

Conversations

Bible Study Resource

EXODUS

God rescues his people

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THE INTRO

The Book of Exodus tells how God rescues his people Israel from slavery in Egypt. At the end of the book of Genesis, Jacob's family had come to Egypt at the invitation of Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, who had risen to prominence in Egypt. At the beginning of Exodus, we discover that the descendants of the family of Jacob have become a nation. But having arrived in Egypt as free people, the opening chapter of Exodus describes how the Israelites are enslaved by the Egyptians.

There is much in this story that resonates with current news headlines. In Exodus we find people enslaved, we read of genocide and ethnic cleansing, and towards the end of our studies Israel is a multitude of people fleeing oppression and making a dangerous journey through the sea on their way to a new, promised land. In Exodus we read more about the God introduced in the book of Genesis, the God who creates and sustains life, and who makes humanity in his own image. We learn how this God is concerned about the suffering of his people, and how he comes to rescue them from their oppressive circumstances, circumstances in which the blessing of life is being threatened. As we read and study this incredible story may we come to know more of this amazing God and the life and salvation he offers.

THE METHOD

Conversations is a method of Bible study developed by the Scottish Bible Society and the Contextual Bible Study Group. Conversations seeks to encourage people to actively engage with the Bible and apply it to life. The questions are designed to stimulate conversation within groups where people may have varying backgrounds and knowledge of the Bible. You will notice a similar pattern of questions used throughout the studies. All of the questions are 'open' questions which don't presume an answer but instead invite people to reflect personally on the text. The first question is always, "*What jumps off the page at you?*" an opportunity for people to begin to share their thoughts on a passage. Then there are 'listing' questions that encourage a closer reading of the text, 'theological' questions that seek to understand the meaning, and finally 'contextual' questions that begin to apply the text to life.

We hope you find this a refreshing and stimulating way to study the Bible. More Bible study resources that utilise the Conversations method can be found on the Scottish Bible Society website: www.scottishbiblesociety.org

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EXODUS 1:6-22

⁶ Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, ⁷ but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.

⁸ Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. ⁹ ‘Look,’ he said to his people, ‘the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. ¹⁰ Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.’

¹¹ So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹² But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites ¹³ and worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁴ They made their lives bitter with harsh labour in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labour, the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

¹⁵ The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, ¹⁶ ‘When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.’

¹⁷ The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live. ¹⁸ Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, ‘Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?’

¹⁹ The midwives answered Pharaoh, ‘Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive.’

²⁰ So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous. ²¹ And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

²² Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: ‘Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.’

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BACKGROUND

How did Israel end up in Egypt?

- Jacob a.k.a. “Israel” (son of Isaac, grandson of Abraham) had twelve sons, whose descendants become the “Israelites”.
- Jacob’s son Joseph, sold by his brothers into slavery, ends up as a slave in prison in Egypt.
- Through God’s amazing plans, Joseph is released from slavery and prison to become second in command to Pharaoh (king of Egypt) during a famine; Joseph’s brothers come to Egypt to get food during the famine, are reconciled to Joseph, and Jacob and his sons come to live in Egypt. Joseph’s leadership saves Egypt — and Jacob’s family — from starvation.

QUESTIONS

- 1** What jumps off the page at you?
- 2** List the words in the passage that speak of Israel’s life being blessed, and those that speak of Israel’s life being oppressed.
- 3** God’s great promise to Abraham in **Genesis 12:2-3** was this:

*“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.*

*I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”*

As Abraham obeys God and arrives in Canaan, God appears to Abraham and promises,
“To your offspring I will give this land.”

Genesis 12:7

What parts of these promises have been or are being fulfilled in the passage? What parts of these promises are under threat in the passage?

- 4** Things don’t look too good for Israel. How do we react when life does not look good, when God’s promises seem under threat in our lives?
- 5** What options do you think Israel had to escape the oppression they were under?
- 6** How will this passage change the way we face circumstances where life is oppressive?

Closing Prayer

Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

Psalm 4:1

EXODUS 2:1-10

¹ Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, ² and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. ³ But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. ⁴ His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him.

⁵ Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river-bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. ⁶ She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. 'This is one of the Hebrew babies,' she said.

⁷ Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?'

⁸ 'Yes, go,' she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. ⁹ Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.' So the woman took the baby and nursed him. ¹⁰ When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, 'I drew him out of the water.'

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QUESTIONS

- 1 What jumps off the page at you?
- 2 List the people in the story, what they did to preserve Moses' life and what they risked in doing so.
- 3 This story deliberately picks up on stories from Israel's past (Genesis) and future (Exodus). What links can you find between the following stories (**pick one**):
 - a. Moses being placed in a basket (the same word is used in Genesis to describe the "Ark") and the story of Noah; *or*
 - b. The actions of Pharaoh's daughter in saving Moses, and the story of God saving Israel in the Exodus.
- 4 At the beginning of Exodus it is women who defy and subvert the murderous purposes of Pharaoh and instead serve the life-giving purposes of God. How have women in your life been both a source and example of God's gift of life?
- 5 How will this passage enable us to be a source of life to others?

EXODUS 2:11-25

¹¹ One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labour. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. ¹² Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³ The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, ‘Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?’

¹⁴ The man said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?’ Then Moses was afraid and thought, ‘What I did must have become known.’

¹⁵ When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well. ¹⁶ Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father’s flock. ¹⁷ Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock.

¹⁸ When the girls returned to Reuel their father, he asked them, ‘Why have you returned so early today?’

¹⁹ They answered, ‘An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock.’

²⁰ ‘And where is he?’ Reuel asked his daughters. ‘Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat.’

²¹ Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. ²² Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, ‘I have become a foreigner in a foreign land.’

²³ During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. ²⁴ God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. ²⁵ So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

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QUESTIONS

- 1 What jumps off the page at you?
- 2 List the phrases in the story that show Moses identified with and was concerned for the Israelites.
- 3 What do the actions of Moses in Egypt and Midian reveal about Moses and how God will use Moses in the future, and what parallels can you see between how Moses acts here and how God will act towards Israel?
- 4 In what ways does Moses' life to this point reflect Israel's experience? What difficulties did Moses / Israel face, and what evidence is there that God's life-giving purposes and blessing continued in Moses' / Israel's lives, despite the circumstances?
- 5 Moses' father in law is a priest, whose name (Reuel, also known as Jethro) means "friend of God", and who offers hospitality (and more!) to Moses the refugee. Think about times in life when you have experienced disorienting circumstances. What evidence was there that God was present and working out his purposes, despite the circumstances?
- 6 How will this passage change the way we face disorienting circumstances?

EXODUS 3:1-22

¹ Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, 'I will go over and see this strange sight – why the bush does not burn up.'

⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, 'Moses! Moses!' And Moses said, 'Here I am.'

⁵ 'Do not come any closer,' God said. 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.'⁶ Then he said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ The LORD said, 'I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.'⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey – the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.'

¹¹ But Moses said to God, 'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'

¹² And God said, 'I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.'

¹³ Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" Then what shall I tell them?'

¹⁴ God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you."'

¹⁵ God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, "The LORD, the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob – has sent me to you." "This is my name for ever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.'

¹⁶ ‘Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, “The LORD, the God of your fathers – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt.¹⁷ And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites – a land flowing with milk and honey.”

¹⁸ ‘The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, “The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God.”¹⁹ But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him.²⁰ So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go.

²¹ ‘And I will make the Egyptians favourably disposed towards this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed.²² Every woman is to ask her neighbour and any woman living in her house for articles of silver and gold and for clothing, which you will put on your sons and daughters. And so you will plunder the Egyptians.’

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QUESTIONS

- 1 What jumps off the page at you?
- 2 List the words the passage uses to describe God’s activity.
- 3 When our experience of life is oppressive, how much do we value God’s activity of hearing our prayers, seeing our suffering, and being concerned? Do these things mean as much to us as God stepping in to save us?
- 4 God’s great promise to Abraham in **Genesis 12:2-3** was this: *“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”* As Abraham obeys God and arrives in Canaan, God appears to Abraham and promises, *“To your offspring I will give this land”* (**Genesis 12:7**). What evidence of these promises being fulfilled can be found in the passage?
- 5 What part do God’s promises play in sustaining our faith and hope when life is oppressive? How easy is it believe in God’s promises in difficult times and how does this affect hope?
- 6 How will this passage change the way we face circumstances where life is oppressive?

EXODUS 5:1-21

¹ Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: “Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.”

² Pharaoh said, ‘Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.’

³ Then they said, ‘The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword.’

⁴ But the king of Egypt said, ‘Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labour? Get back to your work!’ ⁵ Then Pharaoh said, ‘Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working.’

⁶ That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: ⁷ ‘You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. ⁸ But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don’t reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, “Let us go and sacrifice to our God.”’ ⁹ Make the work harder for the people so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies.’

¹⁰ Then the slave drivers and the overseers went out and said to the people, ‘This is what Pharaoh says: “I will not give you any more straw. ¹¹ Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all.”’ ¹² So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw. ¹³ The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, ‘Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw.’ ¹⁴ And Pharaoh’s slave drivers beat the Israelite overseers they had appointed, demanding, ‘Why haven’t you met your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?’

¹⁵ Then the Israelite overseers went and appealed to Pharaoh: ‘Why have you treated your servants this way? ¹⁶ Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, “Make bricks!” Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people.’

¹⁷ Pharaoh said, ‘Lazy, that’s what you are – lazy! That is why you keep saying, “Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.”’ ¹⁸ Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks.’

¹⁹ The Israelite overseers realised they were in trouble when they were told, ‘You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day.’²⁰ When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them,²¹ and they said, ‘May the LORD look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.’

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QUESTIONS

- 1 What jumps off the page at you?
- 2 List the things that Pharaoh says and does that show Pharaoh’s opposition to God.
- 3 In v2, Pharaoh twice states his reason for refusing to let Israel go: He does not know the LORD and so will not obey him. Is it possible to know God and not obey him? Is it possible not to know God and still obey him?
- 4 What do the conversation between the Israelite overseers and Pharaoh, and the conversation between the overseers and Moses and Aaron, reveal about what the Israelites want? Are the things the overseers want the things that God wants for them?
- 5 What does this passage teach us about ourselves and our desires, and God and his desires, in the midst of intensively oppressive circumstances?

EXODUS 8:16 - 9:7

¹⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the ground,’ and throughout the land of Egypt the dust will become gnats.”¹⁷ They did this, and when Aaron stretched out his hand with the staff and struck the dust of the ground, gnats came on people and animals. All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats.¹⁸ But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not.

Since the gnats were on people and animals everywhere,¹⁹ the magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said.

²⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh as he goes to the river and say to him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me.’²¹ If you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you and your officials, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies; even the ground will be covered with them.

²² “But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land.”²³ I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This sign will occur tomorrow.”

²⁴ And the LORD did this. Dense swarms of flies poured into Pharaoh’s palace and into the houses of his officials; throughout Egypt the land was ruined by the flies.

²⁵ Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land.”

²⁶ But Moses said, “That would not be right. The sacrifices we offer the LORD our God would be detestable to the Egyptians. And if we offer sacrifices that are detestable in their eyes, will they not stone us?”²⁷ We must take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, as he commands us.”

²⁸ Pharaoh said, “I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the LORD your God in the wilderness, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me.”

²⁹ Moses answered, “As soon as I leave you, I will pray to the LORD, and tomorrow the flies will leave Pharaoh and his officials and his people. Only let Pharaoh be sure that he does not act deceitfully again by not letting the people go to offer sacrifices to the LORD.”

³⁰ Then Moses left Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD,³¹ and the LORD did what Moses asked. The flies left Pharaoh and his officials and his people; not a fly remained.

³² But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.

Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go to Pharaoh and say to him, “This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may worship me.’² If you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them back,³ the hand of the LORD will bring a terrible plague on your livestock in the field – on your horses, donkeys and camels and on your cattle, sheep and goats.⁴ But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die.”

⁵ The LORD set a time and said, “Tomorrow the LORD will do this in the land.”⁶ And the next day the LORD did it: all the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died.⁷ Pharaoh investigated and found that not even one of the animals of the Israelites had died. Yet his heart was unyielding and he would not let the people go.

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BACKGROUND

- In the Ancient Near East people believed that different parts of creation were controlled by different gods.
- The ten plagues (blood, frogs, gnats, flies, livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, firstborn) demonstrate that God, not Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt, is in control of creation. The plagues become increasingly severe, as creation is “unmade”, with the final plagues being the removal of light and life.
- The contest between God and Pharaoh is about who Israel should worship (the word can also be translated as “serve”): God or Pharaoh.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What jumps off the page at you?
- 2 List the things and places that are affected by the plagues.
- 3 What does God’s repeated word to Pharaoh, “*Let my people go, so that they may worship [serve] me*” (8:20; 9:1) tell us about God / Israel and Pharaoh / Egypt?
- 4 In what ways do you think the plagues act as signs (8:23) for Pharaoh? What do you think these signs mean, and who – apart from Pharaoh – is supposed to see and understand these signs?
- 5 List Pharaoh’s response to the plagues in this passage.
- 6 What is at risk when we ignore what God is saying and doing in our lives?
- 7 How will this passage change the way we face circumstances where life is oppressive?

EXODUS 11:1-10

¹ Now the LORD said to Moses, ‘I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely. ² Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbours for articles of silver and gold.’ ³ (The LORD made the Egyptians favourably disposed towards the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh’s officials and by the people.)

⁴ So Moses said, ‘This is what the LORD says: “About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. ⁵ Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. ⁶ There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt – worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. ⁷ But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal.” Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. ⁸ All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, “Go, you and all the people who follow you!” After that I will leave.’ Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.

⁹ The LORD had said to Moses, ‘Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you – so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt.’ ¹⁰ Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.

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QUESTIONS

- 1** What jumps off the page at you?
- 2** List the people in the passage and what the passage tells us about them.
- 3** In v2-3 we read about the fulfilment of God’s promise to Moses back in **Exodus 3:21**:

“And I will make the Egyptians favourably disposed towards this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed.”

If you were an Egyptian who had lived through the plagues, what do you think you would have thought about Moses and the Israelites?

- 4** List the things that the LORD does in the passage. What do these things tell us about God?
- 5** How will this passage change the way we face circumstances where life is oppressive?

EXODUS 12:1-13, 21-30

¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ² “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. ⁴ If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbour, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. ⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. ⁶ Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ⁷ Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door-frames of the houses where they eat the lambs. ⁸ That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. ⁹ Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire – with the head, legs and internal organs. ¹⁰ Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. ¹¹ This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD’s Passover.

¹² “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

²¹ Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, ‘Go at once and select the animals for your families and slaughter the Passover lamb. ²² Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the door-frame. None of you shall go out of the door of your house until morning. ²³ When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the door-frame and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.

²⁴ ‘Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. ²⁵ When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. ²⁶ And when your children ask you, “What does this ceremony mean to you?” ²⁷ then tell them, “It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.”” Then the people bowed down and worshipped. ²⁸ The Israelites did just what the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron.

²⁹ At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. ³⁰ Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

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QUESTIONS

- 1** What jumps off the page at you?
- 2** List all the preparations for the Passover.
- 3** Why do you think God instructed the Israelites to mark their door frames with blood, and to do that each year?
- 4** What do you make of the instructions to burn what was not eaten, to have cloaks tucked into belts, sandals on feet, and staff in hand, and to eat in a hurry?
- 5** What traditions do we have – as a community of faith and as a nation – that enable us to remember the past?
- 6** How does this passage help us to live with hope and expectation in circumstances where life is oppressive?

EXODUS 12:31-42

³¹ During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, ‘Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested.

³² Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.’

³³ The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. ‘For otherwise,’ they said, ‘we will all die!’ ³⁴ So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. ³⁵ The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. ³⁶ The LORD had made the Egyptians favourably disposed towards the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.

³⁷ The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Sukkoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. ³⁸ Many other people went up with them, and also large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds. ³⁹ With the dough the Israelites had brought from Egypt, they baked loaves of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves.

⁴⁰ Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. ⁴¹ At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD’s divisions left Egypt. ⁴² Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honour the LORD for the generations to come.

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QUESTIONS

- 1 What jumps off the page at you?
- 2 List all the people and things God brought out of Egypt with the Israelites.
- 3 What do you make of what Pharaoh and the Egyptians say when asking the Israelites to leave?
- 4 Imagine you are among the Israelites who have been brought out of Egypt, freed from slavery and now laden with the riches of Egypt, sitting down to bake and eat bread, the first meal the Israelites have eaten as free people for 430 years. How do you feel and what do you think of the God who has brought you out?
- 5 How will this passage change the way you face oppressive circumstances that seem like they will never end?

EXODUS 14:5-31

⁵ When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, ‘What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!’⁶ So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. ⁷ He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. ⁸ The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. ⁹ The Egyptians – all Pharaoh’s horses and chariots, horsemen and troops – pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon.

¹⁰ As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. ¹¹ They said to Moses, ‘Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?’ ¹² Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, “Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians”? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!’

¹³ Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. ¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.’

¹⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. ¹⁶ Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷ I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. ¹⁸ The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen.’

¹⁹ Then the angel of God, who had been travelling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, ²⁰ coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other; so neither went near the other all night long.

²¹ Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, ²² and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

²³ The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. ²⁴ During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. ²⁵ He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, 'Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt.'

²⁶ Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.'²⁷ Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing towards it, and the LORD swept them into the sea.²⁸ The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen – the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

²⁹ But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. ³⁰ That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. ³¹ And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

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QUESTIONS

- 1 What jumps off the page at you?
- 2 List the people in the passage and how their circumstances change through the story.
- 3 Imagine you are among the Israelites. You thought you had escaped from slavery but now Pharaoh and his army are bearing down on you, and you are hemmed in on the other side by the sea. What do you feel and would you believe what Moses said, "*Don't be afraid, stand firm, God will deliver you*" (Exodus 14:13)?
- 4 How does God reveal in this passage that he, and not Pharaoh, is LORD?
- 5 How will this passage help you trust and believe in God when facing seemingly overwhelming circumstances?

EXODUS 16:1-30

¹ The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. ² In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. ³ The Israelites said to them, ‘If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat round pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.’

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. ⁵ On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.’

⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, ‘In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, ⁷ and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?’ ⁸ Moses also said, ‘You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD.’

⁹ Then Moses told Aaron, ‘Say to the entire Israelite community, “Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.”’

¹⁰ While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked towards the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.

¹¹ The LORD said to Moses, ¹² ‘I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, “At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.”’

¹³ That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. ¹⁴ When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. ¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was.

Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is what the LORD has commanded: “Everyone is to gather as much as they need. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.”’

¹⁷ The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little.

¹⁸ And when they measured it by the omer, the one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little. Everyone had gathered just as much as they needed.

¹⁹ Then Moses said to them, ‘No one is to keep any of it until morning.’

²⁰ However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

²¹ Each morning everyone gathered as much as they needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. ²² On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much – two omers for each person – and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses.

²³ He said to them, ‘This is what the LORD commanded: “Tomorrow is to be a day of sabbath rest, a holy sabbath to the LORD. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.”’

²⁴ So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. ²⁵ ‘Eat it today,’ Moses said, ‘because today is a sabbath to the LORD. You will not find any of it on the ground today. ²⁶ Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.’

²⁷ Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. ²⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? ²⁹ Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out.’ ³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day.

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QUESTIONS

- 1** What jumps off the page at you?
- 2** List the complaints of the Israelites and God’s answers. List God’s commands, and the response of the Israelites.
- 3** What was it that God wanted the Israelites to know about him, what did God want to know about the Israelites, and why do you think this was important?
- 4** Imagine you are an Israelite, born into slavery in Egypt. What does the Sabbath mean to you and what does it reveal to you about God?
- 5** How will this passage change the way you deal with circumstances where you find yourself in need?

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

MATTHEW 18:20 (KJV)



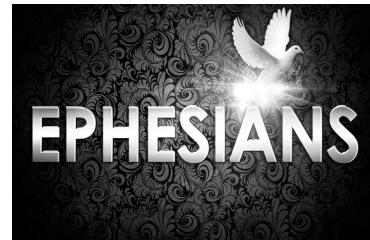
7 PSALMS
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Psalms are the outpouring of praise and worship but also include pain, suffering and often cries to God for release. Just pick one of these Psalms that will suit your group and the circumstances you find yourself or your group in.



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