

## Exodus 1-6 Quotes and Notes

### Exodus 1: A reversal of fortune

1. Introduction – Ex. 1.1-7.
2. Oppression – Ex. 1.8-14.
3. The Midwives – Ex. 1.15-22.<sup>1</sup>

### Exodus 2: The early life of Moses

1. The abandonment and rescue of Moses – Ex. 2.1-10.
2. Moses' strife with an Egyptian – Ex. 2.11-15.<sup>2</sup>
3. Moses' life in Midian – Ex. 2.16-22.
4. Narrative transition – Ex. 2.23-25.

### Exodus 3-4.17: Moses' prophetic call

1. Moses' theophany at the burning bush – Ex. 3.1-6.
  - a. Ex. 3.2 - An "angel of the Lord<sup>3</sup> appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush."<sup>4</sup> The Prophet Joseph Smith shared a similar experience [in his 1835 account of the First Vision](#).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The unnamed heroic women (except Shiprah and Puah, see Ex. 1.15) in this story drive home the point that Israel was filled with fertility. And the women (once again) show their power to preserve and protect life. This image of the woman as a protector of life is repeated in many parts of the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>2</sup> The historian [Eusebius of Caesarea](#) says that the slaying was the result of a court intrigue in which certain men plotted to assassinate Moses. In the encounter it is said that Moses successfully warded off the attacker and killed him. (*Eusebius of Caesarea: Praeparatio Evangelica (Preparation for the Gospel)*. Translated by E.H. Gifford (1903), Book 9, see: [Eusebius IX:27](#).) For those looking this up on the internet site provided, go to where it says "But while they were on the way, one of those who were cognizant of the plot reported it to Moses; and he being on his guard buried Merris himself, and called the river and the city thereby Meroe. And this Merris is honoured by the people of the country not less highly than Isis. 'Then Aaron the brother of Moses, having learned about the plot, advised his brother to flee into Arabia; and he took the advice, and sailed across the Nile from Memphis, intending to escape into Arabia. 'But when Chanethothes was informed of the flight of Moses, he lay in ambush intending to kill him; and when he saw him coming, he drew his sword against him, **but Moses was too quick for him**, and seized his hand, and drew his sword and slew Chanethothes. 'So he made his escape into Arabia, and lived with Raguel the ruler of the district, having married his daughter. And Raguel wished to make an expedition against the Egyptians in order to restore Moses, and procure the government for his daughter and son-in-law; but Moses prevented it, out of regard for his own nation: and Raguel forbidding him to march against the Arabs, ordered him to plunder Egypt."

<sup>3</sup> Sarna (writing from his Judaic perspective) writes, "The "angel" has no role in the entire theophany; it is the fire that attracts Moses' attention, and it is always God Himself who speaks. Most likely the angel is mentioned only to avoid what would be the gross anthropomorphism of localizing God in a bush." Sarna, [The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus](#), The Jewish Publication Society, 1991, p. 14

<sup>4</sup> וַיֵּרָא מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּלַבַּת־אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּבָּה Literally "And an angel of Yahweh appeared to him: a flame of fire (*belabat-esh*) from the midst of the bush" (*hassneh*). The JST changes this to "presence of the Lord" and in this way takes away the confusion caused by this Hebrew use of מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה "angel of Yahweh."

<sup>5</sup> Joseph shared: "I called on the Lord in mighty prayer. **A pillar of fire appeared** above my head; which presently rested down upon me, and filled me with unspeakable joy. **A personage appeared in the midst of this pillar of**

- b. Ex. 3.4 – “God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, “Moses, Moses,” and he said, “Here I am.”<sup>6</sup>
- 2. The divine call – Ex. 3.7-10.
  - a. “I know their sorrows” – Ex. 3.7. This illustrates the character of God. The Book of Mormon helps to flesh out this idea. See: Mosiah 24.1, 10, 13-15.<sup>7</sup>
  - b. “A land flowing with milk and honey”<sup>8</sup> – Ex. 3.8.<sup>9</sup> See also [Alma 32.42](#): “ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is **most precious**, which is **sweet above all** that is sweet, and

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**flame**, which was spread all around and **yet nothing consumed.**” [Joseph Smith’s 1835 account of the First Vision](#). This was dictated to his clerk Warren Parrish.

<sup>6</sup> Moses responds הִנְנִי *hinnehi*, the same response that Abraham gives when called by the angel of God in Genesis 22.11 when he is about to sacrifice Isaac. It is the same response Isaiah gives in Isaiah 6.9 “Here I am, send me” *hinneni shalakhni*. I see a connection within this structure to the answers given by seers when called by God or his heavenly messengers.

<sup>7</sup> Understanding the character of God is important. In the *Lectures on Faith* we read the following:

An acquaintance with these attributes in the divine character, is essentially necessary, in order that the faith of any rational being can center in Him for life and salvation. For if he did not, in the first instance, believe Him to be God, that is, the Creator and upholder of all things, he could not center his faith in Him for life and salvation, for fear there should be greater than He who would thwart all His plans, and He, like the Gods of the heathen, would be unable to fulfill His promises; but seeing He is God over all, from everlasting to everlasting, the Creator and upholder of all things, no such fear can exist in the minds of those who put their trust in Him, so that in this respect their faith can be without wavering. *Lectures on Faith*, lecture 3.

<sup>8</sup> The description of the land is common in the Hebrew Bible. See for example Exodus 3:8 and 3:17 and 13:5 and 33:3; Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 13:27 and 14:8 and 16:3 and 16:14; Deuteronomy 6:3 and 11:9 and 26:9 and 26:15 and 27:3 and 31:20; Joshua 11:5; Jeremiah 32:22; and Ezekiel 20:6 and 20:15.

<sup>9</sup> **Milk and Honey: A recurrent symbol of the land's fertility.** Milk and Honey are seen as two of nature’s nurturing elements that require no agricultural knowledge. Milk and Honey are also connected to the image of the tree, lady wisdom, and images of holiness and creation (Proverbs 3.18). Honey and bees were also connected to divine foresight, because bees were able to predict weather, something that ancient writers observed them able to choose to stay close to their hives or venture beyond, depending upon the weather conditions. Aristotle writes: “Bees can tell the approach of rough weather or of rain; and the proof is that they will not fly away, but even while it is as yet fine they go fluttering about within a restricted space, and the bee-keeper knows from this that they are expecting bad weather.” ([Aristotle, History of Animals 9.40](#); Pliny, Natural History 11.10. See also: Daryn Lehoux, Why does Aristotle think bees are divine? Proportion, triplicity and order in the natural world, [The British Journal for the History of Science](#) , [Volume 52](#) , [Issue 3](#) , September 2019 , pp. 383 – 403.)

The relationship to prophecy and bees can be connected with the ancient practice of making “mead,” which was originally made from fermented honey and water. This connection between honey being viewed as the main ingredient of the intoxicant, led to the belief that the second temple of Delphi was “built by bees” from beeswax and feathers. (Rigoglioso, p. 175) Arthur Bernard Cook states that bees have often been connected to wisdom and supernatural knowledge. Cook states, “Moreover, the connection between prophecy/supernatural knowledge, entheogens, and honey is suggested by the common claim that’s special poets and sages, including Hesiod, Pindar, Sophocles, Plato, Virgil, Lucan, and Ambrose, were said to have been “fed by bees” during infancy in order to have bread in them wisdom and eloquence.” (Cook, 1895, p. 7-8). Rigoglioso claims that the Pythia, or Oracle, at Delphi also took this intoxicant to assist in her revelations. In addition, bees were thought to represent virginity due in part to the queen bee’s [reproducing parthenogenetically](#). (Jones, p. 216)

Besides prophecy, both Greeks and Christians associated the bee with chastity, even virginity, as well as a figurative expression for the model state (Jones, p. 216-217). According to Fiona Griffith, the observed pattern of bee behavior served as an important example for monastic life, especially for the female monastic life (Griffith, *The*

*Garden of Delights, Reform and Renaissance for Women in the Twelfth Century*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007, p. 102). The bee was associated with the Virgin Mary by many Christian thinkers (Jones, p. 218). Artemis, the Greek goddess of chastity and childbirth, was also associated with the bee. Artemis' involvement with honey harmonizes with her virginity, as well as her protection of women. More interestingly, it is only in her presentation as Artemis Ephesia that she wears bees on her wrap-around garment (see [Jones, figure 7, p. 219](#)).

Speaking of Wisdom (חָכְמָה - *hāk̄mâ*) the author of [Proverbs 24](#) writes:

“Eat honey (עֹמֵץ), my son, for it is good;  
honey from the comb is sweet to your taste.  
Know also that wisdom is like honey for you:  
If you find it, there is a future hope for you,  
and your hope will not be cut off.” – [Proverbs 24.13-14](#).

The Song of Solomon, a text often left unread by Latter-day Saints due to the comment in the JST stating “the Songs of Solomon are not inspired writings” is one that can still be gleaned for many symbolic temple images throughout. The images in Song chapter 4 evoke ideas connecting the feminine spouse of the author to the ascent into the Holy of Holies. Indeed, as Rabbi Akiva stated, “The entire world, all of it, is not equal in worth to the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel.’ His reason was that all the other books in the Writings are holy, whereas the Song of Songs is holy of holies.” (Mishna, Tractate Yadayim 3.5) In this text we read the following:

“Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride;  
milk and honey are under your tongue.  
The fragrance of your garments  
is like the fragrance of Lebanon.” – [Song of Solomon 4.11](#)

It is after this approach that the author comes to what I see as a depiction of the sacred, “A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon,” and it is after this that the beloved is allowed to come into the garden to eat his pleasant fruits (Song of Solomon 4.15-16).

We see this image of an individual coming into God’s presence and receiving words of God likened unto honey in both [Ezekiel 3.3](#) and [Revelation 10.9-10](#). Both times prophets are given God’s word, and both times the word is “sweet as honey.” An obvious connection here would be the fruit of the Tree of Life that Lehi and Nephi speak of in the Book of Mormon, filled with superlatives used to describe it throughout. We read of the fruit being “desirable above all” ([1 Ne. 8.12](#)), fruit desirable to “make one happy” (אֲשֵׁרָא *Ashray* in Hebrew! - [1 Ne. 8.10](#)), with the fruit described as “white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen” ([1 Ne. 8.11](#)). I find it noteworthy that Nephi and Lehi combine the elements of honey and milk in the image of the fruit of the tree, a tree which has strong connections to Asherah, the [Mother Tree of ancient Israel](#).

We see this image in traditions outside of both the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon. The Greeks had legends which seem to have echoes of connection to ancient Hebrew thought. Thinking back to classical Greek myth, we read of the upbringing of Zeus, as well as Dionysus, both gods of fertility. As an infant, Zeus was suckled by Amaltheia who was the wife of Melisseus. Melisseus comes from the word for bee, *melissa*, and can be translated as “bee-man.” **While Amaltheia provided Zeus with milk, her husband provided him with honey.** Similarly, in some accounts of the infancy of Dionysus, the nymph **Macris raised him on milk and honey.** Moreover, **the physical quality of mother’s milk carried the symbolism of purity; white, gleaming, and moist, it carried the imagery equivalent to astral light.** For the Romans, this connection between milk and the eternity of the heavens is exemplified in the myth of the creation of the Milky Way. Legend claims that [one night Juno’s milk, while she was nursing Hercules, sprayed across the sky and created the Milky Way, and our galaxy. The Greek word for milk is γάλακτος (in the genitive), which is where English gets its word for “galaxy.” Giorgio de Santillana asserts that “The Polynesians regarded the Milky Way as “the road of souls as they pass to the spirit world” and that in

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Pawnee and Cherokee lore, "the souls of the dead are received by a star at the northern end of the Milky Way, where it bifurcates, and ... the souls then journey southwards. At the end of the celestial pathway they are received by the Spirit Star, and there they make their home." (*Hamlet's Mill*, [chapter 18](#)). Santillana continues with these ideas, emphasizing that a precession, the movement of the earth in a gyroscope manner, was seen as "the great clock of the universe" and the "golden thread" that pointed the deceased where to proceed in the afterlife. (See also: Jones, [The Enduring Goddess: Artemis and Mary, Mother of Jesus](#), Dissertation, York University, 2016, p.222. See also: Elderkin, George W., Richard Stillwell, Frederick O. Waage, Dorothy B. Waage, and Jean Lassus. *Antioch On-the-Orontes*. Princeton: Princeton U, 1934, p. 205.

Ezekiel, speaking to Jerusalem and lamenting on how wonderfully she was treated in the past when compared to her condition during the Babylonian exile, writes:

I washed thee with water; yea,  
 I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee,  
 and I anointed thee with oil.  
 I clothed thee also with brodered work,  
 and shod thee with badgers' skin,  
 I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.  
 I decked thee also with ornaments,  
 and I put bracelets upon thy hands,  
 and a chain on thy neck.  
 And I put a jewel on thy forehead,  
 and earrings in thine ears,  
 and a beautiful crown upon thine head.  
 Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver;  
 and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk,  
 and brodered work;  
**thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil:**  
 and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and **thou didst prosper into a kingdom.**  
 And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty:  
 for it was perfect through my comeliness,  
 which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God. ([Ezekiel 16.9-14](#))

The bee is also connected to God and creation, as well as our journey across vast distances, from heaven to earth, and back again. Hugh Nibley explains:

The bee is before all creatures the sponsor, inspiration, and guide of the Great Trek. As a creature of the preexistent or pre-Diluvian world, and all but sole survivor of the great catastrophes that desolated the earth, the bee is first to arrive on the scene and start things going again in the new world. **In the first of all migrations, Adam and Eve were accompanied and guided by the bees as they moved from the Garden into the dark outer world.** The bees brought with them "the primordial creative divine power," their honey, "made by the bees of Paradise," is "the food of heaven." When our first ancestors were allowed to bring some of their original blessings from Eden with them, Adam bore the olive, vine, date, pomegranate, and nard, but to Eve was given the greatest blessing, for she was accompanied by her friends from the Garden with their honey—the busy bees whose beneficent labors among the plants and trees made it possible to renew the verdure of the former world in their new one. According to one of the oldest Egyptian ritual sources, when they found the earth barren of life after the Flood, the bees got to work restoring the fertility of the woods and fields while busily producing their honey and wax for the benefit of man. They were especially qualified to conduct Adam and Eve into a strange world, because they knew the place from its older times, themselves being the survivors from that other and better age. (Nibley, [Abraham in Egypt: The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley: Volume 14: Pearl of Great Price](#), p. 612.)

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N. Sarna writes: The combination of the two products is also popular in classical literature. The phrase is never included in the divine promises made to the patriarchs, for whom famine was frequently a grim reality. Besides, their faith did not need to be reinforced by stressing the attractiveness of the land. For the demoralized, enslaved masses of Israel, however, such an enticement would carry weight. As a matter of fact, ancient Egyptian sources testify to the richness of the land.

Milk in the Bible is generally from the goat, "the little man's cow." A plentiful supply pre-supposes an abundance of goats, which in turn points to ample pasturage and the prospect of much meat, hide, and wool. Honey in the Bible (Heb. *devash*) is predominantly the thick, sweet syrup produced from dates and known to the Arabs as *dibs*. Apiculture seems to have been unknown in Palestine; the few explicit references in the Bible to bees' honey pertain to the wild variety. While the date itself is never mentioned, the inclusion of honey among the seven characteristic products of the land listed in Deuteronomy 8:8 indicates that, like all the others, it too derives from the soil.

The combination of milk and honey provides a highly nutritious diet. Milk, widely regarded in the ancient world as a source of vitality, is rich in protein; the dried date is rich in carbohydrates. Ben Sira (39:26) declared milk and honey to be among the chief necessities of human life. Some Arab tribes are known to subsist for months at a time solely on milk and honey. Sarna, [The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus](#), The Jewish Publication Society, 1991 p. 16.

"This leads to the examination of one additional interpretation by [Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch](#) in his commentary on the expression a "land flowing with milk and honey." Instead of focusing on the meaning of milk and honey, **Rabbi Hirsch focuses on the meaning of the word for flowing (*zavat*)**, and writes: "It is very characteristic that the abundance of produce by *zov* only occurs in reference to Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel) In Tanakh, the word *zov* never means overflowing. It occurs mainly to describe a human pathological condition, and otherwise as a flowing forth caused by miraculous power. It does not seem to describe a land that develops the abundance in accordance with its natural fertility, **but a land that only does this under special conditions**. Palestine is a hard land which can only blossom and flourish 'under the continuous special care of God for it, from one end of the year to the other.' When it gets water, it blossoms luxuriously. But it only gets the water from above. It is a land that makes it necessary for its inhabitants to be good." See: Neil Tow, "A Land Flowing With Milk and Honey," [Sefaria](#), accessed 2.17.2022.

Another commentator gives this approach to this symbol:

"Much of biblical topography consisted of midbar: a land mass which sustained life before, during, and after the Israelite period. Using a topological approach, but rather of "a land flowing with milk and honey," we can quickly ascertain that the clue to famous riddle: it is a case wherein "Out of the hard there came forth sweet." (Judges 14.14) For in biblical Palestine as elsewhere, both milk and honey are products not of cultivated, rich farmland, but of meagre, uncultivated, grazing ground (or "wilderness"). Flocks and herds are led (Heb. *dbr*) into the marginal land (*mdbr*): those areas which are unsuitable for agriculture. And it is there, amidst the bushes, rocks, and thickets, that the wild honey is found. Biblical diction paired "milk and honey" not simply because of their gastronomical affinity, but because both are common to one topographical environment. See: Etan Levine, *The Symbolism of Milk and Honey, ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, Spring 1984, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Spring 1984), published by: Institute of General Semantics, p. 34.

It is interesting that in the Ugaritic texts we see a similarity to the use of this idea in the Old Testament. For example, *KTU* 1.6 III 12-13 reads as follows: "The heavens rain oil, The wadis run with honey". Philip Stern has written about the similarities between this passage and the biblical idiom and contends: [The Ugaritic] vision is so close to the biblical expression that it is difficult not to imagine that "a land flowing with milk and honey" has its origin in the rivalry with Baal... [But] YHWH may have been doing one better than Baal, if Israelites valued dairy products over vegetable fat. The biblical formula holds that the land will be fit for animal husbandry and bee-keeping, a slightly different idea of abundance from its predecessor, but in the end the product of the deity's

which is **white above all that is white**, yea, and **pure above all that is pure**; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst.”

- c. “The cry of the children of Israel is come unto me” – Ex. 3.9.
3. Moses’ dialogue with God – Ex. 3.11-4.17
  - a. Who am I that I should go? – Ex. 3.11.
  - b. God states, “I will be with thee...” עִמָּךְ אֶהְיֶה – this statement ‘*ehyeh* “I will be,” is a beautiful connection to the next bit in Exodus 3.14 when God announces his divine name to Moses: אֲנִי אֶלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי “I AM THAT I AM.”
  - c. “And this is to you the token that I have sent you” – Ex. 3.12. Commentators are at a loss as to what this token is. The Greek renders this as σημεῖον, “sign or token.”
  - d. “I AM THAT I AM” - אֲנִי אֶלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי – This phrase can be translated as “I am that I am,” or “I am who I am,” or “I will be what I will be.” It evokes YHVH (or YHWH), the specific proper name of Israel’s God, what in Latter-day Saint vocabulary is called Jehovah, and what many Biblical scholars refer to as Yahweh.<sup>10</sup>
  - e. “Go and gather Israel’s elders and say to them, ‘YHWH, your fathers’ God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...’” – Ex. 3.15. This is the first time YHWH is revealed in the Elohist text. In the next verse we are told that this God appeared unto Moses.
  - f. “Go, and gather the elders of Israel together” – Ex. 3.16.<sup>11</sup>
  - g. “I will bring you into a land flowing with milk and honey” – Ex. 3.17.<sup>12</sup>
  - h. “I will send out my hand... he will send you *out/let you go*” – Ex. 3.20.<sup>13</sup>

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beneficent rule over the land. See: Philip Stern, “The Origin and Significance of “The Land Flowing with Milk and Honey,” *VT* 42 (1992), p. 554-557.

Tigay argues that milk carries with it connotations of fertility, implying by extension that the land itself is fertile. See: Jeffrey H. Tigay, [Deuteronomy: The JPS Torah Commentary](#), Philadelphia, 1996, p. 438.

Schwartz comments of the Jewish legend that Abraham was fed milk and honey by the angel Gabriel with his thumb, “through which milk and honey flowed, and because he was fed in that miraculous way, the boy began to grow at the rate of a year every day.” See: Schwartz, *Tree of Souls*, p. 86.

T.K. Cheyne contends that this image of milk and honey reflects an ancient mythological notion of a heavenly river of milk- The Milky Way. See: T.K. Cheyne, *Traditions and Beliefs of Ancient Israel*, London, 1907, p. 455.

<sup>10</sup> The phrase also indicates that the earliest recorded understanding of the divine name was as a verb derived from the stem *h-v-h*, taken as an earlier form of *h-y-h*, “to be.” Either it expresses the quality of absolute Being, the eternal, unchanging, dynamic presence, or it means, “He causes to be.” *YHVH* is the third person masculine singular; *ehyeh* is the corresponding first person singular. This latter is used here because name-giving in the ancient world implied the wielding of power over the one named; hence, the divine name can only proceed from God Himself. In the course of the Second Temple period the Tetragrammaton (יהוה) came to be regarded as charged with metaphysical potency and therefore ceased to be pronounced. It was replaced in speech by ‘*adonai*, “Lord,” rendered into Greek κύριος - *Kyrios*. Often the vowels of ‘*adonai* would later accompany *YHVH* in written texts. This gave rise to the mistaken form *Jehovah*. The original pronunciation was eventually lost; modern attempts at recovery are conjectural. Sarna, p. 16-17.

<sup>11</sup> The institution of elders is rooted in the tribal-patriarchal system that shaped the character of Israelite society in early times. The rich Mari archives dealing with Northwest Semitic tribes show that the council of elders was entrusted with considerable authority, judicial and political. Its members acted as the spokesmen and the delegates of the tribes in dealings with the urban administration. Sarna, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> See the footnote associated with Exodus 3.8.

<sup>13</sup> Some wordplay with *sh-l-h* is happening here in this verse, “I will send my hand” and “he will send you.”

- i. “You will not go out empty” – Ex. 3.21.<sup>14</sup>
- j. “shall borrow” – Ex. 3.22. Rather, “request,” from the root *šā'al* לָאֵשׁ.
- k. “What if they don’t believe me?” – Ex. 4.1.
  - i. Three signs are given: the rod/snake (v.2-5), the ‘encrusted’ hand<sup>15</sup> (6-7), and the first of the ten plagues – water into blood (v. 8-9).
- l. Moses gives his final objection: “I am not eloquent!” – Ex. 4.10.
- m. Moses objects again and says basically, “send someone else!” – Ex. 4.13.<sup>16</sup>
- n. “I will send you Aaron ‘your Levite brother’<sup>17</sup>... I know that he speaks well... He shall speak for you to the people” – Ex. 4.14-17.

### Exodus 4.18-6.1: The Challenge of being a prophet: Moses’ first attempt at Fulfilling the Command of God

1. Moses takes leave of Jethro – Ex. 4.18-23.<sup>18</sup>
2. “but I will harden his heart...” – Ex. 4.21.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> This promise was fulfilled at the time of the Exodus. Early Jewish interpreters, as reflected in Jubilees 48:18 and Philo of Alexandria, as well as in the Talmud,<sup>14</sup> looked upon these spoils as well-deserved compensation to the Israelites for their long years of unpaid forced labor. It is also possible to interpret the development as being in accordance with the law of Deuteronomy 15.13 that requires the master to provision his slave liberally at the time of emancipation: “When you set him free, do not let him go empty-handed.” Sarna, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> *encrusted* Hebrew *tsara’at*, usually mistranslated “leprosy,” has none of the major symptoms of that malady, and the descriptions of *tsara’at* given in Leviticus 13-14 are incompatible with Hansen’s disease. The comparison to snow is not in respect of its whiteness but of its flakiness. Apart from the startling phenomenon of the sudden appearance and disappearance of the encrustation, this particular sign has an ominous aspect to it in that it is seen in the Bible as a divine punishment for human misbehavior. Sarna, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> To me, the Greek reading of this verse (Ex. 4.13) is less ambiguous. It reads as follows:

καὶ εἶπεν Μωϋσῆς δέομαι κύριε προχέρισαι δυνάμενον ἄλλον ὃν ἀποστελεῖς. Translated: “And Moses said, ‘I pray Lord that you having the power will send with your hand somebody else.’”

וַיֹּאמֶר בְּיַדְךָ יְהוָה תִּשְׁלַח אֶת־יָדְךָ לְשַׁלְּחַן אֶת־יָדְךָ לְשַׁלְּחַן לְשַׁלְּחַן לְשַׁלְּחַן Literally reads, “And he said, O my Lord, please send by the hand you will send.”

<sup>17</sup> “Your Levite brother” אָחִיךָ הַלֵּוִי - Aaron is first mentioned here, and given the title “your Levite brother.” In parts of the text (P) he is three years older than Moses. According to the Documentary Hypothesis, in P Aaron is a brother to Moses, and in E he is “a Levite.” Richard Friedman contends that in this context (The Elohist narrative of Exodus 3) **Aaron is not a brother of Moses**. He writes, “This does not mean that Moses and Aaron are brothers. On the contrary, if they were siblings it would naturally say “your brother.” Why would it say “Your Levite brother?” **If they are actual brothers, they must both be Levites!** “Your Levite brother” has to mean “fellow Levite,” and in E Moses and Aaron are not siblings. See: Richard Elliot Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, HarperOne, 2003, p. 124, emphasis added. It is important to note that only in P are Moses and Aaron brothers, and in P, Aaron is the **older brother** of Moses, establishing his authority.

<sup>18</sup> Note that Moses takes his “wife and his sons” – Ex. 4.20. According to Ex. 18.2-5, Jethro brought Zipporah and the two sons from Midian to Sinai after the Exodus. This shows that they were not in Egypt all the while. Possibly, a fuller version of the story behind the incident of verses 24-26 explained why the family returned to Midian. A midrash has Aaron convincing Moses not to subject his family to the rigors of life in Egypt. Sarna, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> The JST has “but Pharaoh will harden his heart, and he will not let the people go.” The Hebrew text says אָחִיךָ אֶת־לְבָבוֹ “I will strengthen his heart.” Friedman sees this as part of the text of the redactor, noting that in E, Pharaoh’s heart is made “heavy,” and in P Pharaoh’s heart is made “strong.” He sees the redactor working with this term “strengthen” to streamline the two accounts of Moses’ life, going with the P version here. But both versions are included in the flow of the narrative. For in the E accounts we read of Pharaoh’s heart being made

3. Israel is “my firstborn son” – Ex. 4.22.
4. Let my son go or I will “slay thy son” – Ex. 4.23.
5. A night encounter and circumcision – Ex. 4.24-26.<sup>20</sup>
6. Moses’ leadership is accepted – Ex. 4.27-31.
7. Moses’ first audience with Pharaoh – Ex. 5.1-6.1.
  - a. Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice? – Ex. 5.2.
  - b. Building bricks without straw – Ex. 5.4-19.<sup>21</sup>

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“heavy,” כָּבֵד *kbd*, see Ex. 8.15, 32; 9.7, 34; 10.1. For P’s account of Pharaoh’s heart made “strong,” חֲזָק *hzq* (or *qsh*) see Ex. 7.13, 22; 9.12; 14.4, 8, 17. See: Mike Day, [“The Hardening of Pharaoh’s heart,”](#) 11.06.2015.

**Why does the northern text use “heavy” to describe Pharaoh’s heart condition?** For starters, the term “heavy” in the Elohist text is a part of a chain of punning on this term throughout the E account of the Exodus, from the burning bush to Mount Horeb. The description of Moses as כָּבֵד־פִּי וְכָבֵד לְשׁוֹן “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue” (Ex. 4.10) initiates a chain of puns on the various shades of meaning of the word “heavy” (Hebrew כָּבֵד *kbd*, meaning weighty, burdensome, difficult, numerous, rich, or substantial). Pharaoh says “let the work be heavy” (Ex. 5.9). Four of the plagues are described as “heavy”: insects (8.20), pestilence (9.3), hail (9.18, 24), and locusts (10.14). The Israelites leave with “a very heavy livestock” (12.38). When Moses holds up his arms as the Israelites fight the Amalekites, “Moses’ hands were heavy” (17.12). Jethro tells Moses to get help in administering the people “because the thing is too heavy for you” (18.18). And E’s chain of puns culminates at Horeb: there is “a heavy cloud on the mountain” during Moses’ revelation (19.16). See: Richard E. Friedman, [The Bible with Sources Revealed](#), p. 131.

I would add that this term for Pharaoh’s heavy heart is also a polemic against Egypt, using their very terms as they saw them, and associating this with casting a judgment upon their leader. You see, to have a “heavy heart” was not a good thing in the final judgment scenes as portrayed in the Book of the Dead. In Egyptian religion, the heart was the key to the afterlife. It was conceived as surviving death in the Netherworld, where it gave evidence for, or against, its possessor. It was thought that the heart was examined by Anubis and the deities during the weighing of the heart ceremony. If the heart weighed more than the feather of Maat, it was immediately consumed by the monster Ammit. See: BD spell 125. Indeed, as Yekaterina Barbash writes, “Death and burial may be seen as a form of initiation, and the theme of initiation holds a significant place among spells that intersect the temple and mortuary spheres (Federn 1960). The address to Osiris, negative confession (or the deceased’s denial of committing a list of 42 sins during life), and the weighing of the heart vignette in one of the most popular Book of the Dead spells, number 125.” Barbash demonstrates that these ideas spilled over into the world of the Greeks and the Romans in later times as well. Foy Scalf (editor), *Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt*, Oriental Institute, Chicago, 2017, p. 82. To read a translation of the forty-two “negative confessions” in BD 125, go [here](#). For a translation of BD 30A, go [here](#).

<sup>20</sup> This is a clear example of an editorial insertion. This disrupts the flow of the text. Friedman puts this here in the midst of the E narrative as a text coming from J. See: Friedman, p. 126. Sarna writes, “The account of Moses’ return to Egypt is interrupted by a brief but thoroughly perplexing story. At first glance, the obscure, three-verse narrative seems to lack integration into the larger context of the chapter. Moses is not mentioned. If he is the afflicted person, one could well ask how God could want to kill him, the chosen instrument for the liberation of Israel, as he sets out in fulfillment of the divine command. To complicate matters further, the application of some of the verbs, personal pronouns, and pronominal suffixes is unclear. Finally, there is also uncertainty about the meaning of some of the language and about the person to whom it is directed. Sarna, p. 24.

<sup>21</sup> President Packer stated: “The first order issued by a commander mounting a military invasion is the jamming of the channels of communication of those he intends to conquer.” (Reverence Invites Revelation, *Ensign*, November, 1991).

C.S. Lewis described the brick manufacturing mentality of the world in which we live in *The Screwtape Letters*. In this depiction of two devils speaking of ways to wreak havoc among mortals we read, “We will make the whole



- c. The elders of Israel say “May the Lord look upon you and punish you for making us loathsome to Pharaoh and his courtiers- putting a sword in their hands to slay us” – Ex. 5.21, Sarna translation.

### Exodus 6.2-7.13: God Reiterates his support of Moses

1. God spake to Moses: “I am the Lord!” – Ex. 6.2
2. “I was not known by my name Jehovah”... “I appeared unto Abraham... as El Shaddai!” – Ex. 6.3.<sup>22</sup>
3. “I have heard the groanings of the children of Israel” – Ex. 6.5.
4. “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” – Ex. 6.6.
  - a. Another translation of Exodus 6.6-7 reads: “I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements. And I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God.”<sup>23</sup>
5. “I did swear” to give it (the land of Canaan) to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob... - Ex. 6.8.<sup>24</sup>
6. A renewed call to do what the Lord says – Ex. 6.10-13.
7. Heads of clans: Reuben, Simeon, Levi – Ex. 5.14-27.
  - a. The Levites are singled out from among the other tribes of Israel; the House of Aaron (the Aaronides) are distinguished from among the other Levitical families.<sup>25</sup>

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universe a noise in the end. We have already made great strides in this direction... the melodies and silence of Heaven will be shouted down in the end.” (*The Screwtape Letters* [New York: The Macmillan Co., 1973], p.103.) Exodus 5:12 illustrates what happens when we try to build bricks without straw. “So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.” They were scattered gathering stubble. Oftentimes we spend much time gathering stubble when it need not be. We had a great discussion in class on the importance of pouring our energy into building the right bricks in our lives. See: [Exodus 5: Making bricks without straw](#).

<sup>22</sup> Here God tells Moses that he was not known to the patriarchs by the name YHWH. However, the patriarchs did in fact know the name YHWH (Gen 18.14; 24.3; 26.22; 27.20, 27; 28.16; and Gen. 4.26 – all stories told from J. This P passage (Exodus 6.2-3) is a doublet of the passage in E in which God first reveals the divine name (see Exodus 3.15). N. Sarna (p. 31) writes, “The reference is to Genesis 17:1-8 and 35:11- 12.5. Although this divine Name is usually translated “God Almighty, there are no convincing traditions as to its meaning and little etymological justification for that particular rendering. With the advent of Moses, El Shaddai became obsolete; it is preserved only in poetic texts.” For the approach that El Shaddai could represent the divine feminine, see D. Biale’s paper [here](#).

<sup>23</sup> According to several rabbinic sources, it is on the account of the following four verbs of redemption: “I will free... deliver... redeem... take you” – that there arose the obligation to drink four cups of wine at the Passover Seder. See: Sarna, p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> The text says that יָרַח אֶת־יָדִי – literally “I did raise my hand.” This phrase has come from the gesture of oath-taking, something we still see in some settings today. See David Calabro, [Ritual gestures of lifting, extending, and clasping the hand\(s\) in Northwest Semitic Literature and Iconography](#), dissertation, University of Chicago, June 2014, p. 92-93. Calabro’s entire dissertation can be downloaded [here](#). Calabro cites other places where this is happening in the Hebrew Bible. See for example Numbers 14.30, Deut. 32.40-41; Ezekiel 20.5-6, 15, 23, 28, 42; 36.7; 44.12; 47.14; Psalm 106.26-27; Nehemiah 9.15.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Friedman is putting verses 14-25 in a separate category outside of J,E,D,P. He states, “This list (6.14-25) comes from the Book of Records or from some other separate source document. The Redactor appears to have used only the first section of it, covering genealogies from Reuben to Levi, and then stopping at Aaron and his successors, thus leaving out the remaining nine tribes of Israel. See: Friedman, [Sources](#), p. 129. Sarna states that

8. (Again) God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh, again Moses states his reasons why he cannot – Ex. 6.28-30.
  - a. “I am of uncircumcised lips” אָנִי עֵרֶל שִׁפְתַּיִם. Literally translated, this KJV rendering suggests the synonym for being “slow of speech and slow of tongue” or “heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue” (Ex. 4.10). “Uncircumcised” is also used metaphorically of the heart and ear, the idea being that the organ involved is, so to speak, obstructed by a “foreskin” that blocks its proper functioning.<sup>26</sup>

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“these features undoubtedly anticipate later developments: the special status to be granted to the tribe of Levi, the appointment of the Aaronides to serve as priests, and the investment of Aaron as High Priest, with one specific line of his descendants exclusively designated to succeed him. The exaltation of Aaron is enhanced even further by the note about his marriage in verse 23; his brother-in-law, Nahshon, and also presumably his father-in-law, Amminadab, was a chieftain of the tribe of Judah and an ancestor of King David. Sarna, p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Sarna, p. 33.