

## Exodus 6

We begin this chapter with Moses, Aaron, and the people of Israel in despair. Moses and Aaron (ignoring God's explicit instructions on what to say) had spoken with Pharaoh and demanded, then requested that God's people be released. The effort had backfired spectacularly, and the life of the people had become worse than it was before. The people were now despondent and angry with their erstwhile liberators. It is in this moment of doubt and despair that God speaks and reminds Moses and Aaron that it is YHWH who will, with a mighty hand, force Pharaoh to let God's people leave. This proclamation (it is similar in fashion to other royal proclamations) is followed by a reminder from God about 1) God's identity and 2) what God has planned for the people of Israel.

God reminds Aaron and Moses that YHWH is the same God who covenanted with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give them (their descendants) the land of Canaan. YHWH is also the God who hears the cries of the oppressed and will, because of the covenant, make seven promises. The first three promises deal with liberation. God will "free", "deliver" and "redeem" the people. The Hebrew word for "free" can also mean to "bring out." In other words, God's remembrance of the covenant will move a people from slavery to liberation. This marks YHWH as a god who listens, cares, fulfills promises, and liberates. The next two promises focus on God's relationship with the children of Israel. God will "take" them as God's people (an imagery of marriage) and will become "your God." It should be noted that the term "will" is used in a similar fashion to God's personal name, "I will be what I will be." Here the name is fleshed out in relationship to a people and now a nation. I will be your God and you will be my special people. This claiming by God foreshadows the covenant at Sinai where this new relationship will be fleshed out. The final two promises focus on "bring" and "give". These two promises deal with the land of Canaan. God will bring the people into the land and God will give them the land as an inheritance. These seven promises are then completed with a reminder that it is the covenant God YHWH who is making them. As should be expected, the people don't believe Moses and Aaron. Even so God commands Moses and Aaron to go and speak these promises to Pharaoh, regardless of Moses' objections.

The genealogy that follows, though it appears to interrupt the arc of the story is in fact intended to do so. Genealogies are often used to mark the end of one section of a story and the beginning of another. This genealogy marks the end of Moses and Aaron attempting to use their powers to convince Pharaoh to set the people free, and the beginning of God's acts of power to accomplish God's promises to the people. A couple of things in the genealogy. First Moses and Aaron are clearly Levites, meaning they are true Israelites and are of what will be the priestly family. Second, It appears that while Aaron's lineage will continue, Moses will not. In a sense, Moses is a man for this moment while Aaron has a continuing role to play. The chapter ends where it began with Moses being commanded to liberate the people even though Moses lacks the confidence to do so.

Reflection: One of the great myths about what God is doing here is that God is setting the people free. This is not quite true. While they will be freed from Pharaoh's oppression, God is not freeing them to do as they please. God is liberating them so that they can be God's special people; a people bound together in worship of YHWH and organized around the life-giving covenant Law. While some people have argued that this is simply going from enslavement to one king to enslavement by another king, the difference is that Pharaoh enslaves to bring death, YHWH marries to bring life and flourishing to the world.

Questions:

1. How have you witnessed God being a God of liberation?
2. What do you make of the thought that Moses is a man just for this moment and Aaron is a man (lineage) for the future? Why would that be?
3. How would you describe your place in the family of God?