

# CHAPTER 11

## INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS 11

Moses having an intimation from the Lord that one plague more would be brought on Pharaoh, and then he would let Israel go, when they should borrow of their neighbours jewels of gold and silver, the people being in great favour with the Egyptians, (<sup><02100></sup>Exodus 11:1-3), he declares to Pharaoh, before he went out of his presence, the slaying of all the firstborn in Egypt, which would issue in the dismissal of Israel, and then he went out from him in great anger, (<sup><02104></sup>Exodus 11:4-8), but still Pharaoh would not hearken, and his heart was hardened, and he refused again to let Israel go, (<sup><02109></sup>Exodus 10:9,10).

**Ver. 1.** *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] While in the presence of Pharaoh, by a secret impulse upon his mind; or he had said <sup>f305</sup>, which some refer as far back as to his appearance to him in Midian, (<sup><01023></sup>Exodus 4:23), which is too remote; rather it refers to the last time he went to Pharaoh, being sent for by him; and the words may be rendered, “for the Lord had said” <sup>f306</sup>; and so are a reason why Moses was so bold, and expressed himself with so much confidence and assurance to Pharaoh, that he would see his face no more:

*yet will I bring one plague [more] upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt*; upon him and all his subjects, for the following one would affect all the families of Egypt, in which there was a son:

*afterwards he will let you go hence*; out of Egypt readily, at once, and not attempt to stop or retard your going:

*when he shall let you go*; declare his will, give leave and orders for it:

*he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether*; absolutely, entirely, without any exception or limitation, them, their wives, their children, their flocks and herds, and whatsoever belonged to them, without any restraint upon them in any respect, and without any condition of return, or fixing any time for it, but the dismissal should be general, unlimited, and

unconditional; or, “in thrusting he shall thrust you out”<sup>f307</sup>, with force and vehemence, with urgency and in great haste.

**Ver. 2.** *Speak now in the ears of the people*, etc.] This cannot be understood of the whole body of the people being gathered together, but of some of the principal ones, who should communicate it to others, and so from one to another, until all the heads and masters of families became acquainted with it:

*and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold*; to ornament themselves with at the feast they were going to keep: the Samaritan and Septuagint versions add, and clothing or raiment, and such it is certain they did borrow, (<sup>Q25</sup>Exodus 12:35) or vessels<sup>f308</sup> of different forms, made of gold and silver, such as were fit and proper to be used at sacrifices and feasts, and which will account for the vessels given by princes, (<sup>Q10</sup>Numbers 7:1-89) for the doing of which the divine authority was sufficient; though there seems to be a reason for it in justice, that they might be paid for their hard service they had been made to serve for so many years, without having a proper reward for it: the word may be rendered, “let every man ask”, etc.

**Ver. 3.** *And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians*, etc.] So that they freely and willingly lent them the things they asked of them; which seems to be said by way of anticipation, for this was not done until the following plague was inflicted, (see <sup>Q25</sup>Exodus 12:35,36),

*moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt*; his name was famous throughout the whole land, because of the signs and wonders, and miracles wrought by him; they took him to be a very extraordinary person, as he was, and had him in great esteem, because at his entreaty the plagues were removed from them, when they had been wrought on them; and this made them the more willing to lend the above things to the people of Israel when they asked them of them, because of their great respect to Moses, and whom, if they did not cordially love, yet they feared, and might imagine that if they did not comply with the request of his people, he might resent it, and employ his power against them; and thus he stood, either beloved or feared, or both,

*in the sight of Pharaoh's servants*; his ministers, courtiers, and counsellors: and in the sight of the people; the common people, the inhabitants of the land of Egypt.

**Ver. 4.** *And Moses said*, etc.] To Pharaoh before he left him, when he had told him he should see his face no more; for the three preceding verses are to be read in a parenthesis, being placed here by the historian, as giving some light to this last discourse and transaction between Moses and Pharaoh:

*thus saith the Lord, about midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt*; perhaps to the capital and metropolis of it, which might stand in the midst of it, as usually does the royal city; or it may only signify that he would go into the very heart of it, and steer his course all around in every part and quarter of it, slaying the firstborn everywhere in all towns and cities throughout the kingdom, as follows; in order to which he is said to go out, either from the place where Moses used to go and pray to him, and where he met him and gave him his orders and instructions, or out of the land of Goshen, where he dwelt among the Israelites; or rather it only signifies the manifestation of himself in some work and action of his, the exertion of his power in inflicting punishment for sin: thus God is sometimes said to go forth out of his place when he is about to exercise judgment in the earth; for this must be understood consistent with his omnipresence, (see <sup>2321</sup>Isaiah 26:21) and this was to be done about midnight, the middle of the night following the present day, which was the fourteenth of the month of Abib or Nisan; it was in the morning of that day Moses had this discourse with Pharaoh, and in the evening of it the passover was kept, and about the middle of the night the firstborn were slain, as follows.

**Ver. 5.** *And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, etc.*] By the destroying angel inflicting a disease upon them, as Josephus says <sup>f309</sup>, very probably the pestilence; however, it was sudden and immediate death, and which was universal, reaching to all the firstborn that were in the families of the Egyptians in all parts of the kingdom:

*from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne*: this periphrasis, “that sitteth upon his throne”, either belongs to Pharaoh, and is a description of him who now sat upon the throne of Egypt; and the Septuagint version leaves out the pronoun “his”; and so it is the same as if it had been said the firstborn of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; or else, to the firstborn, and describes him who either already sat upon the throne with his father, as was sometimes the case, that the firstborn was taken a partner in the throne, in the lifetime of his father; or who was the presumptive heir of the crown, and should succeed him, and so the Targum of Jonathan,

“who shall or is to sit upon the throne of his kingdom:”

*even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill*; or “behind the two mills”<sup>f310</sup>, or “two millstones”; for it was the custom then, as with the Arabs now, as Doctor Shaw relates<sup>f311</sup>, to grind their corn with hand mills, which were two stones laid on one another, and in the uppermost was a handle, with which it was turned about by women, between whom the two stones were placed, and so they might be said to be behind them; though the phrase used does not necessarily suppose that they sat behind the mill, for it may as well be rendered “by” or “near the mill”<sup>f312</sup>: this is not to be understood of the firstborn, as behind the mill, or at it, and grinding, as Aben Ezra interpret’s it, but of the maidservant; it being the business of such in early times to turn these mills, and grind corn, as it is now in Arabia, as the above traveller relates; and so it was in Judea, in the times of Christ, (~~414~~ Matthew 24:41) and Homer<sup>f313</sup>, in his times, speaks of women grinding at the mill, ((see Gill on “~~414~~ Matthew 24:41”)), the design of these expressions is to show that none would escape this calamity threatened, neither the king nor his nobles, nor any of his subjects, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free: and all the firstborn of beasts: such as had escaped the plagues of the murrain and boils: this is added, not because they were such as were worshipped as gods, as Jarchi observes, but to increase their misery and aggravate their punishment, these being their property and substance, and became scarce and valuable, through the preceding plagues of the murrain, boils, and hail, which destroyed many of their cattle.

**Ver. 6.** *And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt,* etc.] Of parents for the loss of their firstborn sons, their heirs, the support and glory of their families; children for the loss of their elder brethren; and servants for the loss of the prime and principal in their masters’ houses; and all in a dreadful fright, expecting instantly death themselves:

*such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more*; for though the later destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea might be a greater loss, yet not occasion greater mourning; since that was only a loss of military persons, and did not affect at least so many families as this; and though their king was lost also, it might not give them so much concern, since through his ill conduct, his hardness and obstinacy, he had been the means of so many plagues inflicted on them.

**Ver. 7.** *But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast,* etc.] That is, as no hurt should be done to man or beast among them, to the firstborn of either of them, so there would be no noise or cry in their dwellings, but the profoundest silence, stillness, and quietness among them; though this is generally understood of what would be their case when on their march departing out of Egypt, which was immediately upon the slaying of the firstborn; and, if literally understood, it was a very extraordinary thing that a dog, which barks at the least noise that is made, especially in the night, yet not one should move his tongue or bark, or rather “sharpen”<sup>f314</sup> his tongue, snarl and grin, when 600,000 men, besides women and children, with their flocks and herds, set out on their journey, and must doubtless march through many places where dogs were, before they came to the Red sea; though it may also be interpreted figuratively, that not an Egyptian, though ever so spiteful and malicious, and ill disposed to the children of Israel, should offer to do any hurt either to the Israelites or their cattle, or exclaim against them on account of the slaughter of their firstborn, or say one word against their departure, or attempt to stop them, but on the contrary would hasten their going, and be urgent for it:

*that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel;* by preserving them and theirs, when the firstborn of Egypt were destroyed, and by causing stillness and quietness among them when there was an hideous outcry and doleful lamentation among the Egyptians; and by bringing Israel quietly out from among them, none offering to give the least molestation.

**Ver. 8.** *And all these thy servants,* etc.] Pharaoh’s nobles, ministers, courtiers and counsellors, who were then in his presence, and stood about him, to whom Moses pointed:

*shall come down unto me;* from Pharaoh’s palace, which might be built on an eminence, to the place where Moses had dwelt during the time he had been in Egypt, which might lie lower; or these should come from Zoan, or from Memphis, whichever of them was now the royal city, to the land of Goshen, which lay lower than the other part of Egypt; or it may only denote the submission of Pharaoh’s, servants, that they should in the time of their distress be so humble and condescending as to come themselves to Moses, and as it follows:

*and bow down themselves unto me*; in the most obsequious manner, humbly entreating, and earnestly begging him:

*saying, get thee out, and all the people that follow thee*; or “are at thy feet”<sup>f315</sup>, that were at his beck and command, and under his power, as Aben Ezra; or that followed his counsel and advice, as Jarchi, that did as he directed them, and went after him as their leader and commander, even everyone of them; they that brought up the rear, he, and all of them, would be desired to depart, and not a man remain behind: this was fulfilled, (<sup>(123)</sup>Exodus 12:31):

*and after that I will go out*; out of the land of Egypt, Moses, and all the children of Israel:

*and he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger*; as soon as he had said the above words, because he had bid him be gone from him, and had threatened him with his life, if ever he saw his face more; and because he was so rebellious against God, whose zeal inspired the heart of Moses with indignation against him, though the meekest man on earth, and for whose glory he was concerned; though some understand this of Moses going out from Pharaoh, when he and not Moses was in great anger, because of what Moses had now threatened him with, and told him what would be the issue of things, the submission of him and his nobles, and the dismissal of Israel; but this sense is not favoured by the accents.

**Ver. 9.** *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] Not at this time when he went out from Pharaoh, but some time before this, for the words may be rendered, “the Lord had said”<sup>f316</sup>, for so he had, as is related, (<sup>(123)</sup>Exodus 7:3,4), but the historian makes mention of it here, to show that Moses was not ignorant of the event of things; he knew that Pharaoh’s heart would be hardened from time to time, and that one plague after another must be inflicted, before he would let the people go; and therefore when he prayed for the removal of any, it was not in expectation that he would abide by his promise, but to do the will of God, and the duty of his calling:

*Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you*; to Moses and Aaron, and let the people of Israel go as required of him:

*that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt*; which Jarchi interprets of the smiting of the firstborn, dividing the waters of the Red sea, and the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in it; but since these words were said before any of the plagues, were inflicted, it may refer to them all.

**Ver. 10.** *And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh,* etc,] Which are related in the preceding chapters:

*and the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart:* one time after another, and yet more and more:

*so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land;* until the last plague, the slaying of the firstborn, was brought upon him and his people, related in the following chapter.