

# Let my people GO



## ADULT PREACHING RESOURCE

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**FOCUS:** God has created all people to be free - moving from darkness to light.

'Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'"" (Exodus 5:1 NIV)

### INTRODUCTION

Modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT) is a multi-billion-dollar criminal industry that denies freedom across the globe to an estimated 49.6 million people. That's women, men, girls and boys who have been forced into different forms of labour, sex trafficking and marriages.

Throughout the world today, The Salvation Army stands united in this fight for freedom by joining together to pray for people who have experienced modern slavery and human trafficking. We want to be praying for the families left behind and for the Church to rise and fight. We want to pray for an end to the demand side that fuels modern slavery and human trafficking, and for the traffickers and

exploiters who are involved in and benefit from this social injustice.

As we prepare to engage in prayer, we are going to look in the Bible at an early account of slavery in the lives of the Israelites, which is found at the beginning of Exodus. As we start this book, the Israelites went to Egypt because it had what they desired - food. They were given the best part of this country - a fertile land in the region of Goshen - because they were shepherds and kept livestock. After living and enjoying grace during the period of Joseph and the pharaoh (Egyptian king) at that time, those who knew the Israelites and this history died and in came a new pharaoh, who viewed them as a threat because of their increasing numbers. This new ruler saw that the Israelites had become numerous because they

were blessed, and he decided to deal shrewdly with them. He put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour. He made their lives bitter with harsh labour in bricks and mortar, and with all kinds of work in the fields. The Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

The Israelites, God's people, were in misery in the land of Egypt for more than 400 years. The Egypt in this passage can be seen as a picture or reflection of the world. As Egypt was full of suffering for the Israelites, we also have a world full of humans suffering all kinds of social injustices like MSHT. God witnessed their misery and took action, as described in Exodus 3:7-8 *NIV*: 'The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey - the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.'"

God raises up Moses to play an important part in seeing the Israelites freed from their situation of slavery. In Exodus 5:1, Moses exclaims, 'Let my people go!' This was the message that Moses was given by God to say to Pharaoh. It was a command. Moses received clear instructions from God and his mission was freedom for the Israelites, God's people.

When Moses said those words to Pharaoh, the Egyptian ruler did not understand what Moses was talking about, or rather he feigned ignorance: 'Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go"' (Exodus 5:2 *NIV*). Pharaoh felt he had a valid reason on his part because he obtained free labour from the Israelites, so he refused to listen to their God.

Pharaoh was cruel, uncaring and evil to his core. He refused to let God's people go so that they may hold a festival to God in the wilderness. Just like Pharaoh, sin does not let go easily. The enemy's strategy is to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10 *NIV*). The more Moses pleaded for the Israelites to be let go, the harder Pharaoh made it for them to bear.

In the words of Exodus 5:6-8 *NIV*: 'Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and overseers in charge of the people: "You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don't reduce the quota.'"

Moses hit a dead end after his first conversation with Pharaoh, but that was just one layer in a multi-layered story that God was writing. The Israelite overseers despaired and went to appeal to Pharaoh, but they hit a dead end too. In turn, they took it up with Moses and 'said, "May the LORD look on you and judge you! You have made us obnoxious to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us"' (Exodus 5:21 *NIV*).

Who do you turn to when you hit a dead end? Do you turn to man or to God?

Moses took his case to God and said in verse 22: 'Why LORD, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me?' Moses sought God first whenever he hit a dead end. He relied on God to help him solve all the problems. While interceding for the Israelites, Moses put into practice the words of Isaiah 41:21 *NIV*: "'Present your case," says the LORD. "Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's King.'

Here are two very important things we need to know about God from this passage of Scripture when it comes to MSHT:

Firstly, God is never indifferent in the face of the suffering humanity and those experiencing MSHT. His desire is for his people/children to be free. 'Let my people go!' Pharaoh did not obey this command, but it didn't change the fact that God had spoken.

In John 10:10 *NIV*, Jesus says, 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' God saw the Israelites' misery. What happens to God's people does not go unobserved by him. As individuals are experiencing situations of MSHT, it does not go unobserved by him. God heard the Israelites crying and was concerned about their suffering. 'The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfils the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them' (Psalm 145:18-19 *NIV*).

Secondly, God came down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians. He appeared to Moses in flames of fire and sent him with a specific message to Pharaoh: 'Let my people go!' God is saying the same thing to those oppressing people through MSHT, and we are sent by God to go and intercede for these victims, survivors, their families, those creating the demand, and those who exploit and traffic. He was with Moses and he is with us even today because he is a faithful God.

Exodus 6:6-7 *NIV* says, 'I am the LORD, 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 judgement. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.'

## CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ, the light of the world, came to a world that was in darkness and full of sin. He was given a mission by his Father just like Moses. To save his people! Did what Jesus see break his heart? Did what Moses see break his heart? Does what we see today break our hearts? In a world that sees too many people enslaved in MSHT situations, what do we do?

We seek God, we pray continually to God - just like Jesus and Moses did - for victims, survivors, their families, those creating the demand, and those who exploit and traffic. We focus on what God can do and remove the focus from us and what we can do. We trust that God has a plan for every victim, survivor, their families, those creating the demand, and those who exploit and traffic others. And we fight for their freedom until every person is free!

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