

Daily Devotions  
*from the United Reformed Church*

Stories from Exodus  
part 1



Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> June – Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June

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### Introduction

Like Genesis, Exodus is often missed in our Lectionary readings. For the next month or so we will look at the stories in Exodus but skip over most of the legal texts. Many of the stories will be familiar but some less so.

signs and wonders. When he healed the sick, he told his disciples to keep quiet. Feeding the hungry, he talked about the bread of life which banished spiritual hunger. He was wary of signs and miracles which were the trade of the mountebank and con-man. But when it came to the last plague, the death of the first-born, he offered himself, so that, as the High Priest in the Court of the Sanhedrin inadvertently prophesied, "One man should die for the people". "Let my people go" said Moses, "No man has greater love than this, that he lays down his life for his friends", says Jesus.

#### Prayer

God give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Amen

*The Oxford Book of Prayer*

Sunday 21st June Psalm 2

Ruth Watson Minister in Bolton and Salford Missional Partnership

#### Why Do the Nations Rage

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Why do the nations rage  
against God's righteous reign,  
assuming that the law is  
some restrictive chain ?  
Enthroned on high,  
God hears their cry –  
And knows their threats  
are all in vain.

2: For by divine decree  
heaven's purpose is made known :  
God's one and only Son now  
sits on Zion's throne ;  
His many foes  
He overthrows  
And claims the nations  
as His own.

3: Give honour to the Son: be wise, and seek His face,  
for those who spurn God's law risk judgment and disgrace –  
So come, draw near in reverent fear, and He will be your hiding place.

#### Reflection

Have you ever been Ofsteded? Inspected by Her Majesty's Government's body responsible for education? It's a daunting experience especially when in the early days of teaching experience. But if you are doing your best you have nothing to fear. Have you ever been done for speeding? Speed cameras are seen as the bane of some people's life, but if you are abiding by the speed limit they are nothing to fear. We rail against anything that "catches us out" doing something we shouldn't - whether that is "big brother" watching us or having an authority figure in the room. But God's law is there to protect us, not oppress us. It is there to show us the right way to live, not to restrict our living. May we show obedience to the law without challenging the law-giver and so show true reverence to God and so live in peace.

## Prayer

Lord, we may say that rules are made to be broken, but your rules are to be obeyed. Help us to keep to your law that we may walk the narrow path of truth and not stray for our own benefit. Guide us in our daily living that we may know your rules yet not feel restricted by following them. Keep us safe in your loving care. Amen

### Monday 22nd June The Burning Bush

Kirsty Mabbott, CRCW, St Columba's URC & Ansty Rd URC, Coventry

#### Exodus 3: 1 - 12

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he 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.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord 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, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.' But Moses said to God,

### Tuesday 30th June Aaron's Rod

The Rev'd Peter Moth, retired minister, St Andrew's URC, Kenton, Newcastle upon Tyne Name,

#### Exodus 7: 8 - 13

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'When Pharaoh says to you, "Perform a wonder", then you shall say to Aaron, "Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, and it will become a snake."' So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did as the Lord had commanded; Aaron threw down his staff before Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same by their secret arts. Each one threw down his staff, and they became snakes; but Aaron's staff swallowed up theirs. Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

#### Reflection

Exodus 7 and the account of the audience with Pharaoh is the prelude to the 10 plagues of Egypt and Moses's commitment to set his people free. He was a man of influence at Pharaoh's court (Exodus 11.3) but his brother Aaron was the better speaker, and so their 2-pronged campaign began. It was common practice at Pharaoh's court to look for magic signs and omens to decide policy, and the "stick trick" with snakes (baby crocodiles) was probably standard repertoire. Moses and Aaron win, but the Pharaoh is unimpressed. The plagues follow.

I reflect at a time of plague, Covid-19. We don't know whether it's God's judgement on our climate abuse or just one of those "acts of God" sent to try us. I worry because I know what the last plague is, and I'm a first-born. I reflect on Aaron: called to be a prophet. I'm humbled by Moses, called to be the voice of God, shouting "set my people free". I remember the last of the prophets, John Baptist, and his fate at the court of Herod. I kneel before Jesus, the voice of God made flesh. He was sceptical about

God said to Moses, 'I'll give you my authority in Pharaoh's eyes. You shall do all that I command you and Aaron your brother shall do the talking and tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land.'

God is giving his reluctant servant Moses instructions for the task ahead. God has already listened to all of Moses' "yes, buts" and has allowed Aaron to accompany him on his quest to free the people of Israel.

First, God tells Moses that, in Pharaoh's eyes, Moses will seem like a god – that is, he will be able to do things Pharaoh hasn't seen before. Moses and Aaron are to do exactly what God tells them to do. But then God tells Moses that God will harden Pharaoh's heart. God will permit his stubbornness to remain, so that God may have the greater opportunity to multiply wonders in the land.

The miracles will just get greater and greater, but Pharaoh still isn't going to listen. Until judgment will fall on Egypt and they will "know that I am the Lord and the Israelites will be brought out. And then we're told that "Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD commanded them."

So, never be afraid if you're asked to do something. Be sure that God will give you the ability and the strength to do it whatever it is.

#### Prayer

Loving God, thank you for the account of history in Exodus that shows You heard the cries of your people and you rescued them from their oppressors. Help us to be people of Prayer. Help us trust your faithfulness and be willing to serve you when you call knowing that you will equip us for the task.

'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?' He said, 'I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.'

#### Reflection

When Moses approaches the burning bush, I doubt he had considered that his whole world was about change.

God has seen how oppressed the Hebrew people have become and has chosen Moses to go and challenge the oppressor and bring liberation for a whole group of people. God always sides with the oppressed and calls each of us to do the same. This isn't easy work, God doesn't lie to us and claim it will be easy, God does stand with us, teach us, equip us and empower us to call out oppressive structures.

For some, this comes in a single burning bush moment, but for others it is a drip-drip effect. Neither is better than the other, they are just different. This passage reminds us that God calls each of us to make a stand against oppression, and when we are called, we often don't think we are the right person, or that we have the right skills, enough smartness, the right words...the list can go on, and you will know what that "not ready/right for the job" thing is for you. But here's the clincher, God already knows you are exactly the right person to break the oppressive chains you have been called to break and if you don't have the "right stuff" right now, you will gain the "right stuff" as you work for God to bring liberation.

So I encourage you, in our world that has changed dramatically this year, keep standing with God to break oppressive practices and systems even if you don't know how you are going to do it yet. Embrace the burning bush, and the drip-drip that is God's call, and remember God is with you as you stand up for those who cry out to God for liberation.

## Prayer

Great God, we thank you for having a heart for those who are most vulnerable and oppressed. Light the fire of righteousness in us to hear your call to come alongside those who are suffering and help break the chains of oppression knowing you are with us always. Amen.

## Tuesday 23rd June The Divine Name

The Rev'd Nicholas Jones, Minister, Heswall URC & St. George's URC, Thornton Hough

Exodus 3: 13 - 22

But Moses said to God, 'If I come to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your ancestors has sent me to you", and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' He said further, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, "I am has sent me to you."' God also said to 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":

This is my name for ever,  
and this my title for all generations.

Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, "The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying: I have given heed to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt. I declare that I will bring you up out of the misery of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey." They will listen to your voice; and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; let us now go a three days' journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God." I know, however, that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a

## Monday 29th June Moses' fear

The Rev'd Sue Henderson, retired minister, Bradford on Avon United Church

Exodus 6: 28 - 7:7

On the day when the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, he said to him, 'I am the Lord; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I am speaking to you.' But Moses said in the Lord's presence, 'Since I am a poor speaker, why would Pharaoh listen to me?' The Lord said to Moses, 'See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and I will multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt. When Pharaoh does not listen to you, I will lay my hand upon Egypt and bring my people the Israelites, company by company, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgement. The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out from among them.' Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the Lord commanded them. Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

## Reflection

Moses and Aaron had already spoken to Pharaoh to no avail. The state of the Israelites became worse for they had no straw to make their bricks.

Life is full of hard, impossible questions. And the question "why?" often tops the list and we wonder what God is up to.

God's very patient with us. How often have you felt, "I can't do it, I haven't the ability."

many felt he was beyond God's help. Those who said this probably didn't feel that God was unable to help David; they probably felt that God was unwilling to help him. They looked at David's past sin and decided that this was all what he deserved from God. They said that God was against David, and he was just getting what he deserved. This thought was most painful of all for David – the thought that God might be against him and that there really was no help for him in God.

Although many said there was no help for him in God, David knew that God was his shield. Others – and there were many, couldn't shake David's confidence in a God of love and help. When he was under attack from a cunning and ruthless enemy, David knew that God was his shield. This wasn't a prayer asking God to fulfil this; this is a strong declaration of fact: 'You, O LORD, are a shield around me'. God was more than David's protection. He also was the one who put David on higher ground, lifting his head and showing him glory. There was nothing glorious or head-lifting in David's circumstances, but there was in his God.

Have we all not at times wondered how glorious it would be if we had a faith like David? I know I have! David knew beyond doubt that God would protect him. Can we say the same?

God sustains us in our sleep, but we take it for granted. Think of it: we sleep, unconscious, dead to the world – yet we breathe, our hearts pump, our organs operate. The same God who sustains us in our sleep will sustain us in our difficulties. Thanks be to God.

#### Prayer

You, O Lord, are the shield around me.  
You are my glory, the One who holds my head high.  
Make me worthy of your protection.  
Help me to endure and to show your love to others,  
For Jesus' sake, Amen

mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it; after that he will let you go. I will bring this people into such favour with the Egyptians that, when you go, you will not go empty-handed; each woman shall ask her neighbour and any woman living in the neighbour's house for jewellery of silver and of gold, and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters; and so you shall plunder the Egyptians.'

#### Reflection

My surname is one the most common in the English-speaking world. This means it isn't very distinctive and is shared by millions of people.

Sometimes this might be a good thing, sometimes not. One advantage is certainly that it's very rare I have to repeat it, or that it gets misspelled. But however common a name might be it still tells you something. You could make an educated guess at which nation was the land of my fathers (at least on one side of my family tree) and you'd be right.

Jesus also didn't have a very distinctive name – there were many people called Jesus (or Joshua) son of Joseph, so often his home town is added. Jesus of Nazareth, to distinguish him from any others.

There's something of that in this passage. How were the people of Israel to distinguish their God from false Gods? Moses is first sent to say 'I am has sent me to you' - a grammatically challenging and enigmatic sentence. But then he is to clarify, precisely by suggesting God can be understood only in relationship to people. The God of your ancestors, of Jacob, Isaac, Abraham. Our God, the God that we turn to and worship, the God we love and who loves us.

We have many names, titles and descriptions of God, precisely because no single one of them could ever be enough. Rather, they all tell us something about our own relationship with the God we worship and turn to.

## Prayer

Lord, Mother, Father, Friend, 'I am',  
whatever we call you,  
however we address you,  
whichever name we prefer,  
we thank you that you are our God,  
that you love us and know our names,  
and that you have revealed yourself to us  
as you did to Moses. Amen.

[Wednesday 24th June Moses Commissioned](#)

The Rev'd Jacky Embrey, Moderator of Mersey Synod

Exodus 4:1 - 17

Then Moses answered, 'But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, "The Lord did not appear to you."' The Lord said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' He said, 'A staff.' And he said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw the staff on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses drew back from it. Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Reach out your hand, and seize it by the tail'—so he reached out his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in his hand— 'so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.'

Again, the Lord said to him, 'Put your hand inside your cloak.' He put his hand into his cloak; and when he took it out, his hand was leprous, as white as snow. Then God said, 'Put your hand back into your cloak'—so he put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored like the rest of his body— 'If they will not believe you or heed the first sign, they may believe the second sign. If they will not believe even these two signs or heed you, 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.'

We give thanks for people attempting impossible tasks and achieving amazing goals. We pray particularly for peace-makers in places where land is disputed. May they have the energy to persevere even when the struggle seems overwhelming, the care to listen, and the courage to speak. Help us to play our part in building a world where all your children can live in peace. Amen

[Sunday 28th June Psalm 3](#)

Ann Barton - Worship Leader at Whittlesford URC in the Eastern Synod

O Lord, how many are my foes!

Many are rising against me;

many are saying to me,

"There is no help for you in God."

3 But you, O Lord, are a shield around me,

my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.

I cry aloud to the Lord,

and he answers me from his holy hill. Selah

I lie down and sleep;

I wake again, for the Lord sustains me.

I am not afraid of ten thousands of people

who have set themselves against me all around.

Rise up, O Lord!

Deliver me, O my God!

For you strike all my enemies on the cheek;

you break the teeth of the wicked.

Deliverance belongs to the Lord;

may your blessing be on your people!

## Reflection

At the writing of this Psalm David was in a great deal of trouble. His own son, Absalom, had led what seemed to be a successful rebellion against him. Many of his previous friends and associates forsook him and joined the ranks of those who troubled him.<sup>17</sup> David's situation was so bad that



Aaron, and gave them orders regarding the Israelites and Pharaoh king of Egypt, charging them to free the Israelites from the land of Egypt.

### Reflection

Although this is ostensibly a promise of liberation, it is hard not to read this passage without thinking of the many places where land is disputed. Whether Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, Crimea - or the colonial legacies in many other countries - we know the harm in such disputes, and it is difficult to imagine a loving God giving land that is already occupied to another group of people. So while central to the story of God's chosen people, it's not straightforward for us today.

I had forgotten that Moses was reluctant to speak to Pharaoh, and how defeated he felt about the Israelites' reaction. I suspect I'm not the only one for whom these feelings ring true. The times when the boss asks you to do something that you think is impossible. The times when you've tried to do something and it's fallen completely flat. The times when you can see a problem coming but no-one is interested in hearing bad news and doing something about it! And just as that happens in secular workplaces, we have those experiences in churches too. Setting up an event that no-one comes to. Asking for volunteers and no-one steps forward.

God is clear, however, that Moses and Aaron are up to the task ahead, and we'll read more about this in the days ahead. Most of us don't feel we get quite such clear orders from God, and would probably question anyone who did feel quite so clearly directed! But when we do feel called to act, perhaps we should take heart that just as the disheartened Moses would eventually lead Israel out of Egypt, we too may be able to achieve amazing things even though we may feel weak and ineffective.

### Prayer

But Moses said to the Lord, 'O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.' Then the Lord said to him, 'Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak.' But he said, 'O my Lord, please send someone else.' Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, 'What of your brother Aaron the Levite? I know that he can speak fluently; even now he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you his heart will be glad. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth; and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do. He indeed shall speak for you to the people; he shall serve as a mouth for you, and you shall serve as God for him. Take in your hand this staff, with which you shall perform the signs.'

### Reflection

Often the more significant a Biblical character is, the more that we are told about their ancestry and background. In Moses's case, we know more about his 'back story' than almost anyone else. We also hear more about the story of his call.

Moses took a lot of persuading to do what God was calling him to do. The list of reasons (excuses?) why he was the wrong person for the role goes on and on. I wonder whether Moses really did prevaricate more than anyone else, or if it's simply that we hear a lot about it, because of his importance.

Either way, the important thing is that, despite the number of 'buts' in today's passage, Moses did answer God's call. As a result, despite the number of 'buts', God led Moses and God's people out of slavery and through the wilderness to the brink of the Promised Land.

God helped Moses to work through his hesitations. Together, they overcame Moses' reluctance and his lack of confidence in his abilities. Then God began to do great things in and through Moses. God can and will do the same for each of us and for all of us, if we are willing to turn aside, to listen and to work things through with God.

God forgave Moses his reluctance and used him greatly. So, let's not worry about our own hesitancy or dwell too much on our lack of skills. Let's simply turn aside, listen for God and allow God to steer us onto the next step along the way.

Prayer

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,  
open our hearts and minds  
to recognise the burning bushes that you light along our way.  
Give us the courage to step aside and to meet with you there.  
Help us to overcome our hesitancy and lack of confidence.  
Give us courage to step out with you on whatever path you show us  
for you know us better than we know ourselves.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.

[Thursday 25th June Moses returns to Egypt](#)

Leo Roberts, Children's and Youth Development Officer, North Western Synod

Exodus 4: 18 - 31

Moses went back to his father-in-law Jethro and said to him, 'Please let me go back to my kindred in Egypt and see whether they are still living.' And Jethro said to Moses, 'Go in peace.' The Lord said to Moses in Midian, 'Go back to Egypt; for all those who were seeking your life are dead.' So Moses took his wife and his sons, put them on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt; and Moses carried the staff of God in his hand.

Prayer

Lord, when we forget that all we had, have and will have comes from you, be gentle with us so that we can allow the beautiful world you have given us to recover and replenish itself. As people and nations selfishly demand more may your name be made known, for the good of us all.

Amen

[Saturday 27th June God promises liberation](#)

Gordon Woods, Elder, St. Columba's URC, Oxford

Exodus 6: 1 - 13

Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh: Indeed, by a mighty hand he will let them go; by a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land.' God also spoke to Moses and said to him: 'I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name "The Lord" I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens. I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the Israelites, "I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.'" Moses told this to the Israelites; but they would not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and their cruel slavery. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, 'Go and tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his land.' But Moses spoke to the Lord, 'The Israelites have not listened to me; how then shall Pharaoh listen to me, poor speaker that I am?' Thus the Lord spoke to Moses and

## Reflection

I'm no archaeologist and I'm not going to get involved in which Pharaoh might have been Joseph's and later which Pharaoh was the Pharaoh of the oppression / Exodus - every archaeologist has their favourite idea and I've heard at least 6 named. But the Pyramids of the Middle Kingdom / 12th dynasty were built of bricks. The earliest were bricks made of mud and straw. Some think that one of these must be Joseph's Pyramid. 400 years later mud blocks without straw were used. It appears that so much plant material had been removed from the delta that the type of grass/ papyrus was unable to regenerate.

Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh stating that the Lord says "Let my people go". Pharaoh's response that he does not know "the Lord" is reinforced by the demand for the same or more from "his people" with less available resources. In v.16 "You are unjust to your own people" is odd, since the Israelites are not Pharaoh's people. The text is uncertain, and a better reading may be "The fault is with you." '\* I take the point but also see nothing odd about the language of slavery and ownership being used by Pharaoh, following the challenge of who is really the ruler, the Pharaoh, of this people. The upshot is that the Israelite supervisors pass the blame on to Moses and Aaron, pushing Moses into speaking to God. Pharaoh is about to discover who the Lord is.

Like the Lord's people, reliant entirely on the resources of Goshen, we live entirely on the resources of earth. The more we use without allowing them to replenish, the more we become like the Egyptians trying to force the workers to make bricks without straw. Like the Israelite supervisors facing Egyptians with swords, we see fights over food between people, trade tariffs and quotas between nations.

*\*Walter Houston "Exodus" Oxford Bible Commentary accessed 6th March 2020*

And the Lord said to Moses, 'When you go back to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord: Israel is my firstborn son. I said to you, 'Let my son go that he may worship me.' But you refused to let him go; now I will kill your firstborn son.'"

On the way, at a place where they spent the night, the Lord met him and tried to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin, and touched Moses' feet with it, and said, 'Truly you are a bridegroom of blood to me!' So he let him alone. It was then she said, 'A bridegroom of blood by circumcision.'

The Lord said to Aaron, 'Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.' So he went; and he met him at the mountain of God and kissed him. Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord with which he had sent him, and all the signs with which he had charged him. Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the Israelites. Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and performed the signs in the sight of the people. The people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had given heed to the Israelites and that he had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshipped.

## Reflection

"You can never go back" they say. I often hear this after leading worship but it is more commonly stated with regards to football managers returning to a club which they had previously served or some other return in the sporting field. Moses actually WANTS to go back to Egypt despite the Lord telling him that he was definitely going to put some challenges in his path.

And he took his wife and sons to share the peril, what a guy! And, boy, was there peril. Zipporah's quick, and somewhat lateral, thinking meant

that the Lord did not kill Moses (although one of his sons lost a foreskin in the process) and Moses was able to meet with his brother, Aaron, who convinced the Israelites to bow down and worship the Lord.

At times it is difficult enough following God's path without God adding to the difficulty. We are constantly tested in our faith by plenty of small things – words of ridicule from others or our desire for an easy life or the latest iPhone. Yet we stand strong in our faith that God will deliver us. At least, we try...

Prayer

All-seeing Lord

Watch over us as we struggle

Strengthen us as we falter

Forgive us as we fail

Love us as we are. Amen

[Friday 26th June Bricks without Straw](#)

The Rev'd Ruth Browning, Retired Minister worshipping at Thornbury URC.

Exodus 5

Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Let my people go, so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness.'" But Pharaoh said, '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.' Then they said, 'The God of the Hebrews has revealed himself to us; let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord our God, or he will fall upon us with pestilence or sword.' But the king of Egypt said to them, 'Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their work? Get to your labours!' Pharaoh continued, 'Now they are more numerous than the people of the land and yet you want them to stop working!' That same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, as well as their

supervisors, 'You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as before; let them go and gather straw for themselves. But you shall require of them the same quantity of bricks as they have made previously; do not diminish it, for they are lazy; that is why they cry, "Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God." Let heavier work be laid on them; then they will labour at it and pay no attention to deceptive words.'

So the taskmasters and the supervisors of the people went out and said to the people, 'Thus says Pharaoh, "I will not give you straw. Go and get straw yourselves, wherever you can find it; but your work will not be lessened in the least."' So the people scattered throughout the land of Egypt, to gather stubble for straw. The taskmasters were urgent, saying, 'Complete your work, the same daily assignment as when you were given straw.' And the supervisors of the Israelites, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and were asked, 'Why did you not finish the required quantity of bricks yesterday and today, as you did before?'

Then the Israelite supervisors came to Pharaoh and cried, 'Why do you treat your servants like this? No straw is given to your servants, yet they say to us, "Make bricks!" Look how your servants are beaten! You are unjust to your own people.' He said, 'You are lazy, lazy; that is why you say, "Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord." Go now, and work; for no straw shall be given you, but you shall still deliver the same number of bricks.' The Israelite supervisors saw that they were in trouble when they were told, 'You shall not lessen your daily number of bricks.' As they left Pharaoh, they came upon Moses and Aaron who were waiting to meet them. They said to them, 'The Lord look upon you and judge! You have brought us into bad odour with Pharaoh and his officials, and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.'

Then Moses turned again to the Lord and said, 'O Lord, why have you mistreated this people? Why did you ever send me? Since I first came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has mistreated this people, and you have done nothing at all to deliver your people.'