

## EXODUS 1–6

### Introduction

This portion of the *Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament* study covers Exodus chapters 1–6.

[You can find the LDS outline of study and resources here.](#)

### LDS Study Focus

The LDS study guide focuses on the theme: “I Have Remembered My Covenant.”

*The invitation to live in Egypt literally saved Jacob’s family. But after hundreds of years, their descendants were enslaved and terrorized by a new pharaoh “who knew not Joseph” ([Exodus 1:8](#)). It would have been natural for the Israelites to wonder why God allowed this to happen to them, His covenant people. Did He remember the covenant He had made with them? Were they still His people? Could He see how much they were suffering?*

*There may be times when you’ve felt like asking similar questions. You might wonder, Does God know what I’m going through? Can He hear my pleas for help? The story in Exodus of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt answers such questions clearly: God does not forget His people. He remembers His covenants with us and will fulfill them in His own time and way (see [Doctrine and Covenants 88:68](#)). “I will redeem you with a stretched out arm,” He declares. “I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under [your] burdens” ([Exodus 6:6–7](#)).*

**NOTE:** The LDS outline includes some appropriate sin/captivity and Moses/Christ connections. Many of the previous sections focused more on what man does for God in making and keeping covenants. However, there is a fitting focus in this section on what God does in remembering *his* covenant to his people Israel.

### Biblical Focus

As Exodus opens, the dismal fate of the children of Israel in Egypt is revealed. Why had God allowed his children to suffer in such a way for so long?

The book of Exodus becomes a backdrop for the rest of Scripture. The prophets and psalms repeatedly refer to Exodus, and there are over 200 references to the Exodus in the New Testament. This book continues and enhances the biblical themes of exile, slavery, rescue, and restoration.

## ***EXODUS 1***

### ***Infanticide and Hope***

Israel, a nation of millions, was enslaved, and their hope was in a God who had been silent for 400 years. Back in [Genesis 15:13–14](#), God had prophesied to Abram that the slavery of his descendants would come to an end. Four centuries of God’s silence and a powerful slave master had drained Israel’s hope. Would God yet keep his promise? How could he rescue them from the most powerful man in the world?

The oppression of the Israelites climaxed as babies were torn from their mother’s arms and tossed into the Nile. It is horrific even to imagine what God’s people endured in Egypt. However, keep this massacre tucked away in the back of your mind. This portion of Exodus sets the stage for what will happen during the last plague in [Exodus 12](#). It also becomes part of the backdrop of the birth of Christ when Herod murdered the baby boys in Bethlehem.

The birth of Moses brought about a flicker of hope. In the KJV, Moses is called a “goodly” child. The word in Hebrew is “*tov*,” which is the same word that God used to describe his creation, “and it was very good.” This word gives the reader a clue that God’s creative work was about to take place again.

The Hebrew word used for Moses’ basket is the same word for Noah’s ark! So, as you reflect on this story, take a moment to think about all the parallels between Noah’s ark and Moses’ basket and all that these boats meant for God’s people.

Hope ignited, and ironies abounded when Pharaoh’s daughter rescued baby Moses from the Nile. The whole situation completely undermined Pharaoh as the women thwarted his plans. But, instead of being killed, he is saved, adopted to a high position, and placed back in the arms of his mother, who was paid to nurse him!

Moses’ prophetic name, given to him by Pharaoh’s daughter, means “to draw out.” He would be the one who would “draw out” God’s people from slavery in Egypt.

#### **Conversation Starters:**

- **How did God set the stage to begin his plan of setting Israel free? Why do you think he waited so long and let the suffering become so terrible?**
- **What do the floodwaters and the Nile River have in common? What did the ark and the basket have in common?**
- **Jesus (John 8:34) and Paul (Romans 6:16) compare the condition of those who sin to those being in a state of slavery. So how does the condition of the Israelites shed light on what it means to be a slave to sin?**
- **What do we learn about humanity from this chapter? What do we learn about God?**

**Sharing Personally:**

*In Exodus 1, when I read about the terrible conditions the enslaved Israelites endured in Egypt, it reminds me how, by nature, all humans are born as slaves to sin, death, and Satan. Although the people were great in number, they were powerless to overthrow their oppressive slave masters. They needed a savior, and God sent them Moses to free them and lead them to the Promised Land.*

*Likewise, although we humans are great in numbers, we cannot assemble or arrive at a point where we can defeat the oppression of sin, death, and Satan either. Therefore, we needed an ultimate out of this world Savior, and God sent a true and better Moses, Jesus, to free us from our bondage and bring us to the Promised Land of Heaven.*

*I know that as I continue to read Exodus and see how God rescues his people and destroys their oppressors, I will be reminded again of how God has saved and redeemed me.*

## ***EXODUS 2***

Moses had grown up in the palace of Pharaoh with all the education and benefits Egypt had to offer. As a result, he was influential in speech and action ([Acts 7:22](#)). However, his path to leadership didn't take him to the throne of Egypt, leading millions; instead, he found himself watching sheep.

By faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt because he was looking ahead to his reward. By faith, he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. ([Hebrews 11:24–27](#))

Acts and Hebrews give us more insight into Moses' faith than Exodus alone does. When we read these texts side by side with Exodus, we meet a man who was at the same time both a sinner and a saint. Moses certainly believed in God and believed that God's people should be rescued. He also saw how remarkable his own life was and (accurately yet prematurely) assumed that he would be the one to save God's people.

Out of zeal and passion for saving his people, Moses murdered an Egyptian. However, the text alludes to Moses feeling conflicted about his actions as "he looked this way and that" and hid the body.

Can you imagine the devastation and despair Moses felt when his fellow Israelites rejected him as their leader? It seems that they disdained him and in no way viewed him as a beacon of hope. As a result, Moses left Egypt stripped of his identity, homeless, and without a family. He no longer had any rights as an adopted Egyptian, and the Israelites thought he was a joke.

Moses fled to the land of Midian, married, had children, and became a shepherd. Today, we have the advantage of looking back on this portion of Moses' life to see how God was preparing him to be a leader. Moses learned humility and patience as a shepherd, and he also became familiar with the land in which the Israelites would wander for 40 years.

The [Come Follow Me](#) commentary for this section brings up several important themes that could be used for valuable discussion. In addition to talking about the similarities, be sure to focus on the differences.

One of the central themes in the book of Exodus is that God has the power to free His people from oppression. The enslavement of the Israelites as described in [Exodus 1](#) could be seen as a symbol of the captivity we all face because of sin and death (see [2 Nephi 2:26–27](#); [9:10](#); [Alma 36:28](#)). And Moses, the Israelites' deliverer, can be seen as a type, or representation, of Jesus Christ (see [Deuteronomy 18:18–19](#); [1 Nephi 22:20–21](#)). Read [Exodus 1–2](#) with these comparisons in mind. You might notice, for example, that both Moses and Jesus were preserved from death as small children (see [Exodus 1:22–2:10](#); [Matthew 2:13–16](#)) and that both spent time in the wilderness before beginning their ministry (see [Exodus 2:15–22](#); [Matthew 4:1–2](#)). What other insights do you learn from Exodus about spiritual captivity? about the Savior's deliverance?

Those last two questions would be worth discussing along with the following.

**Conversation starters:**

- Was it a sin when Moses killed the Egyptian? What kinds of people does God use to serve him? Why is this important to note?
- Read [Hebrews 11:24–26](#). What gave Moses courage? What do these verses show us about faith in action? Where does the reward come into play?
- In what are you tempted to find your identity? What does it mean to find your identity in Christ?
- What was God doing when he brought Moses to the point of feeling like a stranger and an exile from the exiles (Exodus 2:22)?

**Sharing Personally:**

*When I read about the early years of Moses in Exodus 2, I see a lot of myself. I have delusions of grandeur about how God can use me to do his work and his will. Now, it's not a bad thing to want to do the work and the will of God. However, there are times when I get confused about what that work is and how his will is carried out, and therefore have decided to take matters into my own hands. I have forgotten who the Savior is and that it is not me. Thankfully, like Moses, I have a God who forgives me and rescues me from my self-salvation projects as he draws me to himself.*

## ***EXODUS 3-4***

### ***God calls Moses and almost kills him***

At the end of Exodus 2, God remembered his covenant with the patriarchs. Whenever God “remembers” someone, it is not because he has forgotten. On the contrary, “remembrance” indicates he is about to act. The Hebrew description of his *concern* for Israel implies a deep intimacy between God and his people. Our God is a personal God who suffers with us.

Now that Moses was 80 and was a nobody in a foreign land, God saw fit to call him. Hidden within the bush was the Angel of the LORD. The text indicates that this was God himself speaking with Moses. There is a lot to unpack concerning the identity of the God named “I AM WHO I AM.” From this phrase, we get the name “Yahweh” for God.

The letters of the Hebrew stem for “I AM” are the same letters used in the Hebrew word that is translated as “LORD.” This word occurred already in Genesis 2:4. God used this name when he revealed himself to Abraham. This “LORD” was the God of the covenant, the God of free and faithful grace. The Hebrew word for this name, “LORD,” is pronounced *Yahweh*.

“I AM WHO I AM” was thus God’s way of telling Moses and the Israelites that he was the same covenant-God who in grace and mercy had called them to be his people, the God who would surely now keep all these promises made to them.

This name God gives himself was simple and straightforward. He is the God who exists. He is. This God is, above all, timeless, constant, and unchangeable.

As the reality of what God was calling Moses to do, sank in, he came up with a list of objections. “Who am I?” “Who are you?” “What if Israel doesn’t believe me?” “I’m not eloquent.” Like a patient Father, God gave Moses all the answers and tools that he would need.

Moses was still not convinced and pleaded with God to send someone else. This 80-year-old man was well acquainted with his weaknesses and struggled to believe that God could accomplish the impossible through him. However, God would not let him off the hook.

This feeble version of Moses, who is terrified to answer God’s call, is relatable to us who are called to serve in far more straightforward ways. Satan taunts us with our inadequacies. Ultimately, Moses’ credentials didn’t matter, and neither did ours. The only thing that matters is who is with us. Take courage in this as you witness to your LDS friends, family, and missionaries.

After all the back and forth between God and Moses, God threatened to kill Moses because his son was not circumcised. Moses’ wife, Zipporah, circumcised their son and touched Moses’ feet with the bloody foreskin. These verses are full of symbolism. The touch of blood from his firstborn son saved Moses. The same Hebrew verb is used later to describe “the touch of blood” from the Passover lamb on the doorframe.

### Conversation Starters:

- How does God show that he is the God of the past, present, and future?
- How does God show that he is a personal God?
- How does God show that he is a patient God?
- What does God's name for himself imply about other gods?

### Sharing Personally:

*I love how God connects what he tells us about himself in Exodus 3:14 with what Jesus says about himself in John 8:28. The interconnected nature of the Bible is so compelling.*

*"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus 3:14).*

*"So Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am...'" (John 8:28).*

*In Greek, Jesus' words in John 8:28 echo the name of God revealed to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:14. Jesus wants us to know that he is GOD alone, which is why he can save us from our sins, make us his children, and bring us to heaven to be with him forever.*

## ***EXODUS 5–6***

As Moses returned to Egypt, God moved from being *just the God of promises* to being the God of action and deliverance, the God of fulfillment.

God's plan to rescue the Israelites was detailed and intentional. He could have carried out his plan in moments without all the fuss if he desired. But, instead, he crafted specific events to display before Moses, the Israelites, the Egyptians, Pharaoh, and the whole world for generations to come that he was indeed the *I AM* God worthy of our faith.

At first, the Israelites believed! But don't get used to it. Moses and Aaron showed the Israelites God's message of deliverance along with the signs and miracles God had enabled them to do. God's people received the message with great joy. However, this was the beginning of Israel's erratic faith relationship with God. Sometimes they believed, but they were a people of doubt, resistance, rebellion, and rejection most of the time, leading us to understand that God is the one who chooses his people. No one chooses God. It is essential to track the Israelites' responses and reactions throughout the book of Exodus as we seek to understand God's character and the condition of the human heart.

For a just little longer, God refrained from revealing his mighty power. Consider Moses' first meeting with Pharaoh from Pharaoh's perspective. Remember that he regarded himself as a deity. Why would another god, who was almighty, ask for permission? The conversation implied that the god of the slave nation was weak. If Israel's God wanted them to worship him, he should act and not check with the other "deities" if it is okay.

Pharaoh's response made sense. He reinforced his oppressive god-like power and ownership of Israel. In doing so, the Israelite God appeared to be pathetic, and Moses and Aaron were nothing but troublemakers for the Israelites.

Moses' prayer was angry, accusatory, confused, and honest. Is any Christian comfortable talking to God like that? In reality, the Bible is full of sincere prayers—just read the book of Psalms. The *I AM* God wants a real, honest, and personal relationship with us. Therefore, we need not hide what our hearts truly feel.

When God responded to Moses, he did not strike him with lightning. Instead, he graciously revealed more details about his rescue plan.

Exodus 6:1–8 is the Gospel of Exodus. God began by stating his name as a king, addressing his subjects, showing power, might, and responsibility for his people. Knowledge of his name also gave the people personal access to him.

Next, he listed seven actions he would take for his people. In the Bible, seven is used as a symbolic number for completeness. Each time, *God* is the subject of the sentence. God is the one who acts and saves.

*"I will, I will, I will, I will, I will, I will, and I will."*

That is our Gospel summary too. Like Israel, we are slaves (to sin) without hope or the ability to help ourselves. God has done all the action to set us free and to bring us to the Promised Land (heaven). Therefore, any message that requires us to *do* something is not the Gospel.



Unsurprisingly, the Israelites did not listen ([Exodus 6:9](#)). They were in such a broken condition that they could not respond to the Gospel message. Yet even though Israel did not believe, God's promises held fast.

#### Conversation Starters:

- Does God's faithfulness to us depend on our faithfulness to him? What is the proper connection between God's loyalty and human trust?
- How would you illustrate Jesus' faith? This chapter is the perfect time to talk about vicarious atonement (Jesus did EVERYTHING perfectly FOR us.)
- Why do you think God set the scene to rescue his people in Egypt like this?
- Read Exodus 6:6-8 together. What are we to make of all the "I" statements? What was God teaching Moses and the Israelites? What is God teaching us?

#### Sharing Personally:

*In Exodus chapter 6, to the hopeless, enslaved, and oppressed Israelites who could do nothing to help themselves, God revealed that he was the God of action. In God's salvation plan, every step started with "I will." Seven times God proclaimed what he would do! "I will. I will. I will. I will. I will. I will. I will."*

*When I read those promises from God, I think about all of God's promises to believers today. I marvel at all the "I wills" that God has spoken for our lives right now.*

*God says, "I will be with you. I will provide for you. I will sustain you. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. I will love you. I will give you everything you need according to the glorious riches that are in Christ Jesus."*

*We can go on and on listing the promises of God because our God is the God of action.*