

UNIT III

STEPS IN BECOMING A NATION

The Book of Exodus contains two of the most significant events in the Old Testament: the deliverance from Egypt and the development of the Covenant. The promise that God would make Abraham's descendants a mighty nation had not been fulfilled; instead they had fallen into Egyptian slavery. The Promised Land continued in the hands of the Canaanites and the Philistines.

The deliverance brought about the birth of a nation. Apart from the intervention of God, there is no other explanation for how a people in slavery and without leadership and organization could become a nation. The nature of Yahweh is to side with the deprived and disadvantaged and to bestow His blessings upon them. His mighty power and goodness are revealed in His acts of salvation history.

Since God is Lord of all creation, including natural law, He is able to accomplish His plan to a great extent through natural events. God's normal activity in history is through natural processes. On occasions, He chooses to accomplish His purpose through unique processes which are called miracles.

The greatness of Moses can be only partially understood. He was called to a task which seemed impossible. He attempted to accomplish the deliverance when he had position and authority in the house of Pharaoh as a prince, but he failed. He was called back from the seemingly insignificant role of a shepherd to lead in the founding of a nation and the organizing of a religion which has given rise to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Even Communism is indebted to Moses for some of its concepts. The significance of the divine revelations at the burning bush, during the Egyptian plagues, and at Mount Sinai cannot be discredited. There is no explanation for what happened and for what resulted apart from a recognition of the revelation and leadership of God. Lesson 7 is concerned with the Scriptures which present the person of Moses and the divinely revealed plan of God for delivering His people.

Lesson 8 is concerned with the Israelites' deliverance from bondage which was the beginning of the life of a nation. The event has been memorialized in a religious ritual—the Passover—which has been perpetuated for more than three millenniums. The religious significance of the deliverance is much more important than the political significance.

Lesson 9 describes God's revelation at Mount Sinai. The Israelite nation's uniqueness resulted from the encounter with Yahweh at Sinai, where the willingness of the people to be loyal to Yahweh was tested, and the Covenant between God and the people was accepted and sealed. The Covenant committed God to bless the people and to make them a great nation. The people were responsible for being a "holy nation and kingdom of priests." The people were obligated to make Yahweh known to all the nations of the earth. They were to worship only the one God Yahweh and make known His righteous nature by living according to His commandments. The goodness and love of God would become known to other nations through the blessings He bestowed upon His people. Not only was the nature of the relationship to God revealed at Sinai, but the religion of the Israelites took on organization which enabled it to survive the defeat and disappearance of the nation. Israel's contribution to the world has not been political or social organizations but her religious institution.

LESSON 7

PREPARATION FOR THE EXODUS

Exodus 1:1–11:10

Aim

To become acquainted with the nature of the Book of Exodus and the power and guidance of God in delivering the Israelites from Egypt.

Introduction to the Book of Exodus

The name

The title Exodus in the Hebrew Bible was taken from the first two words of the text, *We'eleh shemoth* ("Now these are the names"). The shortened Hebrew title is *Shemoth* (names). In the Greek translation (Septuagint) of the Hebrew text, the title Exodus was selected from the principal theme of the book (19:1) and was a translation of the Hebrew word for "the departure."

The content

Exodus is a natural continuation of Genesis. Genesis describes the lives of the fathers of the Hebrew people; Exodus describes the organization of the Hebrew children into a nation. The book begins with a description of Israel's enslavement in Egypt and deliverance from bondage. The institution of the Passover, the revealing of the Covenant at Mount Sinai, and the instructions for public worship are given.

The agent of deliverance was Moses. Chapter 2 tells of his birth and concealment. Chapters 3 and 4 relate his call and commissioning by Yahweh. Chapters 5 and 6 record the affliction of the Israelites and a genealogical table. Chapters 7 through 11 describe the encounter of Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh and nine of the plagues. Chapter 12 presents the Passover and the final plague. Chapters 13 through 18 give the experiences in the wilderness. Chapters 19 through 40 present the events at Sinai when the Ten Commandments and other laws were given.

The purpose

Exodus continues the theme of the salvation history of Yahweh. In Genesis God made the promise to Abraham and his descendants that He would bless them and, through them, the nations. The first part of Exodus shows how God fulfilled His promise by delivering His people who had been reduced to slavery. On the basis of His mighty deliverance, Yahweh commanded the people to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to all the nations of the earth (19:4-6). The remaining twenty-one chapters of Exodus record instructions which were delivered to the people as requirements for living in fellowship with their Redeemer.

Two great themes stand out in Exodus: the deliverance from Egypt and the revelation at Sinai. The deliverance of the enslaved people was of such significance that an annual celebration, the Passover, was instituted as a memorial. The nation of Israel had its birth in the deliverance. The revelation at Sinai gave the guidelines for the relationship of the nation to her God. The religious life and the civil life of Israel were determined by the

Match the following:

- _____ 1. Hebrew title for Exodus a. departure
_____ 2. English title for Exodus b. names

(1-b; 2-a)

The first part of Exodus shows God's fulfilment of His promise through _____ of His chosen people.

(deliverance)

The two great themes in Exodus are:

1. _____
2. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The last twenty-one chapters of Exodus record instructions to the people for _____

(living in fellowship with God)

What annual celebration was instituted as a memorial of the deliverance from Egypt?

(The Passover)

revelation at Sinai.

The key personality

Moses dominates the Book of Exodus and is presented in the rest of the Bible as the key person in the formation and organization of the religion of Israel. As greater emphasis came to be placed upon the Law in the post-exilic period, Moses occupied a more significant role in the history of Israel.

Perhaps the greatest two acts of Moses were his leadership in the deliverance and his activities as mediator of the Covenant and the Law. He was a prophet through whom the Lord's revelation was given to Israel and a priest who interceded for Israel with the Lord. Under his leadership a group of enslaved and disadvantaged people were delivered from bondage and were moulded into a small but influential nation which became a determining factor in the course of world history. The dynamic character of Moses is revealed in the various roles which he fulfilled.

A Resumé of Israel's History and Oppression

Exodus 1:1-22

Exodus 1:1-7 connects the book with Genesis by naming the twelve sons of Jacob and by noting their residence in Egypt and the death of Joseph. Verse 7 indicates the partial fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham and his descendants.

The author intended to show in 1:8-22 that the efforts of the Egyptians to suppress God's chosen people were brought to naught. Even though the Hebrew people were mercilessly oppressed, they multiplied because of the superiority of their God. Recent scholars, however, have used verses 8-11 in attempting to solve the problem of the date of the Exodus. Efforts have been made to identify the new king who ruled Egypt, but did not know Joseph, as the king of the oppression. Identification of the two cities—Pithom and Raamses—which Pharaoh built for storage has also been attempted.

The dates of the Exodus have presented problems which have not been resolved. Two dates have been most commonly defended. The first is about 1440 B. C. and is based on the chronology revealed in the Bible. 1 Kings 6:1 states that the fourth year of Solomon's reign (about 961 B. C.) was 480 years after the Exodus; therefore, the Exodus would be dated about 1441 B. C.¹ According to Exodus 12:40-41, deliverance came after 430 years in Egypt. This fact would place the descent into Egypt about 1870 B. C. and would place the entrance into Egypt about 160 years before the coming of the Hyksos in 1710 B. C. Most scholars generally place the descent of Jacob into Egypt during the time of the coming of the Hyksos.

If the Exodus took place in 1441 B. C., Thutmose III (1482-1450 B. C.)² was the renowned builder of the cities Pithom and Raamses and the Pharaoh of the oppression. His successor Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Proponents of this date argue that the reference to the invading Habiru in the Amarna letters and the fall of Jericho place the Exodus before 1400 B. C.

Although the Hebrew Bible gives the sojourn in Egypt as 430 years, the texts of the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint

¹ W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, and John Bright, *A History of Israel*, date the beginning of the reign of Solomon in 961; therefore, the Exodus based on the Hebrew information of 430 years previous to the fourth year of Solomon's reign would be 1437. Bright sets the date of the Exodus in about 1290 B. C., during the reign of Rameses II (ca. 1290-1224).

² Albright and Bright give the dates of 1490-1435 for Thutmose III.

Verses 8-11 of Exodus I have been used in an attempt to solve the problem of the _____ departure of the Israelites from Egypt.
(date)

One date of the Exodus which is defended by some scholars is _____
(1440 B.C.)

The date 1440 B.C. is based on the _____
(chronology revealed in the Bible)

seem to indicate a sojourn of 215 years. Exodus 6:16-20 gives only four generations from Jacob to Moses. Even after allowing a long span of time for each generation, the four generations would more nearly fit the years recorded in the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch than in the Hebrew Bible.

Other scholars place the date of the Exodus after 1290 B. C. They argue that the cities of Pithom and Raamses were built during the reign of Pharaoh Rameses II, who reigned from about 1290-1224 B.C. According to this view the Pharaoh of the oppression was Sethos I, and the Pharaoh of the Exodus was either Rameses II or his successor Merneptah (1224-1214 B. C.). Merneptah claimed to have defeated Israel in Palestine about 1220 B. C. Considering the forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the Exodus would have taken place about 1290 to 1260 B. C. and the invasion of Canaan from 1250 to 1220 B. C. Archaeological discoveries at Lachish, Bethel, and Hazor indicate that these cities fell in the second half of the thirteenth century. The Habiru have not been identified definitely with the invading Israelites.

Pharaoh had three plans for controlling the Hebrew population. The Egyptians feared that an unrestricted population explosion would result in a revolution. They attempted first to control the population increase by afflicting the Israelites with oppressive and hard labour. When they continued to increase, Pharaoh commanded the midwives to kill all of the male children at birth. The midwives feared God and refused to obey the order; therefore, Pharaoh commanded his people to cast every male Hebrew baby into the Nile.

The Birth and Exile of Moses

Exodus 2:1-25

Notice is given that Moses was of the priestly tribe of Levi. The first three verses may leave one with the impression that Moses was the first born of Amram and Jochebed (6:20). However, the next verse indicates Moses had an older sister, and the genealogy and later references reveal that Aaron was older than Moses. It is possible that Miriam and Aaron were children of Amram by a former marriage. Because of the design of the Egyptians to kill all male Hebrew babies, Moses was put in a basket, which was made from the papyrus plant and water-proofed with bitumen, and placed among the reeds by the bank of the Nile. His sister was stationed nearby to watch over him. The daughter of Israel's oppressor discovered him and adopted him.

The name Moses reflects a double ancestry as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter and the actual son of Hebrews. The name Moses appears to be Egyptian (cf. Thutmose, Ahmose) with the meaning "child" or "son" (Thutmose—child of Thut). The Hebraized sound of the Egyptian word *masa* (child) was *moseh* which is related to the verbal root *masa* (to draw out). Pharaoh's daughter became a mother by "drawing out" the "son." The name Moses indicates the two facts that he was an Israelite of Levitical descent but received an Egyptian name and rearing. Moses was presumably the only baby boy to be preserved. The information that he was nursed by his own mother explains his later sympathy for and loyalty to his own people.

One day Moses beheld an Egyptian foreman maltreating an Israelite, and he killed the Egyptian. Later, Moses intervened in the disagreement of two Israelites and was taunted as a murderer. Perhaps his own people were jealous of his privileged position. In fear for his life, Moses escaped to the land of Midian. His flight may indicate that he was not in good standing with the Pharaoh even though he had been adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter.

Some other scholars place the date of the Exodus after _____.

(1290 B.C.)

Moses was of the priestly tribe of _____

(Levi)

The name Moses reflects a double ancestry:

(1) adopted son of _____

(2) actual son of _____

(1- Pharaoh's daughter; 2-Hebrew)

Because Moses killed an Egyptian and then was taunted by his own kinsmen, he fled to _____

(Midian)

The response of Moses' own kinsmen when he interfered in the quarrel may have deeply affected his personality and contributed to his meekness.

At a well in the desert, Moses met the woman who was to be his wife and who introduced him to her father Jethro, the priest of the god of Midian. According to Genesis 25:1-6, Midian was the son of Abraham by Keturah. The Midianites lived in the region south and southeast of Palestine, and Genesis 37:28 calls them caravan traders. According to Exodus 2 and 3, they were shepherds. In Judges 6-8, they are described as raiders. Since the Midianites were Bedouin, they may have inhabited the eastern part of the Sinai peninsula on occasions.

In 2:16-17 the nature of Moses to take the side of the oppressed is again noted. As the seven daughters of the priest of Midian came to the well and drew water for their flocks, other shepherds came and drove them away. Moses helped the shepherdesses to water their flocks. The daughters reported the incident to their father. Jethro invited Moses to a meal and gave him Zipporah for a wife.

Exodus 2:23-25 relates the history of Moses to the promises of God recorded in Genesis 12:7, 13:15 and renewed to Jacob in 35:11. The purpose of Exodus is to show how the Redeemer God fulfilled His promises to Abraham by delivering the descendants of Abraham out of Egyptian bondage and by preparing them to become a nation in the Promised Land of Canaan.

There is much speculation on the nature of Jethro's (Reuel's) religion. One wonders how much influence his worship may have had on Moses. Since the Midianites were descendants of Abraham, they could have continued a tradition of Yahweh worship; however, the Covenant of Yahweh with Abraham was perpetuated through Sarah's children instead of Keturah's children. The extent to which the Hebrews had become involved in the worship of idols in Egypt is unknown. Perhaps the worship of Yahweh had been neglected. The author, however, associated the God of the Hebrew slaves with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod. 2:24). The fact that the Hebrews had to go into the wilderness to worship may indicate that their masters had suppressed their worship of Yahweh and had insisted on their worship of Egyptian gods.

The Call and Commission of Moses

Exodus 3:1-4:31

After many days (forty years, Exod. 7:7, Acts 7:30), God appeared to Moses while he was pasturing the flock of Jethro on the west side of the wilderness at Mount Horeb (or Mount Sinai, usually identified with Gebel Musa, located at the tip of the Sinai peninsula). The appearance of Yahweh was described as an angel appearing in a blazing fire from a bush. The fact that the bush was burning but was not being consumed attracted Moses' attention. As he turned aside out of curiosity, Elohim called to him from the bush. The removal of the sandals may have been to avoid pollution of a sacred place, and also the Old Testament priests performed their duties barefooted.

The suddenness and impressiveness of God's appearance and Moses' startled response (3:6) emphasize the uniqueness and importance of God's breaking into Moses' experience to confront him with revelation. The fact that the Lord identified Himself and stated that He had heard the cries of His people in Egypt leaves the impression of a lack of intimate relation between the Israelites and Yahweh. The God to whom Moses was introduced was no new God, but the One worshipped by the ancestors of the race. The fact that Yahweh announced that He would "come

Moses was invited to stay in the home of the Midian priest, _____.

(Jethro)

down to deliver" His people from the power of the Egyptians indicated that He would then enter into a closer relationship to His people. The people would be given a spacious land where Yahweh would be the national God (3:8). At the time of the promise, that land was under the control of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perezites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Its adequacy and fertility were described as spacious and flowing with milk and honey (not only from bees but perhaps grape juice boiled to a syrup). The Canaanites inhabited the coastlands and the Jordan valley. The Amorites inhabited the higher country east and west of the Jordan. The Hittite Empire centred in Asia Minor and Syria. The Perizzites possibly lived in central Palestine, and the Hivites were an unimportant people inhabiting the country around Shechem. The Jebusites lived in Jerusalem and continued until the time of David. The Lord was to be the author of the deliverance, but the accomplishment would be carried out through Moses.

Moses' first objection (3:11-12).—His objections indicate that Moses had matured and was much more cautious than when he fled from Egypt. There he had been one of the royal household, but in Midian he was only a shepherd and a fugitive. Previously he had attempted deliverance but had not succeeded. If he failed while a part of the royal household, what chances were there afterwards for him to succeed? He asked, therefore, "Who am I?" The sign of assurance was a promise and a pledge rather than a token. The promise was that the people would be delivered and would worship God at "this mountain." Moses was to understand that his identity was no longer with the royalty of Egypt but with "I am with you" (NEB). Moses failed while depending on identity with Egyptian royalty; he would succeed while depending on identity with the God of his fathers. The proof of God's promise would come in deliverance and in worship of God at the mountain. Moses must act by faith in God.

Moses' second objection (3:13-15).—Each nation had its own god, and each had a personal name. Moses requested to know the name of the God who was sending him to the Israelites. Elohim (God) answered, "I AM WHO I AM" (RSV). The identity of Moses' God was based on the verb "to be." The emphasis was on the Divine Existence. The existing eternal God was then actively manifesting Himself to His people. The practical meaning in the expression may have been "I am what you will discover Me to be."

Instructions to Moses concerning his task (3:16-22).—Moses was to make known to the elders of the people what God had revealed to him. Pharaoh was to be informed that the God of the Hebrews had requested that they be permitted to go on a three day's journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to their God. Sacrifice was the natural response to divine revelation. It was obvious that the king would not give his slaves that privilege. Although the king would oppose them, God promised a miraculous deliverance for the Hebrews.

Moses' third objection (4:1-9).—Since Moses had been rejected previously by his kinsmen when he intervened on their behalf, he feared that they would not listen to him or believe the revelation which had been given him. Moses was given supernatural power to perform three signs. The Egyptian magicians were able to perform the first sign, the turning of the rod into a serpent and back again, since Egypt was known as a land where magic was performed with snakes. The fact that leprosy was regarded as being sent by deity, rarely curable, also indicated that Moses had divine power at his disposal. The third sign, the turning of the Nile water into blood, became the first plague (7:14-25).

Moses's fourth objection (4:10-17).—Moses was still not

Was the land which was said to flow with milk and honey occupied by other people at the time God directed Moses to lead the Israelites there?

(Read Exodus 3:17 for verification.)

Moses first objection to God's call to leadership was a question,

" _____ ?"
God's answer was " _____ ."

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Moses then requested to know _____
_____ .
God answered, " _____ ."

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Moses' third objection is found in Exodus 4:1.

What was it? _____

God's answer was giving Moses _____
_____ to perform three signs.

(Compare your answer with the scripture and text.)

convinced that he had the ability to do the job. He objected by saying that he could not speak. God replied that He would be with Moses' mouth and would teach him what to say (4:12). In verse 13 Moses replied disrespectfully and without faith by refusing to go. His refusal occasioned the Lord's wrath. Aaron would declare publicly the words of revelation which Moses would share with him.

Moses' return to Egypt (4:18-31).—Moses requested his father-in-law's permission to return to Egypt with his family. The king of Egypt of Exodus 3 begins to be referred to as Pharaoh in these verses. The instructions as to what Moses should say to Pharaoh were given again with an additional statement, "Israel is my first-born son." The nature of Moses' illness on the way to Egypt is not clear (4:24-26). Zipporah concluded that it was the result of neglecting the rite of circumcision. The fact that Moses had not yet circumcised his son left the covenant relationship between him and Yahweh unsealed. The circumcision of the son healed the relationship between Moses and Yahweh; therefore, Moses was physically healed. The significance of the experience was to emphasize the covenant relationship of Yahweh and Moses. Upon arriving in Egypt, Moses met Aaron and shared with him the revelation and signs. When the people saw the signs, they believed and responded by worshipping the Lord.

The Preliminary Interviews with Pharaoh

Exodus 5:1-7:7

Moses and Aaron obediently approached Pharaoh and requested the liberation of the slaves to celebrate a feast to their God in the wilderness. As a polytheist, Pharaoh did not necessarily deny the existence of Yahweh, but he acknowledged he had never heard of Israel's God. Pharaoh commanded Moses and Aaron to return to their work. Pharaoh considered the possibility of a rebellion of the numerous slaves; therefore, he increased their oppression by adding to their work. He reasoned that more labour would leave less time for listening to the agitators. Pharaoh's plan appeared to be successful because the leaders of Israel concluded that Moses' agitation was bringing greater distress to the people. Once again Moses' own people rejected his leadership (5:21). Strong doubts arose in the mind of Moses about his mission; therefore, he questioned God concerning the turn of events.

In chapter 5 Yahweh assured Moses that although Pharaoh would not agree to Israel's journeying into the wilderness for a religious festival, he would be forced to do so. The Covenant with Abraham was renewed with Moses (6:2-5). Chapter 6 contains what is frequently referred to as the second account of Moses' call (vv. 3-9). The statement is made that God was known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as *El Shaddi* (God Almighty), but He was not known to them by His name "Yahweh" (Lord). Verse 3 has caused much debate since Yahweh appears in Genesis 2:4; however, the implication of this verse is that the name was not known previously. The Covenant is specifically mentioned in 6:4-5. Yahweh deals with mankind by means of covenants: with Noah (Gen. 9:8ff.), with Abraham (Gen. 17:1f., 7f.), and with the people of Israel (Exod. 19ff.). God bound Himself in the Covenant with Abraham to multiply Abraham's seed and to give his descendants the land of Canaan. The Covenant appears to have been one-sided since God did the giving and Israel did the receiving; however, Yahweh would be honoured in the world because of the blessings He would bestow upon His people and because of the demonstration of His power to deliver them. Moses reminded the people of the Covenant which God had made with their father Abraham, but they did not listen to him because of their dependency and cruel bondage (6:9).

Moses still objected by saying _____

(he could not speak)

Jehovah was angered and said _____ would be Moses' spokesman.

(Aaron)

Which is correct? Circle the correct words. Moses' first request to Pharaoh to allow the Israelite slaves to celebrate a feast to their God (was granted, was rejected, was denied and more work added).

(Circle *was denied and more work added.*)

Find and read the verses in chapter 6 of Exodus which give the account of renewal of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The verses are _____

(Exodus 6:2-8)

In 6:10-13 Moses was instructed to go before Pharaoh again. He objected but was overruled. The family tree of Moses is given in 6:14-27 in order to show the relation of Moses to the priestly tribe of Levi. The story of Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh is resumed in 6:28. In 7:1 Moses was to be "as God to Pharaoh." He would be in full possession of God's authority as he dealt with Pharaoh. Again he was reminded that Pharaoh would not permit Israel to go, but Pharaoh's hardness would result in glory to God. When the Egyptians realized they could no longer keep the Israelites in bondage, they would recognize that the power of Yahweh was greater than the power of their own gods.

The First Nine Plagues

Exodus 7:8-10:29

Introduction

The plagues were introduced by the sign of the rod which God had given previously to Moses. Aaron worked the miracle by casting his staff before Pharaoh. Pharaoh summoned his magicians, and they imitated the miracle. Exodus 7:12 notes that the superiority of Aaron's God was shown by the fact that his staff swallowed up the staffs of the Egyptians magicians. According to the prediction of 7:4, Pharaoh did not listen to the request of Moses and Aaron.

A development in the attitude of both the magicians and Pharaoh was shown. In the first two plagues, the magicians were able to equal the achievements of Moses and Aaron—turning water into blood and bringing frogs on the land. In the third plague, the magicians were unable to produce the gnats; hence they confessed defeat. They did not even attempt the fourth, fifth, and sixth plagues (flies, murrain on cattle, and boils on men and cattle); instead the magicians suffered from the boils themselves. The magicians disappeared from the scene after the sixth plague.

Pharaoh's stubbornness continued throughout the plagues. He was overwhelmed by the frogs and appealed to Moses and Aaron for help, but he later withdrew his promise to release the Israelites after the frogs were dead. He was defiant during the third plague but offered concession during the fourth. He would allow Israel to hold the sacrificial feast in Egypt, but Moses refused. After Pharaoh agreed to a wilderness feast and the plague was ended, he withdrew his permission. Pharaoh was defiant during the fifth and sixth plagues but was driven to concession during the seventh plague. He granted Israel's request for release, but as the plague ended, he again withdrew his concession. After his own people interceded for the sake of Egypt, he agreed to permit the men to go to the feast. Moses refused and the plague of the locusts came. Pharaoh prayed for the removal of the plague but offered no concession. He continued to refuse the request of Moses. After darkness had been over the land for three days, Pharaoh agreed to permit all Israel to depart, but their flocks and herds must be left. Again Moses refused, and at the end of the ninth plague little progress seemed to have been made.

The author of Exodus showed that Pharaoh's behaviour was due to the Lord's hardening of Pharaoh's heart. The theological position that God overruled Pharaoh's freedom of choice and deliberately hardened his heart is unacceptable to many interpreters. There are frequent references to Pharaoh's hardening his own heart and frequent references to Yahweh's hardening of Pharaoh's heart. The problem of the sovereignty of God and the freedom of man is raised in this matter.

Three Hebrew words are used in describing Pharaoh's heart. The key words mean "to grow hard," "to be obstinate," and "to

Exodus 7:12 shows the superiority of God's power through Aaron's rod by _____

(his rod swallowing the rods of the magicians)

Write the development of the attitude of the magicians in relation to the plagues.

First two plagues _____

Third plague _____

Fourth, fifth, and sixth plagues _____

After the sixth plague _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Pharaoh initiated the process of _____

his _____ and later God made his

(hardening, heart, heart, hard)

be perverse." The Lord foretold the hardening of Pharaoh's heart (4:21), but Pharaoh initiated the process (7:13). Following the swallowing of the magicians' rods by the rod of Aaron, it is declared that Pharaoh's heart grew hard: it was made obstinate. Afterwards, the Scripture states that Yahweh made Pharaoh's heart hard. The purpose of the author was not to solve the problem of God's sovereignty and man's freedom but to show the mighty power of Israel's God who keeps His promises and blesses His people. Israel's covenant-making and redeeming God was the God of the oppressed and disadvantaged against the haughty and powerful.

Each plague, except the last, was related to natural phenomena or disease. The severity of the plagues and their timing demonstrate their miraculous element.

A description of the plagues

The first plague (7:14-25).—Moses and Aaron met Pharaoh on the bank of the Nile River. Egypt depended on the Nile for her existence. As a result of the smiting, the Nile became red and the fish died. Usually in June or July during the flooding of the Nile, the water becomes dirty red but normally remains drinkable. The magicians were able to imitate the miracle of Aaron, and Pharaoh remained unmoved.

The second plague (8:1-15).—Frogs usually accompany the inundation of the Nile, though they are seldom so numerous as to become a plague. Pharaoh was warned of a second plague if he refused to permit Israel to go. The miracle of the appearance of frogs occurred when Aaron stretched forth his hand with his staff over the waters. The frogs were not limited to the region of the Nile. They appeared throughout the land. In order for Pharaoh to know the power of the Lord, he was informed that when Moses made the request the frogs would be destroyed. When relief came, Pharaoh hardened his heart.

The third plague (8:16-19).—Whether lice, gnats, or mosquitoes brought the affliction in the third plague is uncertain. Mosquitoes commonly appeared with the flooding of the Nile. The third plague was miraculous in that the insects came from the dust of the ground. The magicians were unable to imitate this plague and admitted to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." The remark resulted in Pharaoh's heart being hardened.

The fourth plague (8:20-32).—Pharaoh was warned of further trouble if he did not permit the people of God to depart. Swarms of insects would come into the houses of the Egyptians, but they would not come into the houses in Goshen, where the Hebrews resided. Pharaoh consented to permit Moses and Aaron to sacrifice to their God within the land, but Moses refused the offer. Cattle were sacred to the Egyptians, and the Hebrews' sacrificing might cause a popular riot. Pharaoh consented to permit them to go on a short journey into the wilderness, but after the plague was lifted Pharaoh again withdrew his permission.

The fifth plague (9:1-7).—The plague of murrain upon the Egyptian's cattle (perhaps anthrax) was against the sacred objects of Egyptian worship. The livestock of the Egyptians died, but those belonging to the Israelites were not harmed. Nevertheless, Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites depart.

The sixth plague (9:8-12).—Moses took ashes and threw them towards heaven in Pharaoh's sight. Sores appeared on men and beasts as a result. The magicians could not stand before Moses to attempt to imitate the plague because of the boils upon themselves. Skin diseases are common in Egypt. A new element is introduced in this plague in the statement that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.

The seventh plague (9:13-35).—Hail storms, with thunder and lightning, are not common in Egypt but do occur occasional-

Read scripture listed in the text for each plague and then write the nine plagues and Pharaoh's response to each.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

ly. Pharaoh was warned of the impending destruction and was advised to bring the cattle into shelter. Moses stretched his hand towards the sky from whence the hail fell. Again, the sons of Israel in Goshen were spared the plague. Pharaoh acknowledged his sin and agreed to permit the Israelites to depart. Moses replied that he did not believe Pharaoh.

The eighth plague (10:1-20).—Notation was made that the series of plagues would be told to succeeding generations as proof that God is Lord. When the plague of locusts was revealed, a new element in the story was introduced as the servants of Pharaoh interceded to avoid the threatened destruction. Pharaoh made the partial concession of permitting only the men to go. Moses rejected the offer and brought the plague of locusts. Pharaoh again confessed his sin and prayed for the lifting of the plague, but his heart was hardened and he refused to let Israel go.

The ninth plague (10:21-29).—Without warning Pharaoh, Moses stretched forth his hand, and the sky was dark for three days. Pharaoh agreed to permit all of the people to go, but he would detain the flocks and the herds. Moses refused the offer since the sacrifices and the burnt offerings came from the livestock. Pharaoh's heart hardened, and he refused to permit them to go.

The Prediction of the Tenth Plague

Exodus 11:1-10

The announcement was made to Pharaoh that Yahweh would slay the first-born of the Egyptians. The plague would come at midnight when the first-born of the families and livestock would die. Pharaoh would be compelled by this plague to let the sons of Israel depart.

The tenth plague which was_____ at midnight to the first-born of the Egyptians resulted in Pharaoh's letting the Israelites depart.

(death)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading Exodus 1–11 and the study manual, answer the following questions.

1. The Hebrew title for Exodus means _____

The English title Exodus means _____

2. The purpose of the first part of Exodus was to _____

3. The last twenty-one chapters of Exodus instructed the people in _____

4. The two events recorded in Exodus which determined Israel's future history are

_____ and _____

5. The two most commonly held dates for the Exodus are _____ B. C. and _____ B.C.

Which date do you favour and why? _____

6. What two facts are indicated by the name Moses? _____

7. During his exile Moses lived with _____

8. Name the four objections of Moses at the burning bush and God's response to each. _____

9. Even though the Egyptian magicians were able to imitate the miracle of the rod becoming a serpent, the superiority of Aaron's rod was shown by _____

10. Outline the relation of the magicians to the plagues.

11. Who was responsible for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart? _____

12. List the first nine plagues and Pharaoh's response to each.

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 68-77 in *A Nation in the Making* and do the following.

1. Explain why the Exodus was the most important Old Testament event.
2. Write a brief essay entitled, "God's Providence in the Life of Moses."

Advanced activity (Level 3). Read pages 59-106 in Davies, *Exodus: Introduction and Commentary*, and answer the following questions.

1. How did Moses' experience in 2:11-14 explain his hesitancy and objections in 3:11-15?
2. What is the theological problem connected with the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, and what do you think is the solution?
3. Why was it important for Israel to leave Egypt for the feast to their God?

Seminar Discussion

1. Were the plagues related to natural phenomena? Were they miracles? Explain.
2. Who was responsible for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart?
3. Was Moses sincere in his objections at the burning bush, or was he just seeking a way to avoid the task? (Support your answer with references to the environmental situation and earlier events in the life of Moses.)
4. Why did God elect a slave-people as His chosen?
5. Why did Moses insist on the Israelites' leaving Egypt to worship?
6. How did God prepare Moses for the task of leading the Israelites from slavery? What did Moses need to learn?