

## Adam Clarke:

## Preface to the Book of Exodus

The name by which this book is generally distinguished is borrowed from the Septuagint, in which it is called ἡ ἐξοδος, Exodus, the going out or departure; and by the Codex Alexandrinus, ἡ ἐξοδος ἐκ τῆς Αἰγύπτου, the departure from Egypt, because the departure of the Israelites from Egypt is the most remarkable fact mentioned in the whole book. In the Hebrew Bibles it is called וַעֲלֵה שְׁמוֹת (Ve-Elleh Shemoth), these are the names, which are the words with which it commences. It contains a history of the transactions of 145 years, beginning at the death of Joseph, where the book of Genesis ends, and coming down to the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness at the foot of Mount Sinai.

In this book Moses details the causes and motives of the persecution raised up against the Israelites in Egypt, the orders given by Pharaoh to destroy all the Hebrew male children, and the prevention of the execution of those orders through the humanity and piety of the midwives appointed to deliver the Hebrew women. The marriage of Amram and Jochebed is next related; the birth of Moses; the manner in which he was exposed on the river Nile, and in which he was discovered by the daughter of Pharaoh; his being providentially put under the care of his own mother to be nursed, and educated as the son of the Egyptian princess; how, when forty years of age, he left the court, visited and defended his brethren; the danger to which he was in consequence exposed; his flight to Arabia; his contract with Jethro, priest or prince of Midian, whose daughter Zipporah he afterwards espoused. While employed in keeping the flocks of his father-in-law, God appeared to him in a burning bush, and commissioned him to go and deliver his countrymen from the oppression under which they groaned. Having given him the most positive assurances of protection and power to work miracles, and having associated with him his brother Aaron, he sent them first to the Israelites to declare the purpose of Jehovah, and afterwards to Pharaoh to require him, in the name of the Most High, to set the Israelites at liberty. Pharaoh, far from submitting, made their yoke more grievous; and Moses, on a second interview with him, to convince him by whose authority he made the demand, wrought a miracle before him and his courtiers. This being in a certain way imitated by Pharaoh's magicians, he hardened his heart, and refused to let the people go, till God, by ten extraordinary plagues, convinced him of his omnipotence, and obliged him to consent to dismiss a people over whose persons and properties he had claimed and exercised a right founded only on the most tyrannical principles.

The plagues by which God afflicted the whole land of Egypt, Goshen excepted, where the Israelites dwelt, were the following: -

1. He turned all the waters of Egypt into blood.
2. He caused innumerable frogs to come over the whole land.
3. He afflicted both man and beast with immense swarms of vermin.
4. Afterwards with a multitude of different kinds of insects.
5. He sent a grievous pestilence among their cattle.
6. Smote both man and beast with boils.
7. Destroyed their crops with grievous storms of hail, accompanied with the most terrible thunder and lightning.
8. Desolated the whole land by innumerable swarms of locusts.
9. He spread a palpable darkness all over Egypt; and,
10. In one night slew all the first-born, both of man and beast, through the whole of the Egyptian territories.

What proved the miraculous nature of all these plagues most particularly was, 1st, Their coming exactly according to the prediction and at the command of Moses and Aaron. 2dly, Their extending only to the Egyptians, and leaving the land of Goshen, the Israelites, their cattle and substance, entirely untouched. After relating all these things in detail, with their attendant circumstances, Moses describes the institution, reason, and celebration of the passover; the preparation of the Israelites for their departure; their leaving Goshen and beginning their journey to the promised land, by the way of Rameses, Succoth, and Etham. How Pharaoh, repenting of the permission he had given them to depart, began to pursue them with an immense army of horse and foot, and overtook them at their encampment at Baal-zephon, on the borders of the Red Sea. Their destruction appearing then to be inevitable, Moses farther relates that having called earnestly upon God, and stretched his rod over the waters, they became divided, and the Israelites entered into the bed of the sea, and passed over to the opposite shore. Pharaoh and his host madly pursuing in the same track, the rear of their army being fairly entered by the time the last of the Israelites had made good their landing on the opposite coast. Moses stretching his rod again over the waters, they returned to their former channel and overwhelmed the Egyptian army, so that every soul perished.

Moses next gives a circumstantial account of the different encampments of the Israelites in the wilderness, during the space of nearly forty years: the miracles wrought in their behalf; the chief of which were the pillar of

cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, to direct and protect them in the wilderness; the bringing water out of a rock for them and their cattle; feeding them with manna from heaven; bringing innumerable flocks of quails to their camp; giving them a complete victory over the Amalekites at the intercession of Moses; and particularly God's astonishing manifestation of himself on Mount Sinai, when he delivered to Moses an epitome of his whole law, in what was called the Ten Words or Ten Commandments.

Moses proceeds to give a circumstantial detail of the different laws, statutes, and ordinances which he received from God, and particularly the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, and the awful display of the Divine Majesty on that solemn occasion; the formation of the Ark, holy Table and Candlestick; the Tabernacle, with its furniture, covering, courts, etc., the brazen Altar, golden Altar, brazen Laver, anointing oil, perfume, sacerdotal garments for Aaron and his sons, and the artificers employed on the work of the Tabernacle, etc. He then gives an account of Israel's idolatry in the matter of the golden calf, made under the direction of Aaron; God's displeasure, and the death of the principal idolaters; the erection and consecration of the Tabernacle, and its being filled and encompassed with the Divine glory, with the order and manner of their marches by direction of the miraculous pillar; with which the book concludes.