the people, and **officers** over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

Deut. 1:15 So I took the **chief** רֹאשׁ of your tribes, wise men, and known, and **made them heads** שָׂרֵי over you, **captains** שָׂרֵי over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and **officers** among your tribes.

Deut. 16:18 **Judges** שֹׁפְטִים and **officers shalt thou make thee** in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

Deut. 20:9 And it shall be, when the **officers** have made an end of speaking unto the people, that **they shall make captains** שָׂרֵי of the armies to lead the people.

Deut. 29:10 Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your **captains** of your tribes, your **elders**, and your **officers**, with all the men of Israel,

Deut. 31:28 Gather unto me all the **elders** of your tribes, and your **officers**, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them.

Josh. 8:33 And all Israel, and their **elders**, and **officers**, and their **judges**, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel.

Josh. 23:2 And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their **elders**, and for their **heads**, and for their **judges**, and for their **officers**, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age:

Josh. 24:1 And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the **elders** of Israel, and for their **heads**, and for their **judges**, and for their **officers**; and they presented themselves before God.

1Chr. 23:4 Of which, twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the LORD; and six thousand were **officers** and **judges**:

1Chr. 26:29 Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons were for the outward business over Israel, for **officers** and **judges**.

1Chr. 27:1 Now the children of Israel after their number, to wit, the **chief** רֹאשׁ fathers and **captains** שָׂרֵי of thousands and hundreds, and their **officers** that served the king in any matter of the courses, which came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, of every course were twenty and four thousand.

2Chr. 19:11 And, behold, Amariah the **chief** ראש priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the **ruler** נגיד of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites shall be **officers** before you. Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good.

2Chr. 26:11 Moreover Uzziah had an host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their account by the hand of Jeiel the **scribe** סופר and Maaseiah the ruler שוטר, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's **captains** שר.

2Chr. 34:13 Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and were **overseers** מנצה of all that wrought the work in any manner of service: and of the Levites there were **scribes** סופר, and **officers** שוטר, and **porters** שוער.

Words for Chaff, Stubble

Just what was it that the Israelites had to go gather?

קש H7179. This is the word that Exodus uses. Both blown by the wind (Is 40:24 41:2 Jr 13:24 Ps 83:14 Jb 13:25) and burned by fire (Ex 15:7 Is 5:24 47:17 Jl 2:5 Ob 18 Nah 1:10 Mal 3:19). The verb קשש is to gather herbs. This verb, and the emphasis on burning with fire (a technique of ancient agriculture, cf. Heb 6:8), suggests “stubble” is the right meaning.

	קש	מץ	קשש	תבן	Total
καλάμη	9				18
φρύγανον	4				6
χνοῦς		6			8
ἄχυρον				16	21
Total	16	8	2	17	

מץ H4651 driven by wind

קשש H2842 just two times; burned by fire (LXX translates by verbs, no noun)

תבן H8401 straw, what they were formerly given.

Pharaoh tells the people to “go”

Go work

Ex. 5:4 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.

Ex. 5:18 **Go** therefore now, and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.

Go sacrifice (limited)

Ex. 8:25 And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, **Go ye**, sacrifice to your God **in the land**. (After fourth plague, of flies)

Ex. 10:8 And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, **Go**, serve the LORD your God: but who are they that shall go? ... 11 Not so: **go now ye that are men**, and serve the LORD; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence. (Before eighth plague, of locusts)

Ex. 10:24 And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, **Go** ye, serve the LORD; **only let your flocks and your herds be stayed**: let your little ones also go with you. (After ninth plague, darkness)

Final discharge from Egypt

Ex. 12:31 And he called for 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.
32 Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and **be gone**; and bless me also.

Other speakers:

Ex. 5:11 Go ye, get you straw where ye can find it: yet not ought of your work shall be diminished. (taskmasters)

Rebellions against Moses and Aaron

The nation repeatedly tempted the Lord:³¹

Num 14:22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; 23 Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

Most commentators understand “ten” in the sense of “many,” as in Gen 31:7, 41; Lev 26:26; Job 19:3. But the Rabbis manage to identify ten, by including two details in the treatment of the manna:

	Ref	Incident	People complain	Moses' Response	Lord's Response	Verb
1	Ex 14:10-14	Red Sea	12 For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.	13 fear not, stand still	4 declares purpose 21 opens the sea	
2	Ex 15:23-25	Marah	23 And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. 24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?	25a cried to the Lord 25c cast tree into water	25b showed him healing tree	24 Murmur
3	Ex 16:2-7	Longing for Flesh	3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.	6ff instructions for using manna	4-5 promised manna 13 quail	2, 7, 8, 12 Murmur

31 Jonathan Lunde, *Following Jesus, the Servant-King* (2010: Zondervan Academic, Grand Rapids) helpfully suggests that the Lord Jesus' temptations in the wilderness as the individual Servant of the Lord correspond to these failures of the Servant Israel in the wilderness.

Exodus 4:19-6:27

	Ref	Incident	People complain	Moses' Response	Lord's Response	Verb
4, 5	Ex 16:20, 27	Abuse of manna	20, hoarding 27, seeking it on the Sabbath			
6	Ex 17:1-4	Water at Rephidim	3 Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? Moses fears stoning	4 calls on the Lord, 6b strikes the rock	5-6a instructions to strike the rock	3 Murmur, Tempt, Contend רָבַח
7	Ex 32	Golden Calf	1 Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.	11 intercedes 19 breaks the tablets 20 grinds calf, makes them drink 26-28 orders a purge	7 tells Moses what they have done 25 plagues the people	
8	Num 11:1-3	Burning at Taberah	1a People complain in general, the Lord sends burning	2 Moses intercedes	1b sends a burning	
9	Num 11:4-33	MixedMulti tude: Complaint about Manna	4 Who shall give us flesh to eat? 5 We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:	11-15 complains to the Lord	16 appoint elders 18 sends quail 33 sends plague	
10	Num 14:1-10	Spies	2 And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! 10 threaten to stone	5-19 intercedes	20ff die in wilderness	Murmur, Tempt

Table 11: Rabbinic enumeration of the ten times Israel tempted the Lord

In addition, after Num 14:22, we can identify four more:

	Ref	Incident	People complain	Moses' Response	Lord's Response	Verb
11	Num 16	Rebellion of Korah	3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?	4ff commands trial by censors 22 intercedes	31 earth swallows them	Murmur

	Ref	Incident	People complain	Moses' Response	Lord's Response	Verb
12	Num 16:41	Execution of Korah	41 But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.	46 Moses intervenes to stop plague ch 17 contest of the rods	45 threatens to consume	Murmur
13	Num 20:2-5	Water at Kadesh	2 And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. 3 And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! 4 And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?	6 intercedes 10 smites the rock	8 speak to the rock	
14	Num 21:4-5	Brazen Serpent	5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.			

Table 12: Tempting the Lord after Numbers 14

Buis (VT 1978) also notes the complaint of Miriam and Aaron against Moses,

Num 12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. 2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.

It is interesting that not only does Israel tempt the Lord, but he tempts or tries them נִסָּה:

God tries Israel	Israel tries God
Ex. 15:25 And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,	
Ex. 16:4 Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.	
	Ex. 17:2 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?

God tries Israel	Israel tries God
	Ex. 17:7 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD , saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?
Ex. 20:20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you , and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.	
	Num. 14:22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

Table 13: Instances where the Lord tempts or tries Israel

Moses' Meetings with God

When does Moses speak to the Lord? After the Lord calls him at the burning bush, and then guides him out of Midian, we can discern three stages.

First, when he is under pressure (as here), he sometimes cries out to God. Two of these align with instances of the people's rebellion noted in the previous section.

At Marah, where they complained about bitter water,

Exo 15:25 And **he cried unto the LORD**; ...

At Rephidim, where the Lord first provided water from the rock,

Exo 17:4 And **Moses cried unto the LORD**, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

Moses ascends Mount Sinai seven or eight times, to meet with the Lord. When they first arrive ,

Exo 19:3 And **Moses went up** unto God, ...

After the people agree to the covenant,

Exo 19:8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And **Moses returned the words of the people** unto the LORD.

After the Lord reveals his majesty, Moses ascends to receive the ten commandments,

Exo 19:20 And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and **Moses went up**.

After delivering the commandments to the people,

Exo 20:21 And the people stood afar off, and **Moses drew near** unto the thick darkness where God was.

At the offering of the sacrifice that ratifies the covenant, he takes the elders part way up, and then completes the trip himself, to receive instructions for the sanctuary.

Exo 24:1 And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off. ... 15 And **Moses went up** into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

During this delay, the people make the golden calf. Moses returns to intercede for them:

Exo 32:31 And **Moses returned unto the LORD**, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

Finally, he ascends to receive the replacement tablets and learn the full name of God,

Exo 34:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. 2 And be ready in the morning, and **come up in the morning unto mount Sinai**, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount.

The revelation of the tabernacle makes it clear that God desires closer fellowship with his people than that which requires climbing a mountain. But the episode of the golden calf raises doubts in Moses' mind about the feasibility of the tabernacle, so between the last two ascents, Moses establishes a place at the foot of the mount where people could meet with God.

Exo 33:7 And Moses took **the tabernacle**, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, ...

“The tabernacle” (definite) is apparently his personal tent, mentioned earlier in ch. 18:

Exo 18:7 And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into **the tent**.

Exod 6:3

Approaches:

Garr JBL 1992: even within P, El Shadday is the promising God (part-whole relation), YHWH is the fulfilling God (identity relation), and to know YHWH means to understand his covenant obligations, which only happens in Exodus. Draws on covenantal semantics of ידע.

Cassuto, Sarna, R.D. Wilson: double-duty *beth*, which Garr rejects

Stuart: take the second half of the verse as a question, “was I not known?,” expecting positive answer. This was already proposed by R.D. Wilson (PTR 22 (1924) 108-119, <https://biblicalelearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Wilson-Exod6-3-PTR.pdf>) as the last and apparently climactic suggestion of eight, though Stuart does not cite him.

Whitney WTJ 1986: take “not” as “not only.” “I was known as El Shadday, and not only as YHWH.” This actually makes El Shadday the primary name. See Auffret, Structure.

Establishing a Covenant (6:4)

קום *hifil qoom* H6965 is dominant in Genesis: 0.56/k, not other book has over 0.25/k.

What is the relation between establishing a covenant and making one (כרת *karat* H3772)? Group by covenant. Notes:

- Between people, it's only "make."
- God is the only one who can "establish" a covenant.

People can establish the words of a covenant:

2Kings 23:3 And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to **perform the words of this covenant** that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

Jer. 34:18 And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not **performed the words** of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof,

But so can God:

Neh. 9:8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast **performed thy words**; for thou art righteous:

Gen 9:11 is anomalous: God establishes a covenant with Noah, but there is no reference to making (cutting) it.

We should also consider cases of remembering (זָכַר *zakar* H2142) a covenant.

- When God is the subject, it appears to be restricted to grant covenants (Noah, patriarchs)
- But when people are the subject, it can be something else (Amos 1:9)
- 1 Chr 16:15 // Psa 105:8 is interesting. The following vv make clear that the patriarchal covenant is in view, but both God (Psalm 105) and Israel (1 Chronicles) are said to remember it.

Between People

Abraham and Abimelech

Gen. 21:27 And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and both of them **made** a covenant.

Gen. 21:32 Thus they **made** a covenant at Beersheba: then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines.

Isaac and Abimelech

Gen. 26:28 And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us **make** a covenant with thee;

Jacob and Laban

Gen. 31:44 Now therefore come thou, let us **make** a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

Gibeonites

Josh. 9:6 And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore **make** ye a league with us.

Josh. 9:7 And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we **make** a league with you?

Josh. 9:11 Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now **make** ye a league with us.

Josh. 9:15 And Joshua made peace with them, and **made** a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.

Josh. 9:16 And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had **made** a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them.

Solomon and Hiram

1Kings 5:12 And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him: and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two **made** a league together.

King and People

David and Elders

2Sam. 5:3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David **made** a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel.

1Chr. 11:3 Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David **made** a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel.

Jehoiada

2Kings 11:4 And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and **made** a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and shewed them the king's son. *Associated with divine covenant, 11:17*

2Chr. 23:3 And all the congregation **made** a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD hath said of the sons of David.

2Chr. 23:16 And Jehoiada **made** a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORD'S people.

Other Kings

2Chr. 29:10 Now it is in mine heart to **make** a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.

2Chr. 34:31 And the king stood in his place, and **made** a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all

his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

Others

1Sam. 11:1 Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabeshgilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, **Make** a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

1Sam. 18:3 Then Jonathan and David **made** a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

1Sam. 23:18 And they two **made** a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

2Sam. 3:12 And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, **Make** thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee

2Sam. 3:13 And he said, Well; I will **make** a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face.

2Sam. 3:21 And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may **make** a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

1Kings 20:34 And Benhadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he **made** a covenant with him, and sent him away.

Is. 28:15 Because ye have said, We have **made** a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

Amos 1:9 Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and **remembered** זכר not the brotherly covenant:

Jer. 34:8 This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, after that the king Zedekiah had **made** a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them;

Jer. 34:15 And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had **made** a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name:

Jer. 34:18 And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had **made** before me, when they **cut** the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof,

Ezek. 17:13 And hath taken of the king's seed, and **made** a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land:

Job 31:1 I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?

Job 41:4 Will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?

Ezra 10:3 Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.

Hos. 10:4 They have spoken words, swearing falsely in **making** a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.

Psa. 83:5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they **are confederate** ברית יכרתו against thee:

Israel and Other Nations, Prohibited

Ex. 23:32 Thou shalt **make** no covenant with them, nor with their gods.

Ex. 34:12 Take heed to thyself, lest thou **make** a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

Ex. 34:15 Lest thou **make** a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice;

Deut. 7:2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt **make** no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

Judg. 2:2 And ye shall **make** no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

Hos. 12:1 Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do **make** a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

Noah

קום

Gen. 6:18 But with thee will I **establish** my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

Gen. 9:9 And I, behold, I **establish** my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

Gen. 9:11 And I will **establish** my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

Gen. 9:17 And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have **established** between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.

זכר

Gen. 9:15 And I will **remember** my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Gen. 9:16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may **remember** the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

Abraham

כרת

Gen. 15:18 In the same day the LORD **made** a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

Neh. 9:8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and **madest** a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Gergashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous:

קים

Gen. 17:7 And I will **establish** my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

זכר

Ex. 6:5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have **remembered** my covenant.

Lev. 26:42 Then will I **remember** my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

Lev. 26:45 But I will for their sakes **remember** the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.

Psa. 105:8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations. 9 Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; 10 And confirmed [עמל *hifil*] the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: 11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance: 12 When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

The next four are probably the patriarchal covenant, since God only remembers grant covenants.

Jer. 14:21 Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: **remember**, break not thy covenant with us.

Ezek. 16:60 Nevertheless I will **remember** my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.

Psa. 106:45 And he **remembered** for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

Psa. 111:5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever **be mindful** of his covenant.

Isaac

Gen. 17:19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will **establish** my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

Gen. 17:21 But my covenant will I **establish** with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

Patriarchs in General

Note that the various promises are considered a single covenant

Ex. 6:4 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.

Deut. 8:18 But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may **establish** his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

Sinai

כרת

Ex. 24:8 And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath **made** with you concerning all these words.

Ex. 34:10 And he said, Behold, I **make** a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

Ex. 34:27 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have **made** a covenant with thee and with Israel.

Deut. 4:23 Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee.

Deut. 5:2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.

Deut. 5:3 The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

Deut. 9:9 When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant which the LORD **made** with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water:

Deut. 29:1 These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to **make** with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

Deut. 29:12 That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God **maketh** with thee this day:

Deut. 29:14 Neither with you only do I **make** this covenant and this oath;

Deut. 29:25 Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he **made** with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt:

Deut. 31:16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have **made** with them.

1Kings 8:21 And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, which he **made** with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

2Kings 17:15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he **made** with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them.

2Kings 17:35 With whom the LORD had **made** a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them:

2Kings 17:38 And the covenant that I have **made** with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods.

Jer. 11:10 They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I **made** with their fathers.

Jer. 31:32 Not according to the covenant that I **made** with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

Jer. 34:13 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; I **made** a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying,

2Chr. 6:11 And in it have I put the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, that he **made** with the children of Israel.

דִּן

Lev. 26:9 For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and **establish** my covenant with you.

Covenant Renewal, People with God, mediated by Ruler

Josh. 24:25 So Joshua **made** a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

2Kings 11:17 And Jehoiada **made** a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD'S people; between the king also and the people. *associated with human-human covenant, 11:4*

2Kings 23:3 And the king stood by a pillar, and **made** a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

Davidic

2Chr. 21:7 Howbeit the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had **made** with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever.

Psa. 89:3 I have **made** a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,

New Covenant

כרת

Is. 55:3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will **make** an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Is. 61:8 For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will **make** an everlasting covenant with them.

Jer. 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will **make** a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

Jer. 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will **make** with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jer. 32:40 And I will **make** an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

Hos. 2:18 And in that day will I **make** a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.

Ezek. 34:25 And I will **make** with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

Ezek. 37:26 Moreover I will **make** a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

קים

Ezek. 16:60 Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will **establish** unto thee an everlasting covenant.

Ezek. 16:62 And I will **establish** my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD:

Unspecified Divine Covenants

Zech. 11:10 And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had **made** with all the people.

Psa. 50:5 Gather my saints together unto me; those that have **made** a covenant with me by sacrifice.

Chronology of the Four Generations (Gen 15:16)

Sometimes genealogies omit generations. Keil and Delitzsch argue on the basis of the number of people in the clan of Amram the son of Levi in Num 3:27-28 that the son of Levi cannot be the same as Amram the father of Moses, but other generations must intervene, as in Ezra 7:3 (cf. 1 Chr 6:7-11), which jumps from one Azariah to another. Other families had far more generations

between Jacob and the Exodus: Over this same period of time, 1 Chr 2:3-11 records seven generations of the family of Judah from Jacob to Salmon (who participated in the conquest, and married Rahab (Matt 1:5), and 1 Chr 7:20-27 shows eleven generations in Joseph's family from Jacob to Joshua, Moses' successor.³²

The structure of the genealogy in Exod 6 certainly seems to try to link the two numbers in Gen 15:13, 16, the four generations by the names listed, and the 400 years by the sum of the ages of Levi, Kohath, and Amram. In Gen 15, the link may be in reference to what Abraham would recognize as the length of a generation, given that Isaac was born when he was 100 (Gen 21:5). Perhaps the structure of the genealogy is intended not as a mathematical demonstration, but as a mnemonic or reminder linking the passages in Genesis and Exodus, along the lines suggested by Chajes, *The Student's Guide to the Talmud*, ch.21, and invoked by Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, in explaining the patronymic of Zechariah in Matt 23:35.

32 <https://earlywritings.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=7085>