

Chapters 5 and 6

As chapter 5 begins, Moses and Aaron are facing the Pharaoh for the first time, and Moses says:

“Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.’ And Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.”

The year is 1527 BC, and we know from lesson 2 that Ahmose is the Pharaoh who uttered these words. When Moses and Aaron first stood before him, he was 23 years old and spoke with an arrogance that would cost him more than he could possibly have imagined at that moment. He did not yet know the “Lord God of Israel”...but soon he would.

“So they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please, let us go three days’ journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.” Why did they tell the Pharaoh that the Israelites wished to take a three-day journey into the desert to worship God, when they had no intention of returning to Egypt? Did Moses lie?

Not at all! In chapter 3:18-19, when God was speaking to Moses in the burning bush, He gave him these instructions: ***“and you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt; and you shall say to him, ‘The Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us; and now, please, let us go three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.’ But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand.”*** Moses said exactly what he was told to say.

Did you notice in the first line, ***“You shall come, you and the elders...”***? Moses and Aaron were not alone in their audience with the king. This is why the next verses read: ***“Then the king of Egypt said to them, “Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? Get back to your labor.” And Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest from their labor!”*** To the Pharaoh’s way of thinking, any amount of time they spent standing in his court was time wasted when they could have been making bricks!

It wouldn't have surprised Ahmose that the Hebrews wished to worship their God. His people had *many* gods, so he understood the concept. But it was a privilege he did not intend to grant them at this time, just as God had told Moses would happen. By the way, I don't believe a common slave could have just put down his tools, walked off the work site and demanded to speak to the king. So, the fact that Moses and Aaron were granted an audience with this important man should indicate to us that the Pharaoh held them in some degree of regard – that he recognized their authority. However, nothing about this encounter suggests that he did respect them. Maybe that is why God directed them to take the elders with them – to put some perceived “clout” behind their request. Whatever the case, Ahmose dismissed them without granting their request.

And, to further impress upon them his power (and the foolishness of wasting his time with requests he had no intention of honoring), he increased their workload. They were already expected to produce a certain quota of bricks every day. Now, that quota remained, but they had the added responsibility of gathering their own straw for the bricks – with no tolerance for a decrease in output.

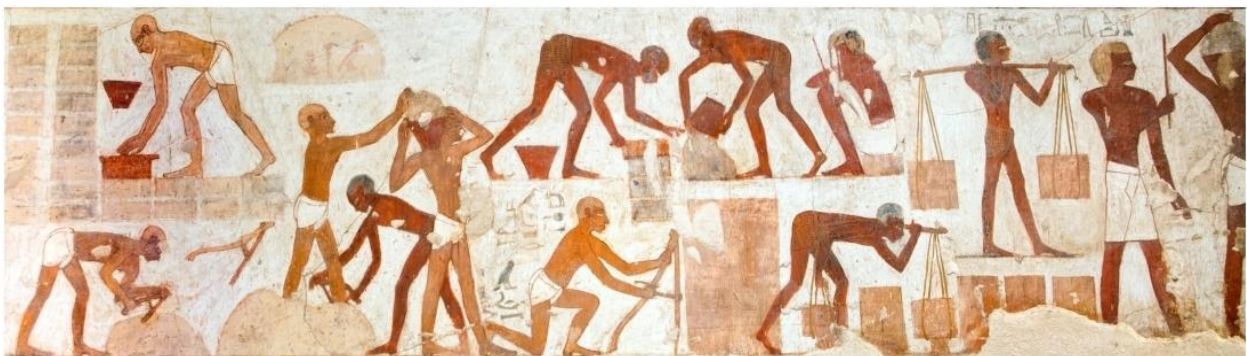
Why were they making bricks? Buildings in ancient Egypt were made from either stone or brick. The more elaborate ones: temples, administration buildings, and even the pyramids, were constructed of hewed stone because it was more durable. But common buildings like business stores, palaces, storage facilities, even private homes, were built from brick. (By the way, contrary to what some say, the bible does not tell us that the Israelites were building the pyramids! Many of these were built during the “Old Kingdom,” hundreds of years before the Israelites were in Egypt.) The bricks were made of mud, sand and clay taken from the Nile River, formed into shape in a mold, and then dried in the sun. The clay helped hold the mud together as it dried. When the supply of clay was low, straw was used to keep the mud from falling apart during the drying process. Bricks made from mud and clay was reserved for private homes and palaces, whereas the bricks made from mud and straw were more commonly used to build storage buildings.



This photo (taken by David Falk) is of the ruins of one such facility similar to those found in Pithom and Rameses, 2 storage cities in which the Israelites were forced to work. We have no way of knowing how long it would have taken a crew of slave laborers to build such a thing as this, but since we do know that 600,000 men of fighting

age came out in the exodus, the work force was probably even greater than that, working in various sites simultaneously.

The image below is of a painting said to be on the walls of the tomb of Rekhmire. It depicts all stages of brick making by slave labor in that time period. I don't fully understand the steps shown, but it does give us an idea of the labor-intensive process.



“And the taskmasters forced them to hurry, saying, ‘Fulfill your work, your daily quota, as when there was straw.’ Also the officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh’s taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, ‘Why have you not fulfilled your

task in making brick both yesterday and today, as before?’” (5:13-14) Those Israelite men who had been placed in a supervisory position, recognized as “officers,” were the ones beaten. Since they were the ones who counted and tallied the number of bricks produced, reaching the quota was ultimately their responsibility.

Do you notice in verse 14 that the Egyptian taskmasters FIRST beat the officers THEN demanded they explain why they could not fulfill their duty? One would think that punishment would be the result of an unsatisfactory answer to a question. But, the Egyptian mind-set at that time was that you could only guarantee a truthful answer AFTER a severe beating with a stick, which often included also having their feet and hands twisted just short of the breaking point.

After a number of these extreme interrogations, these officers went before the Pharaoh asking why they were being dealt with so severely, even suggesting *“the fault is in your own people.”* The response was to take the desperate situation they were already in, and make it even worse. *“You are idle! Idle! Therefore you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.’ Therefore go now and work; for no straw shall be given you, yet you shall deliver the quota of bricks.’ And the officers of the children of Israel saw that they were in trouble ...’*”

Verse 20 tells us that, when they were dismissed from the king’s presence, *“they met Moses and Aaron who stood in the way.”* Apparently, these two men were aware that a meeting had been taking place behind closed doors and were awaiting news. I imagine that Moses was feeling rather anxious; hoping his interventions on the Lord’s behalf had not actually made matters worse.

When something goes wrong, it’s human nature to look for someone to blame, so in that moment the elders turned on the very men sent to deliver them: *“Let the Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us.”* (Exodus 5:21) If we were to search for an “upside” to their anger, we could mention that their wish for the *“Lord to look on you and judge”* indicates that at least they still viewed Jehovah as their savior! Even though they were living far away from home, they had not forgotten Him and had evidently been pleading to God

to deliver them from this bondage. As far as we know, neither Moses nor Aaron replied to their statement, but instead Moses ***“returned to the Lord”*** and poured out his heart. ***“Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all.”*** (5:22-23)

Moses made a bold, accusatory statement here, but I don't think it implies that he ever doubted that God could deliver these people... he just didn't expect things to get worse before they got better. I interpret the question ***“Why is it you have sent me?”*** to imply, “I told you I wasn't the right man for this job.” Moses was, of course, aware of his speaking limitations, whatever they were, and felt as though they were in some way to blame for the worsening of the situation. God's answer, in chapter 6:1-8 is long and powerful:

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land.’ And God spoke to Moses and said to him: ‘I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Jehovah, I was not known to them. I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: “I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord.”’”

The first thing I notice in God's response is that He was apparently not offended by Moses' strong words! There is no rebuff. God begins His reply with, ***“Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.”*** Moses had forgotten, as we so often do, that God has a plan and controls

all things. He will execute that plan in the time and manner He sees fit because He has all wisdom and power. We sometimes find ourselves in situations that leave us asking God, “Why is this happening to me?” I imagine Him responding; ***“Now you shall see what I will do.”*** In other words, “I am at work in your life and there is obviously something to be learned or gained by this particular thing happening in this particular way.” As the psalmist says in 46:10, ***“Be still and know that I am God.”*** In this particular passage, God both begins and ends His response by reminding Moses, ***“I am the Lord.”***

Here, in this passage in Exodus 6, are a couple of important things that often get overlooked. For one, this is the first time we learn of the name “Jehovah.” Up until now, God had been known to the patriarchs only as “God Almighty” and says, ***“My name Jehovah was not known to them.”*** Several commentators tell us that in Genesis 17:1 God identifies Himself to Abraham as “Jehovah,” but that is not correct! The word used in that verse is the Hebrew word “shadday,” which translates to “Almighty.” That is exactly what God tells Moses here in Exodus 6:3 – that He was known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by the name “Almighty.” The King James Version of the bible, which is still pretty much accepted as the most correct direct translation of the original manuscripts, renders the Hebrew word “Yehovah” (anglicized as Jehovah) as “LORD” in every single instance throughout the book of Genesis and Exodus except here where it is translated “Jehovah.” The word appears 559 times in Genesis and Exodus alone. It is often translated ***“Yehweh,”*** and is the true name of our God!

Secondly, when God mentions the promises He made to the three patriarchs, (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) ***“to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers,”*** He is referring to where they were living or “sojourning” before going to Egypt. The important part of that phrase is before going to Egypt.

Remember back in lesson 2, we determined that the children of Israel only lived in Egypt for 239 years. A lot of people believe they spent quite a bit more time there, as you already know. Many commentators, in fact, will argue that the stay in Egypt was exactly 430 years. They base that on Exodus 12:41 where it is said: ***“And it came to pass at the end of the four***

hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.” The mistake is in believing that that statement is talking just about the stay in Egypt. Look at the previous scripture, 12:40: *“Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.”* (KJV) That seems to emphasize the mistake unless you look more carefully. The composition of verse 40 includes a parenthetical expression: *“who dwelt in Egypt.”* What is a parenthetical expression? It is *“A word or words added to a sentence without changing the meaning or grammar of the original sentence, usually set off by commas.”*

Why the free grammar lesson in the midst of this study, you ask? Because we need to understand how to read verse 40. If the parenthetical phrase *“who dwelt in Egypt”* is removed, the meaning of the sentence is not affected. So, what is actually being expressed in this verse is: *“Now the sojourning of the children of Israel was four hundred and thirty years.”* We know without a doubt when that sojourning began – with the promise first made to Abraham at age 99 – when God told him he was a sojourner in the land which would be given to his descendants.

So, actually, the children of Israel sojourned for 191 years in and around the land that would become theirs – Canaan – and then went into Egypt where they sojourned for another 239 years (see lesson 2) – the total time equaling 430 years.

Verse 41 tells us they came out of Egypt on the selfsame day – which I believe means it was EXACTLY 430 YEARS – TO THE VERY DAY – after the promise was made to Abraham! We will, of course, study this in depth as we progress through the book, but I believe it is a detail worth mentioning here.

Back to our story...

God assured Moses, *“I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant.”*

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EXODUS

Ron Roberts

Lesson 5

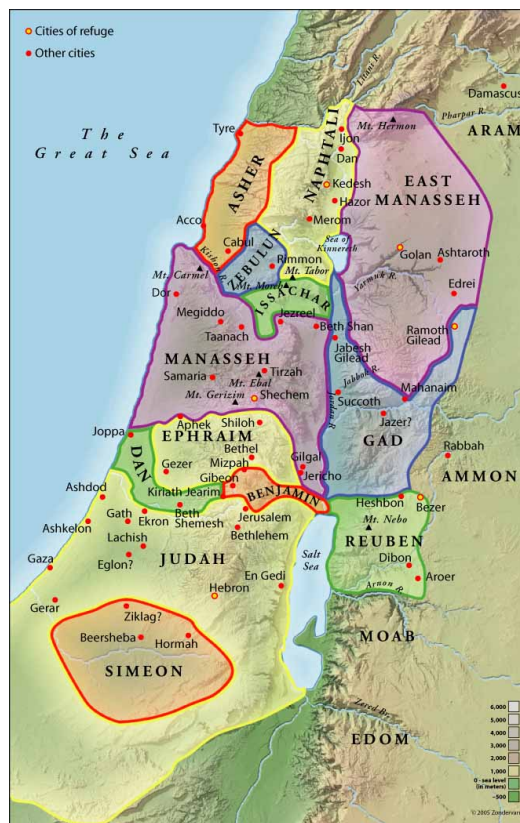
The word “remembered” doesn’t mean “previously forgotten” but instead that the time is just now right to act on His promise. They will soon leave Egypt, travel to the Promised Land, and inherit it!



Circled in red on the map at left is what is commonly considered to be that “Promised Land” with borders of the city of Sidon to the extreme north, the Mediterranean Sea to the west, the River of Egypt to the south and the Dead Sea, Jordan River, and the Sea of Galilee as the eastern border. Our study of Exodus will end before the land is conquered and settled, but I want us to be aware that the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh chose land to the east of the Jordan

River, and Dead Sea – outside of the red area – with Jehovah’s blessing. Why? Because He actually promised a much larger area of land shown on this map circled in blue. Back in Genesis 15:18 it reads: ***“On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.”*** (NKJV) Some believe this scripture references the entire Euphrates River, which would involve an even greater area of land, though much of it would be wilderness. I choose to believe that the actual borders are closer to what I have shown circled in blue.

On the right is a commercial map that illustrates the actual way the twelve tribes settled in the Promised Land including the nations that



surrounded them. You will notice that they did not occupy all of the land they had been allotted, but that's material for a different study because the book of Exodus ends prior to all that.

So... Jehovah sent Moses back to the children of Israel with some much needed reassurance of Who was in charge of their deliverance from slavery and exactly what His plan included: ***“I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord.”*** ”

From my perspective in the 21st century, it's hard to imagine the Israelites not being comforted by these very stirring words, but we are told, ***“...they did not heed Moses, because of anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.”*** We must remember that humans have always been ...human. Deep suffering in the moment can hold much more sway over us than promises for a future we cannot yet see, or even imagine.

So... it is back to Pharaoh again. Notice the change in what God has asked Moses to tell Ahmose this time. No longer is he to request a three day journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to their God. Now, Moses is to demand that the Pharaoh ***“let the children of Israel go out of his land.”*** Period. But, if the Pharaoh wouldn't let them leave for three days, he certainly isn't going to let them go permanently. If the first “minor” request Moses made was answered with increased workload and more suffering for the Israelite people, what will happen when he makes this second request?

My thought is that there was a lesson to be learned here – by the King himself. We know from the chart of Pharaohs shown in Lesson 2, that Ahmose reigned from 1539 BC until 1514 BC, so he not only survived the “exodus experience” (in 1527 BC), but he reigned for another 13 years afterwards. I imagine he spent many quiet hours reflecting on the miracles he had

witnessed at Moses' hand, and perhaps at what his pride had cost him. Do you suppose Ahmose might have looked back on this decision – to refuse this second request – as the moment when he began to understand some things about this God Moses worshipped? If God asks of us something that constitutes a minor burden, and we refuse to carry it, He may come back with a heavier one – whereby we learn we should have humbled ourselves and obeyed right from the start!

I hear despair in Moses' voice when he responds to God's command ***"The children of Israel have not heeded me. How then shall Pharaoh heed me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?"*** He just can't seem to let go of his insecurities about his speaking ability. But, the Lord's reply is to give Moses and Aaron a "charge": ***"Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, and gave them a charge for the children of Israel and for Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt."*** The word "charge" is the Hebrew word *"tsavah"* which means *"a command sent by a messenger."* When a messenger is dispatched, he carries the full power of the one who sent him. Therefore, this "charge" to both the children of Israel and the king of Egypt is Moses himself, and he represents the Almighty Jehovah.

Remember what Ahmose said the first time Moses and Aaron brought their request before him? ***"Who is this Lord? I do not know Him."*** The implication, of course, was *"because I don't know Him, I have no reason to respect His authority."* That is about to change! This Pharaoh will receive a very special introduction to Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel and many demonstrations of His power.

For whatever reason, the narrative is interrupted and a long and detailed genealogy of Moses and Aaron is given, beginning with the sons of Jacob. Some commentators believe in the original manuscripts it was an "attached" document and was never intended to be a part of this narrative. Frankly, I don't know, but if you remember the chart I used in the beginning of this study, it included – by mother – the twelve sons of Jacob who traveled to Egypt. This genealogy takes that chart a few steps further and shows us that Moses and Aaron are, in fact, direct descendants of Jacob.

In the next lesson, God will “introduce himself” to the Pharaoh through the first of the plagues. Things are about to get really interesting.

Concerning Almose:

The bulk of commentators believe the Pharaoh in power at the time Moses goes back to Egypt was Merenptah, the son of Rameses II, which you see in the lower third of this chart as reigning for only 10 years between 1213 and 1203 BC, because most commentators believe the children of Israel were in Egypt longer than they really were. In Lesson 2, we determined the Exodus occurred in 1527 BC, a little over 300 years earlier! Looking at the chart again you will



see 1527 falls within the time that Ahmose was ruling Egypt (his limestone bust is shown here). The name Ahmose means “The Moon is born.” According to Egyptian history, he was the founder of the 18th

dynasty, the son of Tao II, and brother of the last pharaoh of the Seventeenth dynasty, Kamose. Ahmose’s father, Tao II, was killed when Ahmose was 7 years old, and about 3 years later, his brother Kamose (who took the throne after Tao II) died of unknown causes, after reigning only three years. Ahmose assumed the throne at

	Semenenre		
	Suserenre		
	Sobekemzaf II		
	Antef VI		
	Antef VII		
	Tao I		
	Tao II		
17th	Kamose		
	Ahmose	1539	1514
	Amenhotep I	1514	1493
	Thutmose I	1493	1481
	Thutmose II	1491	1479
	Hatshepsut	1473	1458
	Thutmose III	1504	1450
	Amenhotep II	1427	1392
	Thutmose IV	1419	1386
	Amenhotep III	1382	1344
	Amenhotep IV	1350	1334
	Smenkhkare	1336	1334
	Tutankhamun	1334	1325
	Ay	1325	1321
18th	Horemheb	1323	1295
	Ramesses I	1295	1294
	Seti I	1394	1279
	Ramesses II	1279	1213
	Merenptah	1213	1203
	Amenmesse	1203	1200
	Seti II	1200	1194
	Siptah	1194	1188
19th	Tausert	1185	1187
	Setakht	1186	1184
	Ramesses III	1184	1153
	Ramesses IV	1153	1147
	Ramesses V	1147	1143
	Ramesses VI	1143	1136
	Ramesses VII	1136	1129
	Ramesses VIII	1129	1126

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EXODUS

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Lesson 5

the age of 10 years old and reigned for 25 years. In 1527, when Moses first met him, he was 23 years old.