

# MOSES: The Servant of God

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## CHAPTER TEN

### PREPARING FOR THE EXODUS

**“And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt”** (Exodus 12:41).

WE have seen how, during those months of agony, Moses had been the organ through which God wrought out his purposes; first of informing Pharaoh’s mind, and latterly of breaking his stubborn will. And already we have had indications that through the faith of this man, which was growing exceedingly, blessing would accrue to the chosen people.

The first three plagues fell equally on the children of Israel as on the Egyptians; but when the brothers threatened Pharaoh with the fourth, they were commissioned, in the name of God, to utter this further message: **“I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell”** (Exodus 8:22).

And from that hour the children of Israel were exempted from the terrible inflictions by which Egypt was desolated. Moses claimed that God should do as He had said. And according to his faith it befell. No murrain swept off their beasts. No boils broke out on their persons. No tempest swept their fields. No locusts destroyed their crops. No darkness obscured to them the sun.

Thus, while the minds of their oppressors were engrossed with their own special sufferings, the Hebrews were at peace; and when the Egyptians were prevented by the darkness from moving, the oppressed population of Goshen had ample time to prepare for that Exodus which Moses at least knew was so near.

As we study that strange and marvellous episode, we must never forget the light thrown on it by the memorable verse which tells us that **“by faith Moses kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood; lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them”** (Hebrews 11:28).

The importance of this verse lies in the fact that it attributes the keeping of the Passover, the sprinkling of blood on the lintels of the Hebrew houses, and the immunity of the Hebrew people, to the effect of the heroic faith which burnt so steadily in the soul of this simple-hearted man; the entirety of whose obedience was only equaled by the absoluteness of the unquestioning faith, which dared to take God at his word.

## **I. HIS FAITH WAS BASED ON PROMISE**

All faith must rest there. There must be some distinct word or undertaking on the part of one who is perfectly trustworthy, or there is no ground for faith to build on. Here is the difference between faith and credulity; between faith and following some vain will-o-the-wisp, generated amid the miasma of an unhealthy imagination.

We cannot tell the form in which the Divine Word came to the two brethren. Was it as when a man speaketh to his friend? Should we have heard it, with our uncircumcised ears, had we been in their company? Or was it an impression photographed on the heart of each, upturned towards the source of light? But, howsoever the communication came, in those accents which first declared what Israel was to do, and then, with unhesitating precision, announced the successive acts which would finally smite the fetters from the captives hands, and free the nation in a single night they recognized the voice that had bidden them go to Pharaoh with repeated summonses to surrender.

The directions were substantially these. On the tenth of the following month, the head of each family, whether slave or elder, was to select a firstling lamb, free of disease and defect. Only if the family were too small to need a lamb for itself might it join with some neighboring household. There was no question as to the lamb being too little for the household. JESUS is "enough for all, enough for each, enough for evermore." The lamb was to be kept from the tenth to the fourteenth of the month, and killed on the latter day, towards the close of the afternoon. The blood, as it gushed warm from the wound, was to be carefully caught in a basin, and sprinkled on the two side posts and lintel of the houses where the Israelites dwelt; the carcase roasted whole, and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Special instructions were also given as to the attitude in which that feast was to be eaten. The whole family was to be gathered around the table, from the grey-headed sire to the new-born babe. There was to be no symptom of lassitude or indolence. The men were to have their loins girt as for a long journey, and to grasp their staves. The women were to have their dough and kneading troughs bound up in little bundles, with their clothes, for easy carriage on their shoulders. All were to have their feet sandaled. The meal was to be eaten in haste. And thus, with ears intent to catch the first note of the trumpet, the whole nation was to await the signal for its Exodus, sheltered by blood; whilst strength was stored for the fatigues that must be endured ere the land of bondage was left behind forever.

There was a great contrast, therefore, between the attitude of the Israelites in the destruction of the first-born and in the former plagues. In those they had been perfectly inactive, only reaping the benefits which accrued from the successive victories won through the faith of their great leader. But now they were called upon to appropriate benefits, which might not accrue if they failed to conform to the conditions laid down. And in those demands on their obedience and faith, there surely must have broken, on the minds of the more intelligent at least, the feeling that there was a deeper meaning in the whole transaction than appeared on the surface; and that eternal issues were being wrought out, the meaning of which they could not as yet adequately apprehend.

Moses at least must have felt that God was in effect saying to his people that they were not less guilty, in some respects, than the Egyptians around them. It was not enough for them to allege that they had not gone to the same lengths of stiff-necked rebellion as Pharaoh and his people. Had they not forgotten his Sabbaths, and turned to serve other gods, and mingled in the evil rites of Egyptian idolatry? For these things, at least, they were held guilty in his sight, and liable to lose the first-born of their homes, unless they kept the sprinkling of blood.

And when all the provisions had been thus solemnly recited, there followed the words of promise, on which thenceforward Moses reposed his faith; **“I will pass through the land of Egypt, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; . . . and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt”** (ver. 12, 13).

## II. HIS FAITH LED TO ACTION

He gathered the elders of Israel, and informed them of the instructions he had received; and whether it was that come prognostications of their coming deliverance had entered their souls, or that they had come to believe in their great leader to an extent which had been previously impossible, it is certain that they offered neither opposition nor suggestion to his proposals. They bowed the head and worshipped, and went their way to do **“as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron: so did they”** (ver. 27, 28).

It is a glorious thing for men and angels to see a faith which, with no outward appearance to warrant it, will yet step out on a path of literal obedience, though there seems nothing but thin air to tread upon. It seemed so utterly extraordinary for such a thing to be, as the deliverance of his people, because blood happened to be sprinkled on the outside of their doors. There was no precedent; no apparent reason to justify such a thing to ordinary common-sense; no likelihood of obedience having any connection with deliverance. Many such thoughts may have occurred to him; but he dismissed them from his mind, and simply obeyed, believing that there could be no mistake, no shadow of turning in Him to whom he had given the allegiance of his soul.

Oh that such faith were ours! Not arguing, nor questioning, nor reasoning: but believing that the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ; and that what He says about accepting all who believe in Christ, making us sit together with Him on his throne, and loving us with the love He bears his Son, He is willing and able to perform.

And such faith becomes contagious. How did that memorable tenth night of the month Abib close in upon Egypt? Did not the air seem oppressed with the burden of the coming woe? Did no priestess, intoxicated with Mephitic vapour, utter in piercing shrieks some warning of the terrible visitation at hand?

Did not the wings of the Angel of Death overshadow the doomed land, before he smote with his sword? Surely the fact of the Israelites obtaining so many gifts of jewelry and raiment from the Egyptians indicated that, on both sides, there was an anticipation of their near release. Whilst, however, on the one hand, there must have been grave foreboding and suspense; on the other there were expectancy and hope.

The faith of Moses had kindled faith in three millions of people; who stood ready to plunge the knife into the fleecy victim that awaited it, to sprinkle the blood, to start on the distant march, but with no fear that the first-born of the house should be left a corpse behind. No father eyed his son with anxiety; no mother trembled to hear the rustle of the angel-wing; no boy shuddered at the near approach of death. It was enough that God had said, that, when He saw the blood, He would pass over.

But though they could not see it or understand it, or fathom the purposes of God, they knew the blood was there to speak for them; and they believed, therefore, that all must be well. And though no one knew exactly their destination, nor how they would reach it, they had no misgiving as to the issue.

### III. HIS FAITH WAS VINDICATED

Who can depict that night, ever memorable in the history of our race when, indeed, as Bunsen says, history itself was born the night when God brought Israel out of the house of bondage!

It was the early spring, and a time of the full silver moon, which shed her soft light in cascades of beauty on the land that lay beneath her; from where, on the Western frontier, the Nile rolled its majestic volumes, to the waters of the Red Sea on the far Eastern border.

All was still with an almost preternatural silence; “broken only by the hoot of the owl, the scream of the bittern, the plunge of the monster in the water, or the cry of the jackal on the plains.”

But suddenly the stillness was interrupted by a scream of anguish, as a mother rushed out into the night to tell that the Angel of Death had begun his work, and she was presently answered by the wail of a mother in agony for her first-born; and this by another, and yet another.

It was useless to summon priest or physician, magician or courtier; how could they help others who had not been able to ward off death from their own? The maid grinding at the mill and her lady sleeping under curtains of silk were involved in a common sorrow, which obliterated all social distinctions, and made all one. There was not a house where there was not one dead even Pharaoh’s palace was not exempt. The news spread like wildfire that the heir to the throne was dead. **“And there was a great cry in Egypt.”**

Ah, Egypt! bitter as that night was, it did not counterbalance the wrongs that Israel had suffered at thy hands for centuries! Thy tears were as a rill, compared to the rivers of sorrow which had been extorted from that high-spirited people, who were compelled to turn the soil to brick, with no reward but the taskmaster’s scourge! Thy loss in sweet and noble life was insignificant, compared with the thousands flung into the Nile, or done to death in the cruel brick-kilns! Thy cry, piercing and heart rending though it were, a whisper, compared with the sobs wrung from mothers as their babes were torn from their breasts, the groans of the oppressed as they saw their dear ones failing under a bondage they could not alleviate, or with the cries of the men driven to despair.

**“Then Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people.”**

There was no attempt at parley. They, their people, their children, and their property, were to be gone. And the bidding of the palace was repeated by ten thousand tongues. The one eager desire of the Egyptians was to get rid of them at all speed, and at all cost. They were glad to give them anything they asked, and thus bestowed some payment for their long unremunerated labour; and even Pharaoh, the haughty monarch, entreated that they would bless him ere they went.

And so the host stepped forth into freedom.

For the first time the Israelites realized that they were a nation, and drank the earliest rich deep draught of liberty. A mere horde of slaves, they suddenly crystallized into a people. The spirit of their leader inspired and thrilled them.

There was a fire in their eye, an elasticity in their step, a courage in their heart, which told their own story. Then was their mouth filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing. God hath made bare his holy arm in their deliverance. And sentiments began to assert themselves which were destined ere long to roll in thunderous acclaim along the shores of the Red Sea.

What faith did for them it will do for thee and me, O soul enslaved by a worse tyranny than Pharaoh's. If only thou wouldst claim deliverance thou shouldst have it.

Listen to the song which heralded the work of Christ: **“that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all our days”** (Luke 1:74, 75).

This is for us. We, too, may overcome by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our testimony. By faith we, too, may obtain promises and stop the mouths of lions, and quench the violence of fire. Only claim thy freedom, and thou shalt tread on the lion and adder; the young lion and dragon shalt thou trample under foot.

**~ end of chapter 10 ~**

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