

Preceding Text

(Where are we? Chapters 1-15 **Redemption - Prelude**)

In the previous chapter, Moses stands before Pharaoh for the first time to say that the LORD (YHWH) says to Pharaoh, “Let my people go that they may celebrate a festival for Me in the wilderness.” Pharaoh asks, “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.” Exod 5:2 We almost hear the heavenly realm gasp! What? You do not know the LORD?

Now to be fair to Pharaoh, in the ancient Near East, people had many gods, and the gods are connected to specific pieces of land or a specific element of nature. Egypt had many gods including Pharaoh, and here Pharaoh is saying “I know of many gods, but I don’t know yours. Why would I obey a god I do not know?”

This chapter sets up the conflict between Pharaoh and God. Pharaoh will continue to harden his heart to not bow before God or obey his decrees. It ends with the people and Moses demoralized. Israel’s situation deteriorates following Moses petition to Pharaoh in God’s name (YHWH)

Current Text: Themes and Background

Read 6:2–8 as one unit. Do you see the seven verbs all written in first person? This reads as an emphatic reaffirmation of redemption. Also note that this group of verses bookend with “I am YHWH.”

God told Moses to cast a vision for the Israelites 6:6–9 – “It’s an extraordinary vision, a picture of a future beyond the present pain.”¹ And a hopeful vision dares to defy the voices of despair, for it promises dignity and flourishing and rooted in a good place.

Egypt was a place of provision originally – Israel was fruitful and multiplied. This was a place to pause and find shelter not to stay forever. They need to move and get back to the place of inheritance – the promise to Abraham. The danger is that the longer Israel is in Egypt, the more they forget who they are. They begin to shape their story around Egypt instead of who they are as God’s people.

God promises to take them as his people – and he will be their God. Exod 6:7 WOW. There is intimacy there. A God choosing them even when they don’t have a land to call their own. In fact, they have little to offer, yet God says he will take them to be his family – even more, his first son. He moves towards them even while are still enslaved.

Love will define God’s relationship with his people.

¹ Chuck DeGroat, *Leaving Egypt: Finding God in the Wilderness Places*, p. 52.

Engage the Text: Discussion Questions

1. What did you hear as the main point of the sermon? Or what was your primary takeaway?
2. What is the effect of God's speech that reaffirms his redemptive plan for Israel to be bookended with the statement, "I am the LORD"?
3. While we can think of Egypt as a metaphor and thus, we all have "an Egypt" in life that is a place of entrapment. We can also think of Egypt as rooted in its time and place. It was a superpower that controlled most of the trade routes all the way to Mesopotamia. If we think of Egypt in this way, we realize that we in North America are closer to Egypt than we are to Israel in this story. Does this change the way to read? Are there cautionary words we can take from these narratives, so we make sure not to create priorities that look like Egypt?
4. How do you feel called to hope beyond our present struggles? What are challenges to do so, and what helps you do so?
5. Do you have anyone in your life who plays the role of Moses? One who can cast a vision of a future beyond the present pain? OR do you desire to be a Moses to someone else? What must happen for you to get there?
6. What is the text telling us about God's character, God's revelation, and God's mission in the world?

Read for Next Week: Exodus 7