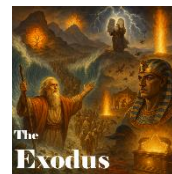




## From Affliction to Multiplication: The Unstoppable Plan of God Exodus 1:1-22 (Lesson #1)



### The Plan for Today

The themes we explored in Genesis set the stage for the book of Exodus. Like Genesis, Exodus was also written by Moses and continues the narrative seamlessly. The story picks up with the nation of Israel, who—due to a severe famine—relocated to Egypt and settled in the region of Goshen. There, they were protected and cared for by Joseph, the second most powerful man in Egypt, subordinate only to Pharaoh. You likely remember the key events that brought us to this point:

- **Abraham** was called out of Ur of the Chaldeans, stepping out in faith to follow God to a land he had never seen. He was promised a son, despite he and his wife Sarah being barren and advanced in age.
- **Isaac**, the promised son, was nearly sacrificed by Abraham in obedience to God, until the angel of Yahweh intervened.
- **Jacob**, the cunning second son of Isaac, secured the birthright from his older brother Esau and was later renamed *Israel* by God.
- **Joseph**, the eleventh son of Jacob, was chosen by God to be a deliverer and protector of his people—a powerful archetype of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is Jacob's family—now the nation of Israel—that we find in Egypt, having been brought there during the famine. Under Joseph's care, they were given favor and provision. This transition is seamlessly woven into the narrative from Genesis.

Now, many years have passed. The Israelites have lived in Goshen for decades, thriving under the umbrella of the Egyptian nation. All seemed to be going well... until the story takes a dramatic turn.

### Brief Introduction

- Title, Author, and Arrangement
- Timing and Timespan of Exodus
- Location of the book of Exodus
- Commence verse by verse study through chapter 1

### Title, Author, and Arrangement

The book of Exodus is the second of the five books of the Hebrew Bible, collectively called either Torah ("law" in Hebrew) or Pentateuch (five volumes in Greek). The English title "Exodus" comes from the Septuagint and the Greek noun "exodos" meaning a going out or a departure.

The central event in the first half of the book is Yahweh raising up a deliverer—Moses—and, through ten miraculous plagues, bringing the nation of Israel out of bondage in Egypt.

One of the most awe-inspiring events recorded in Scripture—and echoed throughout the Old Testament—is the crossing of the Red Sea. After leaving Egypt, God leads the Israelites to the edge of the Red Sea, where they appear trapped: the sea before them, and Pharaoh's army pursuing from behind. It is in this moment that God performs one of the most astounding miracles in the Old Testament. He drives back the waters, and ***"the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left."*** Pharaoh and his army attempt to follow, but Yahweh causes the waters to return, and ***"they covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained."*** Pharaoh and his entire army perish in the sea.

Following this miraculous deliverance, Yahweh leads the nation to Mount Sinai, where He gives them His written covenant—the Ten Commandments—and establishes Israel as a theocratic nation. Along the journey, God performs many miracles, providing for the needs of His people.

After the giving of the Ten Commandments, Yahweh continues to reveal His law, giving additional commands and instructions for worship. He provides detailed directions for the construction of the tabernacle and its sacred furnishings. He also establishes the priestly tribe and outlines their responsibilities in worship and service to Him.

The book concludes with the nation of Israel erecting the tabernacle, a powerful symbol of God's presence dwelling among His people.

Interestingly enough the book opens with this Hebrew phrase translated into English, “and these are the names.” To open with the word “and” may seem strange, but it reminds us that Exodus is a companion, and an expansion of Genesis. And Exodus cannot be fully understood apart from Genesis, so “and” is a fitting way to open the book.

### Author

First, like all of the sacred canon, the book of Genesis was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

*“20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2Pe 1:20-21 ESV)*

Although a human wrote it, it was God Himself who worked through that human author to write it. He did so with an end-game in mind:

*“16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2Ti 3:16-17 ESV)*

Historically, the church has held that the first five books were written by the human author Moses. Although he is not named as the author, its events seem to clearly be written from his perspective and the author records this in Exodus 24:4: *“And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD...”*

In the New Testament Jesus quotes from Exodus and attributes it to Moses, one example:

*“For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’” (Mr 7:10 ESV)*

This is a quote of commandment number five of the ten commandments, given at Mount Siana:

*““Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.” (Ex 20:12 ESV)*

Because Jesus attributes Exodus to Moses, we have great certainty that he was the human author.

### Arrangement

The book of **Genesis** ends with the nation of Israel in Egypt, under the protection of Pharaoh and Joseph. The final verse of Genesis reads:

*“So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” (Genesis 50:26, ESV)*

As **Exodus** opens, we are immediately confronted with a dramatically different set of circumstances. Many years have passed since Joseph saved Egypt, and numerous Pharaohs have come and gone. Over time, Joseph's legacy is forgotten, and the growing nation of Israel is viewed with suspicion and fear. A new Pharaoh rises to power—one who does not know Joseph—and becomes alarmed by Israel's rapid population growth. In response, he enslaves the people and subjects them to harsh forced labor.

The duration of Israel's stay in Egypt, from their arrival to the Exodus, is recorded in Exodus:

*"The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt." (Exodus 12:40–41, ESV)*

The book of Exodus is a **historical narrative**, written from Moses' perspective. It picks up toward the end of Israel's time in Egypt and advances the story through their deliverance, journey to Mount Sinai, and the foundational events that occur there.

### **The Timing and the Timespan of the Book**

First, the timing of the book. If you remember from our Genesis study in Genesis 15, Yahweh revealed to Abram this:

*"13 Then the LORD said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. 14 But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.'" (Ge 15:13-14 ESV)*

So, the timing of the book of Exodus is the unfolding plan of God as it relates to the nation of Israel and the coming Messiah. Pause, for a moment and consider last week's lesson. Here we see the sovereignty of God. He has a plan that even includes a timetable. But he chose to reveal this plan to his servant Abraham.

The timespan of the book of Exodus: Moses is born in Exodus chapter 2, he lived until the age of forty in Egypt. He then flees Egypt and lives forty years in Midian; he then returns to Egypt (at 80 years old), and following the ten plagues is used by Yahweh to lead the nation of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. The book details a period of 80 to at the most 100 years of history.

### **Location:**

The book of Exodus opens in Egypt, transitions to Midian, then back to Egypt and then to Mount Sinai. In class we will discuss the possible locations for Mount Sinai and the Red Sea crossing.

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***1:1-4 These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household: 2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, 3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher.***

Here Moses reminds us of the names of the **sons of Israel**, the eleven sons who came to Egypt where Jacob was living. Jacob's eleven brothers:

**Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah** (first four born of Leah)

**Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin** (last two born of Leah and last child born of Rachel)

**Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher** (the two sons born of Bilhah and the two sons born of Zilpah)

Connecting the Exodus story to the events in Genesis, namely God's covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are central to understanding the unfolding story involving Israel as found in the Exodus.

Why would God take notice of a nation of slaves in Egypt and why would he raise up a leader and deliverer to lead them out of Egypt?

**The answers are found in His covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** (Gen 12:1-3; 26:2-4; 28:13-15).

We are observing the **unfolding plans** of our **Great God**, we are observing the covenant promised to Abraham, repeated to Isaac, then repeated to Jacob, taking greater and greater form.

Here that covenant develops as we reached the promised time when God would deliver the nation out of bondage as promised to Abraham many years earlier.

***Vs 5 All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt.***

In verse 1 we were discussing the sons of Israel, here Moses refers to the descendants of Jacob. As most, if not all of us know, this is the same man. In verse one he is called Israel, here he is called Jacob.

This reminds the reader of the previous narrative in Genesis where God declared that Jacob (which means heel grabber or supplanter) was given a new name by God, Israel which means God prevails.

Here we are told that the descendants of Jacob who came to Egypt were 70 persons and that Joseph was already in Egypt. Moses is simply recording the size of the nation of Israel as it entered Egypt. In all honesty Israel was nothing more than an extended family when it entered Egypt.

***Vs 6 Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation.***

Then Joseph died, we were told this in the closing verse of Genesis, but what Moses is recording here is that ultimately time moved on and not only did Joseph die, but that entire generation died.

Now as we consider “and then Joseph died” we are reminded that even the greatest human leaders, even the greatest Christians, even the greatest pastors, or greatest missionaries, should the Lord tarry, will one day die.

**God may bury His servants, but He never buries His plan.**

The heads of what would become the 12 tribes of Israel, **all died**. Here we see all of this initial **generation that entered Egypt died**. But guess what God will do following the death of His servant Joseph, He will ultimately raise up another leader, another deliverer!

Now to be honest at this point it does not appear that Israel wants or even needs a deliverer, life is good in Egypt, and so it goes for a time.

***Vs 7 But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.***

If you remember the family of Jacob settled in Goshen. There in Goshen, we are told that they were fruitful and **increased greatly**. They **multiplied** and **grew exceedingly strong**.

The land became filled with them. They go from 70, to an exceeding and mighty nation there is Goshen.

Notice how Moses explains their expansion, how he explains their multiplication: ***so that the land was filled with them.*** It was like everywhere you went in Egypt there were more and more Israelites. We are right to suspect that they had reached a place where they grossly outnumbered the Egyptians.

Now you are likely wondering how many Jews exited Egypt? I am glad you asked, for that is one of the debated issues within the Exodus story. There are essentially two different views.

View 1 – There were 2 – 3 million people who existed Egypt.

View 2 – The number was much less than this, even as low as around 30,000 who exited Egypt. If we are honest that is a **massive difference**.

So where do these numbers come from. Here is what we read in Ex 12:37:

*“And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children.” (Ex 12:37 ESV)*

Now this seems pretty straightforward and when you account for women and children. 2 -3 million people seems reasonable.

As you consider this, following their exodus from Egypt the nation of Israel was numbered again at Mt Sinai, there we read:

*“17 ¶ Moses and Aaron took these men who had been named, 18 and on the first day of the second month, they assembled the whole congregation together, who registered themselves by clans, by fathers’ houses, according to the number of names from twenty years old and upward, head by head, 19 as the LORD commanded Moses. So he listed them in the wilderness of Sinai. 20 The people of Reuben, Israel’s firstborn, their generations, by their clans, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, head by head, every male from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go to war: 21 those listed of the tribe of Reuben were 46,500.*

Picking back up in verse 42:

*42 Of the people of Naphtali, their generations, by their clans, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and upward, every man able to go to war: 43 those listed of the tribe of Naphtali were 53,400. 44 ¶ These are those who were listed, whom Moses and Aaron listed with the help of the chiefs of Israel, twelve men, each representing his fathers’ house. 45 So all those listed of the people of Israel, by their fathers’ houses, from twenty years old and upward, every man able to go to war in Israel — 46 all those listed were 603,550.” (Nu 1:17-46 ESV)*

Seems settled, but actually it is not. There is great debate here. **We will take a look at the two positions when we get to Exodus 12.**

**But if the literal understanding of the Hebrew words is correct, then there was over 600,000 men.**

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***Vs 8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.***

This is an understatement. If they were in Egypt 430 years to the day, then there would have been a succession of Pharaohs, each probably having less and less of an understanding and appreciation for **what Joseph did for the nation.**

**Until finally**, Moses records a new king arises, who did not know Joseph. This new king likely had **no understanding** of what Joseph had done, thus **no appreciation** for Joseph's people who were living in Goshen.

**Joseph had saved Egypt**, but unfortunately a Pharaoh arises who had no knowledge of what Joseph had done for the nation of Egypt!

**APPLICATION:** This is one of the many reasons we do not put our faith in people or political parties. They can change and all of a sudden, we find ourselves on the wrong side of the equation. Our trust and hope must always be in God!

*Vs 9 And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us.*

He looks at all these Hebrews living in Goshen, and having no appreciation for what Joseph did for the nation of Egypt, he grows concerned.

These Israelites, living in our land are **too many**. This likely alludes to the fact that there are many more of them now than there are Egyptians. But it is more than just too many, **they are too mighty for us.**

Now as you consider what Pharaoh is saying, these Israelites, **none were trained soldiers**, so it would have taken a **large number of sheep herders** to get **Pharaoh concerned**, about their might, but **concerned he is!**

*Vs 10 Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."*

He decides that Egypt needs to be careful what they do here. They need to act wisely, Pharaoh sees this as a real and present danger.

He concludes that they need to take charge of this situation, if they do not take charge of this situation, the nation will continue to multiply, they will become even more numerous and then if war breaks out between Egypt and one of the surrounding nation, they will join against us.

A home-grown army of sheep herders. They will join forces and notice his concern, for this is important. They will join with their enemies and **leave the land! His greatest concerns are they will become strong enough that they help overthrow Egypt and leave the land.**

*Vs 11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses.*

Due to the Israelites multiplying and growing strong, due to the Pharaoh's concern. Therefore, the Pharaoh enslaved them and he set taskmasters over them. Further, Pharaoh through these taskmasters afflicted the Israelites with heavy burdens.

And the Israelites built for Pharaoh the store cities of Pithom and Raamses. The Pharaoh Raamses came much later in history. It is this verse that caused Cecil B. DeMill and others to conclude that the Pharaoh of the Exodus was Raamses. Ramses ruled at the height of Egyptian power.

More recently scholars have come to believe that Raamses was the name of the city that would later rise up in the place. It is a telescoping of the city name. This is quite common even today, we will refer to something in prior history, but refer to the name of the place where the event occurred with its more modern name.

But the Israelites built cities for the Egyptians. **Just so you know**, we have no indication that the Israelites built any pyramids.

**The nation of Israel goes from being blessed and favored to be rejected and oppressed!** They have become slaves to the Egyptian nation.

*Vs 12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.*

More **oppression**, led to more **multiplication**!

They kept multiplying and started to **spread abroad**. The Hebrew word translated spread abroad is פָּרַץ (**parats**) and it means to **break out**, or **to break open**.

**These Israelites are multiplying and spreading out everywhere.**

**PAUSE:** God's (revealed will) was not slavery for the nation of Israel, but God permitted the slavery (permissive will) and through divine providence he would use it to cause Israel to want to escape Egypt.

**A small family entered Egypt, a great and mighty nation will exit!**

The Egyptians were in **dread of them**, they were in **fear of them because** their **numbers** were becoming **so massive**.

This has been the story of God's people throughout their history, both Old Testament and New Testament. The blood of the martyrs has indeed proven to be the seeds of the church. Think of the apostles, the blood of the apostles proved to be the seeds of the church! Time permitting, we will look more at that.

But, it is worth noting that over and over again, **persecution** against the church has **backfired** and led to the **church multiplying**.

*Vs 13-14 So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves 14 and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.*

Moses records that they **ruthlessly** made the people of Israel work as slaves. The Hebrew word translated "ruthlessly" is פָּרַךְ (**perek**), and means it **harshly** or **cruelly**. This is the first time this Hebrew word is used in the Old Testament.

They worked them without mercy and without break. They made the lives of the Israelites, bitter! They **crushed them** with slave labor.

They worked them with mortar and brick and all kinds of work in the fields. In all their work they made the work ruthlessly. Moses repeats the Hebrew word indicating harshly or cruelly from verse 13.

**APPLICATION:** Persecution is part of the Christian experience, we should not be amazed when it happens, we should rather be amazed when it is not happening, and thank God for those times, for that is not the norm. **A few verses to consider include:** (II Tim 3:12; Joh 15:18; Matt 5:10; I Pet 4:12-14; Is 54:17).

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*Vs 15-16 Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, 16 "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live."*

In an attempt to stop the rapid multiplication of the Hebrews, the Pharaoh speaks to two Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah (their names means fair and splendid).

Pharaoh takes these women aside and says to them: When you are serving as midwife and a Hebrew woman is having a baby, and you see the woman on the birthstool, if it is a son, kill him. If it is a daughter, you shall let her live.

Here the Pharaoh executes the first recorded plan of infanticide in the scriptures. The edict from the Pharaoh, kill all male Israelite children.

Now we should not think that these two women were the only midwives, maybe they were leaders in the midwives' guild, we do not know, but we suspect they were supposed to pass Pharaoh's commands to other midwives.

**17 But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.**

Do not miss this, it seemed that God was nowhere to be found in this story, but there He was the whole time, in the midst of Israel's suffering, God was there.

Because these two women **feared God, rather than obeying Pharaoh, they let the male children live.**

**SO YOU KNOW:** The Hebrew word here is **אלהים ('elohiym)**, because the two Hebrew midwives **feared אלהים ('elohiym)**, they did not do as the Pharaoh commanded, but let the male children live.

While we are here, we are going to come across a few different names for God here in the book of Exodus. I want you to see them here. We will unpack them as we go. **Names of God in Exodus (first use):**

Exodus 1:17: **Elohiym (God)**

Exodus 3:2 **Yahweh (Covenant Name)**

Ex 6:2: **El Shadday (God Almighty) (Mighty God)**

Exodus 15:2: **El (God) (Mighty One)**

Exodus 15:26: **Yahweh Rapha (God who heals)**

Exodus 17:15: **Yahweh Nissi (God is my banner)**

Equally we will find many attributes of God, glimpses into his nature throughout the book of Exodus. One that I would like to draw out attention to is: Ex 34:6-14, there God is described as possessing these attributes:

- |                  |              |
|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Merciful      | 5. Faithful  |
| 2. Gracious      | 6. Forgiving |
| 3. Slow to anger | 7. Just      |
| 4. Loving        |              |



***Vs 18-19 So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the male children live?" 19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them."***

The Pharaoh called in the midwives and asked them why they were allowing the sons to live and not killing them.

The midwives answered that it was because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, they are “vigorous” and give birth before the midwives can even arrive.

The **Hebrew** word translated vigorous is **חַיָּה (chayeh)** and is a **Hapax Legomenon**, it is only used once here in the entire **Hebrew bible**.

**Were the midwives lying?** We actually do not know. But we do know that the midwives did not participate in Pharaoh’s horrible, sinful plan!

***Vs 20 So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong.***

Because of the midwives feared God, and would not violate God’s prohibition against murder, God dwelt well (the word means **to be pleased with** or **to be accepted**). God was pleased with the midwives and **acted on their behalf**.

The people continued to multiply. Again, we are not talking about addition we are talking about multiplication. If you have been keeping count Moses has used the word multiply or multiplication four times here in chapter 1:

*“But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them.” (Ex 1:7 ESV)*

*“Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” (Ex 1:10 ESV)*

*“But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.” (Ex 1:12 ESV)*

*“So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong.” (Ex 1:20 ESV)*

You should get the sense that God is supernaturally growing and expanding the nation.

***Vs 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.***

This harkens back to the first half of verse 20 and explains why God did what he did. God was gracious towards the midwives and gave them families because they feared him as evidenced in their obedience to His commands.

The actual Hebrew word translated families is **בַּיִת (bayith)**, which means home, house, or dwelling.

**APPLICATION:** We do not hear much about the fear of the Lord anymore. **Yet this point is taught all over the Bible.**

The fear of the Lord is used a large number of times in the Bible.

In the ESV:  
Fear of the Lord – 27 times  
Fear the Lord – 34 times  
Fear God – 15 times  
Fear of God – 8 times

Some key verses include (Pr 8:13; Pr 1:7; Mat 10:28; Luk 1:50).

Now when we say “the fear of the Lord”, a little explanation is necessary.

For those who do not believe, the fear of God is rightly understood as the fear of His judgment and eternal separation from Him—what Scripture refers to as eternal death (Luke 12:5; Hebrews 10:31). But for believers, the fear of God takes on a very different meaning. It is not terror, but reverence—a deep awe and respect for who God is. Hebrews 12:28–29 captures this beautifully: *“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’”*

This reverence and awe are at the heart of what it means for Christians to fear God. It is the driving force behind our surrender to the Creator of the universe.

Proverbs 1:7 declares, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.”* True wisdom begins with a proper understanding of who God is—His holiness, justice, and righteousness. Without this reverential fear, we cannot grasp genuine wisdom. Ecclesiastes 12:13, sums this up very nicely: *“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”*

The believers fear of God (reverence for God) should impact how we live our lives for God!

***Vs 22 Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live.""***

Then Pharaoh issued an edict, a law, he command all people in his empire.

Can you imagine a ruler giving an edict like this. All the male children that are born of a certain race of people are to be killed. A national policy, a national law!

**Satan’s works in the heart of the Pharaoh of Egypt** with a plan to stop the coming of the promised deliver.

Had Pharaoh been successful, Pharaoh would have prevented the seed that would led to the Messiah.

**APPLICATION: But it is not just that is it?** There are men and women in our state, in our city, in our town, in our church, maybe even in our class who are in bondage. They are trapped in their sins and they are serving a difficult and ruthless taskmaster.

Next week we will pick back up here at God’s plan to send a deliverer starts to take shape

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