

March 23–29: Exodus 1–6, “I Have Remembered My Covenant”

Side Bar: How Long Were the Israelites in Egypt?

The common belief that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt for more than 400 years comes from a verse in Exodus

Exodus 12:40

Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.

But the numbers don't work when you add up the ages of Moses' ancestors

Moses was the Great Grandson of Levi; Levi → Kohath → Amram → Moses

We are told how old Kohath and Amram were when they died:

Kohath was one of the 70 Israelites who joined Joseph in Egypt (Gen 46:11) and he lived to be 133 (Exodus 6:18)

Amram lived to be 137 (Exodus 6:20)

Moses delivered the Israelites from Egypt when he was 80 (Exodus 7:7)

If Kohath was a newborn when he came to Egypt

And if Amram was born the year Kohath died

And if Moses was born the year Amram died

$$133 + 137 + 80 = 350 \text{ years in Egypt}$$

More realistic – If the fathers were 60 when their sons were born

$$60 + 60 + 80 = 200 \text{ years in Egypt}$$

And Exodus 12:40 doesn't really say they were in Egypt 430 years, it says they were not in the land of promise for 430 years

Paul references the 430 years that they were not in the land of promise

Galatians 3:16-17

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made...

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

What Paul is saying is that the Law, that came to Moses 430 years later, does not revoke the covenant made to Abraham.

Number of years from the time that Abraham received the covenant until Israelites go to Egypt

Abraham was 75 when he receives the covenant and 100 when Isaac is born
Isaac was 60 when Jacob is born
Jacob was 130 when he goes to Egypt

$25 + 60 + 130 = 215$ years in the land of Canaan, etc.

It was 430 years from the time that Abraham received the covenant until Moses received the Law

$430 - 215 = 215$ years in Egypt

This time frame also fits with the first passage we are going to read

Israelites in Bondage

The Israelites became such a powerful force in Egypt that Pharaoh feared they might help Egypt's enemies defeat them. To control the Israelites, Pharaoh placed them in bondage.

Exd 1:5-12,22

5 And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already.

6 And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation

7 And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.

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

9 And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:

10 Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.

11 Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

What did the Egyptians fear that led them to enslave the Israelites?

(children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.
the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:

the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew)

Mark E. Petersen

“The fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham required that Israel should become numerous. To accomplish this, the little family, numbering only 70 persons, needed sufficient time and a peaceful place in which to grow. Egypt was that place.

“Palestine was a battleground for warring nations that moved back and forth in their conquests between the Nile and the Euphrates. Israel would have found no peace there. They required stable conditions for their eventual growth and development.” (Moses: Man of Miracles, pg. 27–30)

Moses In Pharaoh’s Court

I assume we all know the account of how Moses’s mother hid him in an ark on the Nile to avoid Pharaoh’s decree to kill all Hebrew male babies, and how Pharaoh’s daughter saved him and raised him as her own in Pharaoh’s court.

Let’s read some commentaries from the New Testament about Moses’s early life.

Hebrews 11:23-26

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

What do these verses teach us about Moses’s understanding of his identity and his faith, despite being raised in Pharaoh’s household?

(refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter

Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt)

It seems that Moses knew he was a Hebrew, understood the gospel of Christ, and was willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of Christ.

Bruce R. McConkie

"Reared and taught amid all the wealth, splendor, and influence of Pharaoh's court; having at his command the prestige and power of the royal household; knowing he was assured of a life of ease and affluence-yet Moses, because of faith in Christ, chose to suffer with slaves and bondsmen of his own race rather than to accept the honors, wealth, and power of the

greatest nation then on earth." (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3: 213)

Acts 7:20-27

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

What does this passage teach us about Moses's sense of responsibility—and how his people were not yet ready to accept it?

(he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them)
thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?)

Moses the Deliverer

From Egypt, he went to Midian, where he received the priesthood from Jethro and took Jethro's daughter as his wife. He remained there for about another 40 years until he saw the burning bush and the Lord told him it was time to deliver Israel.

Exd 3:4-9

4 And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

5 And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

6 Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

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;

8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

9 Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

What great work did the Lord reveal to Moses that He was about to bring forth?

(I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large)

- Finally the Israelites will inhabit the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He calls on Moses to do this work.

Exd 3:10-12

10 Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

11 And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

12 And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

What do we learn from the Lord's response when Moses questions his ability to deliver Israel?

(Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh,
and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?
Certainly I will be with thee)

Neal A. Maxwell

"Moses said to God, 'Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?' Subsequently, after experiencing difficulty, 'Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord,... why is it that thou hast sent me?' Nevertheless, after some needed tutoring, Moses loyally did as he was divinely bidden." (Men and Women of Christ, pg. 115)

Lorenzo Snow

"Moses felt his inability and incompetency to do that which was required of him. The work was too great. It was too profound in its nature and character, and it required that which Moses felt he did not possess in power and ability; and he felt his weakness... So it is with the elders who are called to go forth to the nations of the earth as ministers of the gospel. They feel their inadequacy. They feel their insufficiency." (Brian H. Stuy, Collected Discourses, vol. 5, October 10 1887)

Exd 3:13-15

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.

Why do you think Moses felt it was necessary to reveal God's identity to the Israelites?

(when I come unto the children of Israel
they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?)

Russell M. Nelson

"Jehovah is derived from the Hebrew word Hayah, which means 'to be' or 'to exist.' A form of the word Hayah in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament was translated into English as 'I Am'. Remarkably, 'I Am' was used by Jehovah as a name for Himself... [Jehova] revealed to Moses this very name that He had meekly and modestly chosen for His own premortal identification—'I Am.'

“Later in His mortal ministry,... when Jesus was taunted about His acquaintanceship with Abraham: ‘Then said the Jews unto him,... hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am’ (John 8:57–58). Jehovah—the great I Am and God of the Old Testament—clearly identified Himself when the resurrected Jesus personally appeared in His glory to the Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple... saying: ‘I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain’ (D&C 110:2–4). Jesus fulfilled His responsibility as Jehovah, ‘the Great I Am,’ with eternal consequence.” (“Jesus the Christ—Our Master and More," pg. 20)

Moses and the Elders of Israel

The Lord commands Moses to meet with the elders of Israel.

Exd 3:16-17

16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt:
17 And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

We just read in Acts 7:25 that the Israelites did not believe Moses was the deliverer

when he interacted with them while still in Pharaoh's court. He now wonders why they should believe him.

Exd 4:1

1 And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.

In verses 2 through 9, the Lord provides Moses with three signs to show the Israelites.

The first sign was turning the rod into a snake and then back again.

The second sign was making his hand leprous, then whole again.

The third was taking water from the river and pouring it out so that it became blood.

Moses states another concern he has about convincing the Israelites.

Exd 4:10-15

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.

11 And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?

12 Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

13 And he said, O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.

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.

15 And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

What does this passage teach us about how the Lord accepts our weaknesses and helps us do His work despite them?

(I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say
Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother... thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do)

Henry B. Eyring

"None of us can do the work... relying solely on our own wisdom and talents. That is because this is not our work—it is the Lord's. So the only way to succeed is to rely on Him....

"So if you feel a little overwhelmed, take that as a good sign. It indicates

that you can sense the magnitude of the trust God has placed in you. It means that you have some small understanding of what the priesthood really is." (CR, April 2017)

Richard C. Edgley

"Moses made another attempt to express his feelings of inadequacy. He explained that he was 'slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.' In response, the Lord said, 'Who hath made man's mouth?' He explained that He would 'be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.' When Moses still expressed his uncertainty, the Lord assigned Aaron, Moses's brother, to be Moses's mouthpiece.

"Undoubtedly Moses was comforted. He understood that the Lord was on his side and that he would be able to perform the task." ("Lessons from the Old Testament," Ensign, Jan. 2006)

Moses and Aaron meet with the elders of Israel.

Exd 4:27-31

27 And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went, and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

28 And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

29 And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel:

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.

What does the Israelites' need to see signs before believing Moses and Aaron teach us about the state of their faith?

(all the signs which he had commanded him
Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses
and did the signs in the sight of the people)

Moses and Aaron met with Pharaoh, but Pharaoh responded by increasing the Israelites' workload, requiring them to gather their own straw for brick production. This caused the Israelites to lose faith in Moses.

Exd 5:19-21

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.

20 ¶ And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from

Pharaoh:

21 And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; 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.

What does this passage teach us about the strength of the Israelites' faith when it was tested by increased trials?

The Lord responded by reminding the Israelites who He was and of the promises He had made, but the Israelites were still slow to believe.

Exd 6:6-9

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, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:

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.

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.

9 ¶ And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

What does the Lord's need to continually repeat His promises reveal about the Israelites' faith and spiritual development?

Mark E. Petersen

"There was purpose in all [God] did, and as he permitted Pharaoh to resist, he also was teaching the monarch that the God of Israel was mightier than the gods of Egypt. This lesson was not alone for the Egyptians, either, for the Israelites themselves had to learn that great fact, inasmuch as many of them had become worshipers of the Egyptian deities.

"The Lord was under covenant to bring his people out, and he would keep his word.... But when Moses carried that message to the people, 'they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.'

"Between the complaints of the people and the resistance of the king, Moses had a difficult time." (Moses: Man of Miracles, pg. 61-62)