

**Exegetical Notes, Exodus 5:22-6:8**  
**“Hope in the Wrong Things”**

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**Exodus 5:22-6:8**

**Verse 22-23**

*Moses returned to YHWH and said, “O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.”*

- After hearing the complaint lodged against him by the foremen (see Exodus 5:20-21), Moses turned to the Lord in prayer. He asked God why his actions had brought trouble on the people, and why God had done nothing to rescue the people.

**Verse 6:1**

*Then YHWH said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.”*

- In answer to Moses’ question, God tells Moses that now the stage is set. Because Pharaoh refused to acknowledge that he even knew YHWH and has stubbornly refused to obey God’s request, God’s power will now be fully displayed.
- Two goals will be accomplished in this way. First, Moses and the Hebrews will see and understand that all that happens to them is from God and not Pharaoh, Moses, or themselves. Second, Pharaoh will be forced to bend to the power of the God he has refused to recognize.
- Pharaoh will be so impressed by YHWH’s power that he will not simply allow the Hebrews to leave Egypt, he will drive them out of his realm.

#### **Verse 2-4**

***God also said to Moses, “I am YHWH. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name, YHWH, I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens (Gershoms).***

- There are multiple word plays in these verses around names. First, God identifies himself by saying “I am YHWH.” Translated, God says, “I am I am,” for that is what YHWH means. Later he says that previously he was known as God Almighty, El Shaddai. In the previous verse of this chapter, he has said that Pharaoh and the Hebrews will now see his mighty power. They will see him as El Shaddai even though he now is to be known as YHWH. Also he identifies the Hebrews as aliens. The Hebrew word for aliens is gershom. This is the name of Moses’ son (see Exodus 3:22-23). All of this seems to indicate that at this point in history things which were previous at loose ends are being tied together.
- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew the name YHWH. However, they did not understand the full power of God as YHWH. They did not understand how he would act to redeem his people. The Exodus from Egypt becomes the explanation of what God is to his people. The emphasis on his personal name is an indication of how deeply God loves and is involved with Israel.
- Perhaps the use of the word alien is to remind Moses of his own despondency when he first went to Midian and how God was at work in that, and to help Moses understand that God’s children are now as his own.

#### **Verse 5**

***Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.***

- A covenant is a contract of promise between two parties; in this case, between God and the nation of Israel. God had promised to give them the land of Cana. However, centuries had passed and God had not acted on that promise. Israel was to serve God alone. They, too, had failed to keep the agreement. Therefore, God was not obligated to act upon the promise he had made. It was conditional, and Israel had not met the conditions. What God says here is that, despite Israel’s failure, he has decided to honor the deal anyway. Despite their failure, he will

give them the promised land. Since Israel had not kept her part of the bargain with God, this is an act of God's grace.

#### **Verse 6-7a**

***“Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am YHWH, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.’”***

- God promises that because of who he is he will end the Hebrew enslavement in Egypt. He will do it by calling down “mighty acts of judgment” on Pharaoh. He will make Israel his own, and he will be their God.

#### **Verse 7b-8**

***“Then you will know that I am YHWH, your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession, I am YHWH.”***

- God declares that Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to obey him will not stop his plan. He will deliver and redeem Israel in spite of Pharaoh's refusal. When this happens, the people of Israel will know that he is, indeed, God and that he has acted in their behalf. Not even Pharaoh can refuse him.
- As additional proof, God will give them the land that he swore to give to their ancestors. Neither their ancestors nor they had acted to honor the covenant. So, God was not obligated to keep his part of the deal as they had not kept theirs. But he would give them the land anyway as proof that he was acting on their behalf.
- He would do all this simply because he was God! Therefore, Israel's hope did not rest with them or with Pharaoh. Israel's hope was in the Lord.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Hope in the Wrong Things*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)