

Lesson 5

MOSES THE LIBERATOR



Israel lived in Egypt for a long time not a few years but four centuries. In the early period, the Egyptians respected them because of Joseph. But later they hated the people of Israel who in the course of time spread over the whole of the land and amassed wealth and became strong. So they began to crush Israel. The Pharaoh of that time consented to this.

The Egyptians forced the people of Israel to do very hard jobs treating them like slaves. They were forced to do all the work in the field as well as work with mortar and brick. Egyptian overseers were appointed to treat them without mercy. The people of Israel were not allowed any time for rest or recreation.

Thus the people of Joseph who was the governor of Egypt became slaves in Egypt. The Egyptians treated them cruelly and the people of God were subjected to many hardships. But God prepared a way to save them from these hardships. This is described clearly in Exodus, the second book of the Old Testament.

The Birth of Moses

The pharaoh decreed that all the male children born in the Israel families must be killed. Many newborn babies were killed accordingly. But one Israeli mother not wishing her son to be killed brought him up in secrecy. When the boy was three months old and no more possible to be brought up in secrecy, she made a basket of papyrus lined with bitumen and pitch for water proofing, put the baby in this and left the basket with the baby among the reeds in the river Nile.

The daughter of the Pharaoh saw this baby in a basket among the reeds as she was going down to bathe at the river. She decided to bring up the boy as her own son. This princess wanted someone to look after the baby and the real mother of the child offered to do that for her. After his childhood the boy was returned to the princess and she called him Moses, which means 'taken from water'. There he lived in the royal palace as one of the princes.

Moses Flees from Egypt

Moses grew up in the palace as a prince of Egypt. But he was aware that he was a Hebrew (Israelite). After reaching adulthood once he went to see his people. He saw with his own eyes the sufferings that his people were subjected to. When he saw an Egyptian overseer beating an Israelite, he got angry and killed that Egyptian. Learning of this the Pharaoh decided to punish Moses. But Moses fled from Egypt and reached the land of Midian. There he worked as the shepherd of the priest Jethro. Later, he married Jethro's daughter.

God calls Moses

One day while grazing sheep on mount Horeb, Moses had a vision. A bush was on fire. Though the fire was blazing the bush was not burnt up. Moses was wonderstruck at this unusual sight and approached the bush to have a closer look. Then a voice was heard from the bush. It was the voice of God; and it said: "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground He said further, I am the God of your father; the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:5-6).

Hearing this Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But God said: "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed I know their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey...So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt" (Ex. 3:7-10).

Hearing this Moses wondered: "Who am I to do all this?" And he put this question to God Himself, who replied: "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you:"(Ex. 3:12).

Mission of Moses

God called Moses to entrust him with a great responsibility. God told Moses: "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you," (Ex 3:15).

Moses was given two messages from God; one to be carried to the people of Israel and the other for the Pharaoh of Egypt. The message to Israel was: 'God will save them from slavery in Egypt and lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey'. The message for the pharaoh was: 'Release the people of Israel so that they can go to a wilderness on a three-day's journey where they can offer sacrifice to the Lord God'.

God revealed these things in detail to Moses and made it clear that the Lord, who had led Israel in the past, is still with them. God decided to deliver Israel from their misery and he appointed Moses to carry out this mission.

Three Signs

Moses still had doubts and fears. He said: "They do not believe me or listen to me, but say 'The LORD did not appear to you'" (Ex. 4:1).

God gave the following three signs to Moses to make him feel powerful: God asked Moses to throw his staff on the ground, and when he did so the staff turned into a snake. When Moses stepped back in fear God asked him to catch that snake by its tail. When he did so it turned back into the staff.

In the second sign Moses put his hand on his chest as God asked him to do. When he stretched it out it turned white as snow as if affected by leprosy. God asked him to put the hand back on the chest and when he did that, it was well again.

God gave Moses a third sign to be used if the people of Israel did not believe the first two signs. God said: "You shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water that you shall take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground" (Ex.4:9).

Aaron to Assist

Even after all this Moses was still scared. He said to the Lord: “O my Lord, I have never been eloquent,... I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (Ex. 4:10). Moses requested the Lord to send someone very fluent in tongue in his place. So God gave Moses his own brother Aaron to assist him. God promised that He would be with both of them strengthening them in their mission. He also gave Moses the power to work miracles with his staff.

Mission to Egypt

Taking leave of Jethro, Moses proceeded to Egypt with his wife and children. God gave further instructions to Moses during this journey. He told Aaron: “You go towards the desert to meet Moses.” When they met, Moses explained to Aaron all that had happened. They assembled all the elders of Israel and explained all that God had told Moses. Moses also showed the signs before the people. They all believed and worshipped the Lord (Ex. 4:18-31).

Before Pharaoh

Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh. They asked him to release the people of Israel that they may go and worship the Lord God. But Pharaoh's response was: “Who is the LORD, that I should heed Him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go” (Ex 5:2).

Pharaoh assumed that Israel wanted to worship the Lord out of laziness. So he resolved that these people should not be allowed any leisure, even to think of God. Thus the workload of Israel was increased and their overseers were asked to treat the Israelites more harshly. The Israelites blamed Moses and Aaron for this hardship. Moses took these problems to the Lord who encouraged him and said that the things that He had told him would come to pass. The Lord also convinced Moses that Pharaoh would soon release the people of Israel.

The ways of God are different from human ways. Even in the midst of hardships God leads us to salvation. When we face dangers He shall protect us, for He is faithful. The history of Moses gives us the message that the Lord, who called, strengthened and guided Moses, shall strengthen and guide us also.

Let us Pray

O God, who selected Moses who had weaknesses, and appointed him for great things, help me also to overcome the weaknesses and helplessness of my life.

Read the word of God and narrate

Narrate the call of Moses by God (Exodus 3:1-22).



Word of God for our Guidance

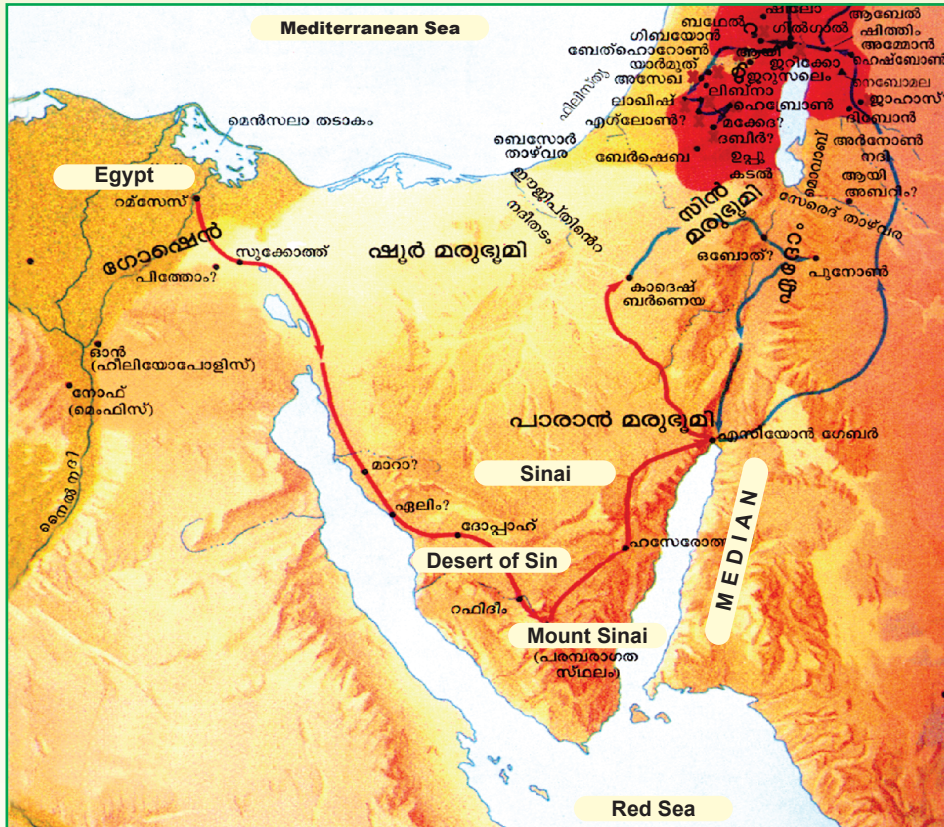
“I will take you as my people, and I will be your God” (Exodus 6:7).

My decision

As Moses accepted the duties entrusted by God, I will follow the directives of my parents.

Let us do

Point out the places given below on the map. Desert of sin, Median, Egypt.



Let us find out the answer

1. What is the meaning of the name, Moses?
2. Where did Moses have the vision of God?
3. What were the things God entrusted to Moses while sending him to Pharaoh?
4. Whom did God give as a helper to Moses?
5. What is the message that the life history of Moses gives us?