



ISRAEL IN EGYPT

Reading: Exodus 3 & 12

Jacob's Name is Changed to Israel (Genesis 32)

The name of the nation of Israel is derived from the name which God gave to Jacob. Jacob was returning to the land of Canaan from Padan-aram where he had married his two wives, Leah and Rachel. He now had eleven sons and large herds and flocks. On his way he was met by an angel of God. In the ensuing incident, the angel told Jacob: *"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed"* (Genesis 32:28). This was repeated a little later when he came to Bethel (Genesis 35:9-12). The name Israel means "prince with God".

So Jacob returned and settled once again in the land of Canaan. The account of the incidents associated with the life of Jacob are found from Genesis 25–49. As we read through these chapters we see the development of his trust and faith in God. In his earlier years he had often planned and plotted to achieve his desired purpose, but finally he realised that complete trust in God alone was the answer to all life's trials. For this reason we find his name listed among the faithful in Hebrews 11 (v21).

"Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs"

We recall these remarkable prophetic words that God spoke to Abraham (Genesis 15:13-16). God had foretold that Abraham's seed would go into Egypt but in the fourth generation would return to Canaan. As we read through the life of Jacob and Joseph we see how these words were so accurately fulfilled.

Joseph—the Saviour of Israel (Genesis 37–50)

The narrative of the life of Joseph, and the remarkable way in which God used him to bring about the salvation of his family (Genesis 45:4-11) is a very moving story which you will enjoy reading. Added to this we are impressed with the faith and Godly life of Joseph when faced with trial and temptation.

Joseph's faith, perfected through the trials of his life, is clearly seen when he was about to die in Egypt. He made the children of Israel swear that when God visited His people to deliver them as He had promised, they would take his bones with them and bury him in the Land of Promise (Genesis 50:24-26; cp Hebrews 11:22). He implicitly believed what God had told Abraham that his seed would be strangers in a land that was not theirs (Egypt), but that after many years of slavery God would deliver them and bring them back to the land He had promised them (Genesis 15:13-16).

Do we have this same faith in the promises that God made to Abraham? Do we believe that the promises made to Abraham will be fulfilled with the return of Jesus Christ? If we do, we need to show our faith by baptism (Galatians 3:26-29), and then endeavour to live a Godly life in this present evil age.

Israel's Deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 1-14)

The account of the hard bondage that Israel endured in Egypt is set out in Exodus chapters 1–2. Yet blended into this account is the example of the faith of the parents of Moses. God blessed their faith and Moses was saved from death that he might be the deliverer of Israel from Egypt (Hebrews 11:23-28; Acts 7:17-36). His parents' instruction concerning God and His purpose in his early years became the basis of Moses' faith. He, like Joseph, believed that God would deliver Israel from Egypt according to His word to Abraham (Genesis 15:13-16).

In Exodus 2 we read of the birth of Moses and of the incidents that caused him to flee for his life from Pharaoh in Egypt into the wilderness of Midian near to Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb.

God Reveals His Purpose and Name to Moses (Exodus 3)

This chapter commences with the impressive miracle that caused Moses to turn aside to look at the burning flame in the midst of a bush, which was however not being consumed (v1-6). It was



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“*the angel of the LORD*” (v2) that spoke with Moses, yet this angel is spoken of as “*the LORD*” (v4), and he further declares: “*I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*” (v6). From this we see that throughout the Bible the angels, who are the messengers of God, speak as if they are God Himself because they represent Him, speaking with His authority and executing miracles with the power He has given them (Psalm 103:20-21; 104:4; Hebrews 1:14).

Thus, although we read that “the LORD”, or God, was to go with Moses to deliver Israel, we now realise that it was an angel sent by God to do this work (Acts 7:30-35; Exodus 3:7-10). The angels are His servants who perform His will (Psalm 103:20-21). Since “*no man hath seen, nor can see*” God (1 Timothy 6:16) the angels represent or manifest Him to man.

We see this same principle in the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he came to reveal the character and work of God to man. In fact he was given the title “*Emmanuel*”, which means “*God with us*” (Matthew 1:23). Though Son of God he denied that he was God, but rather showed that he was doing the will and work of God (cp John 5:19,30,43). When Philip asked Jesus, “*Show us the Father*”, Jesus answered, “*Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?*” (John 14:8-9). Jesus told Philip that as he was doing the works of God and speaking the words of God he was therefore manifesting God to them.

As the angels manifested God to those to whom they revealed themselves, so Jesus did likewise. Jesus could say, “*I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me*” (John 17:6). He could also say, “*I and my Father are one*” (John 10:30), for they were one in character and purpose, though separate as individual beings.

Yahweh—the Name of God

Moses listened as the angel explained that God intended to deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt. God had chosen Moses to perform this work on His behalf with the help of the angels (Exodus 3:7-12). Moses was a very meek man (Numbers 12:3) and felt inadequate for this great task. He realised that the Israelites would ask, “*What is His name?*” (v13). Israel had become accustomed to the names of the many gods of Egypt whose names were associated with the work they were supposed to do and their position. Moses knew they would therefore ask the name of the God who was to deliver them.

The answer given was a most instructive reply—a reply that summarises **in one word** the purpose of God with mankind. That word is the name of the living God.

Verse 14

“I am that I am”

The Hebrew is “*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*”. Though these words have been translated “I am that I am”, the verb *ehyeh* is actually in the future tense and therefore should be rendered “I will be”, as it is in verse 12. So the phrase reads “I will be who I will be” and actually expresses God’s purpose in a very simple manner: “I [God] will be [or, will become] who I will be [or, will become]”. God plans to be manifested not just in angels, but in men and women.

God is the Father of a family “in heaven and earth” who bear His name (Ephesians 3:14-15). We have seen that God reveals Himself in the angels, who speak and act on His behalf.

He has also revealed Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ, who perfectly reflected the character (or moral glory) of God for all men to see (John 1:14). He did everything his Father asked him to do, even obeying His will in the way he died, and so provided the means by which men’s sins could be forgiven and they could be reconciled to God.

This work of gathering together in one all who believe in Him through His Son is clearly expressed in the following words of Jesus:

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be **one**; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be **one** in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be **one**, even as we are **one**: I in them, and thou in me, that



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they may be made perfect in **one**; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” (John 17:20-23)

God’s purpose is to unite together **“in one”** with Himself all those who strive to develop His glorious character, first by learning to think like Him and then by a way of life consistent with God’s ways. Therefore such expressions as Acts 15:14, *“God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them **a people for His name**”*, speak of God’s purpose to gather people to Himself that they might not only reflect His character in their lives now, but ultimately share His glorious immortal nature in the future (2 Peter 1:4).

God’s purpose—*“as truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with my glory”* (Numbers 14:21)—will then be fulfilled when the earth is populated only with the immortal faithful followers of God and Jesus Christ.

Yahweh—“He Who Will Be”

God said of Himself, *“I will be who I will be”*, which in Hebrew is *“Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh”* (Exodus 3:14). However when Moses spoke to the people about God he said, *“He will be”*, which in the Hebrew is **“Yahweh”**. **Yahweh** then is the Name that God has chosen for Himself **to memorialise His purpose** (Hosea 12:5). This Hebrew word, Yahweh, is printed in most Bibles in the following way—**LORD** or, **GOD**. The translators have in this way endeavoured to indicate when this Hebrew word occurs.

God takes pleasure in those who esteem His Name and the glorious purpose enshrined in it, and promises to reward them in the day when His glory is seen in the earth (Malachi 3:16-17).

Yahweh Delivers Israel from Egypt (Exodus 4 to 13)

Yahweh sent Moses to Pharaoh with the message: *“Thus saith Yahweh, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn”* (Exodus 4:22-23).

Pharaoh refused to be moved by Moses’ demands and defied Yahweh. Therefore, by the hand of Moses, God brought ten dreadful plagues upon Egypt. These ten plagues were:

1	Water turned to blood	6	Boils
2	Frogs	7	Hail
3	Lice	8	Locusts
4	Flies	9	Darkness
5	Murrain of beasts	10	Death of the Firstborn

The Passover (Exodus 12)

The last and most memorable plague is termed **“the LORD’s Passover”** (v11). This final and dramatic exhibition of destruction upon Egypt brought the deliverance of Israel from the bondage in which they were held, in fulfilment of God’s words to Abraham regarding his seed (Genesis 15:13-16).

The details of the Passover are recorded in Exodus 12. Each family or group of families was to select a lamb without blemish, and at the appointed time kill it (v5-6). They were then to sprinkle its blood upon the doorposts and lintel of their house (v7). During the evening they were to remain within the house and eat the roasted lamb (v8-10). Everything was to be ready for immediate departure (v11).

While Israel was doing this the angel of Yahweh passed through the land of Egypt. The blood on the door was a *“token”* or sign that the family within had slain their lamb (v12-13). The angel of Yahweh who was sent to destroy the firstborn, on seeing the blood would therefore pass by that house. The houses of Egypt that had no blood upon their doors suffered the dreadful punishment of the slaying of their firstborn.

Thus Israel were delivered through the blood of the lamb. It was to be a memorial to them from that time forward (v14).



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Christ our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

The lessons of the Passover point forward to the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ, “*the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29, 36). It is through his shed blood that we are redeemed (1 Peter 1:18-19).

The apostle Paul speaks of “*Christ our Passover sacrificed for us*” (1 Corinthians 5:6-8), for by his shed blood we are delivered from the bondage of sin and death as Israel were delivered from the bondage of Egypt (Hebrew 2:15).

As Israel remembered, in keeping the Passover Feast each year, that dreadful night that brought their deliverance from Egypt, so Jesus has asked all who have been delivered from slavery to sin through his blood to remember him. In the last supper with his disciples he gave them bread and wine and asked them to share bread and wine regularly in memory of his sacrifice (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14-15)

The dramatic tragedy of the slaying of Egypt’s firstborn gave Israel the opportunity to depart from Egypt. A great company, thought to total around two million in all, left Egypt (Exodus 12:37-38). However it was not long before Pharaoh determined to pursue Israel and capture them again (Exodus 14). Israel’s only way of escape was provided by God in the remarkable miracle of the opening of the Red Sea so that they could cross to safety. Moses’ dramatic words on that occasion were, “*Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Yahweh*” (v13). Yahweh opened the sea and Israel crossed to safety, but when the Egyptians tried to follow them the waters closed upon them and destroyed them all (v30-31).

A Symbol of Baptism

The apostle Paul saw, in the deliverance of Israel as they walked between the walls of water of the Red Sea to safety on the other side, the symbol of baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). How fitting this figure is. When we are baptised we leave our old way of life (“Egypt”) behind and rise again to a new life (on the way to the “Promised Land”), following the example of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-7).

Trials in the Wilderness - the Journey to Mt Sinai (Exodus 16-19)

God had dramatically delivered Israel from Egypt. Now He was to test their faith to see whether they would believe His promise that He would bring them back to the land of their fathers (Genesis 15:13-16).

They lacked food and murmured against Moses. God provided a daily supply of manna to sustain them (Exodus 16). That manna was typical of the Lord Jesus Christ, “the bread of life” (John 6:27-63). They lacked water and once again murmured. Again God responded by supplying ample water out of a rock (Exodus 17). That rock symbolised Christ (1 Corinthians 10:3-4) whose words are life-giving (John 4:10-14; 6:63). God was putting them to the test, so that they might learn to trust in Him. For the most part Israel failed to exhibit that faith which pleases God (Deuteronomy 8:1-6; Hebrews 11:6).

There are many lessons and warnings for us in Israel’s wilderness wanderings (1 Corinthians 10:1-13). Do we trust in God and believe that He will provide us with that which is necessary to sustain us in our pilgrimage to His Kingdom? (Matthew 6:25-34).



Summary Points

1. Jacob had his name changed by God to **Israel (Genesis 32:28)**.
2. Joseph was the one chosen by God to protect and deliver his brethren when they went down into Egypt. At the end of his life he firmly believed that God would deliver Israel from Egypt and so he made them promise to carry his bones out when they departed (**Genesis 50:24-26**).
3. Moses was raised up to deliver Israel from Egypt (**Exodus 1-2**).
4. God, through an angel, appeared to Moses at the burning bush at Mount Sinai. There God revealed His memorial Name to Moses—“*I will be who I will be*”, or “*Yahweh*” (**Exodus 3:12-15**). This name expresses God’s purpose through His Son to gather together into one all those who strive to manifest His Name in their lives by faithful and loving obedience to Him (**John 17:20-23**). God is still taking out of the nations “*a people for His Name*” (**Acts 15:14**).
5. The Passover lamb, which was slain to provide deliverance for Israel from Egypt, points forward to the deliverance from sin and death that is available through the blood of Jesus Christ (**1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8**).
6. The crossing of the Red Sea has a typical significance pointing forward to baptism (**1 Corinthians 10:1-2**).

Lesson 12 - Questions

- 1 God changed Jacob’s name. What was it changed to, and what does it mean?
- 2 Joseph made the people of Israel swear that they would do something. What was this?
- 3 Who was the man God selected to deliver Israel from Egypt?
- 4 Moses asked God what His name was. What was the name God revealed to Moses?
- 5 What does “Yahweh” mean?
- 6 God’s purpose is to gather all believers together in “one” through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ referred to this in a prayer. What did he say in that prayer?
- 7 How many plagues did God send upon Egypt to humble them so that He could then deliver Israel from Egypt?
- 8 The Passover lamb was to be without blemish. Who did this lamb point forward to?
- 9 How is the crossing of the Red Sea a symbol of baptism into Christ?