

A CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL
COMMENTARY

ON

THE BOOK OF EXODUS,

With a New Translation.

BY

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MDCCLXVI.

COMMENTARY.

Part III.

SECTION I. THE BONDAGE IN EGYPT.

I. ISRAEL OPPRESSED IN EGYPT.—Ex. i.

v. 11. מַּטְבֵּל *tribute, levy, task*, work done by a serf for his Lord. Keil understands by it the serf or socager himself. But Esther x. 1 is against this.

פִּתּוֹם Pithom, Πειθώ in Sept., is identified with Πάτουμος in Herod. ii. 158; or, omitting the Egyptian article, Θούμ in the later geographers. Brugsch derives it from *pa*, abode, and *Tum* or Atum, the sun after setting.

רַעַמְסֵס Raamses, 'Ραμεσσή in Sept. It is rendered "son of Ra," the sun, who was worshipped at On or Heliopolis.

v. 15. שִׁפְרָה Shiphrah, *brightness, beauty*. פּוּאָה Pu'ah for פּוּאָה splendour (Simonis).

v. 16. אֶבְנֵי אֵבֶן *potter's wheel, birth-stool*. This word occurs only twice in Scripture. In Jer. xviii. 3 it denotes the potter's wheel. In the present passage it seems to signify the receptacle into which the new-born infant comes from the womb. Both these utensils may have been originally of stone (אֶבֶן). Gen. xxviii. 11.

v. 21. וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בָּתִּים *And made them houses*, gave them not only husbands but children, who constitute families. The

pronoun הוא is masculine. But the plural masculine is occasionally applied to the female. (See Gen. xxxi. 9).

v. 22. נהל : a river, in Memphitic *iaro*, in Sahidic *iero*, a term generally applied to the Nile.

And these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came into Mizraim; every man and his household came with Jacob. 2 Reuben, Simon, Levi and Judah, 3 Issakar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, 4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. 5 And all the souls that came out of the thigh of Jacob were seventy souls: and Joseph was already in Mizraim. 6 And Joseph died, and all his brethren and all that generation. 7 And the sons of Israel were fruitful, and increased and multiplied, and waxed exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them. ¶ 1.

8 Then arose a new king over Mizraim, who knew not Joseph. 9 And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. 10 Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that a war falleth out, and they also join with those that hate us, and fight against us, and get up out of the land. 11 And they set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens: and they built-treasure-cities for Pharaoh, Pithom, and Raamses. 12 And as they afflicted them, so they multiplied, and spread: and they were vexed because of the sons of Israel. 13 And Mizraim made the sons of Israel serve with rigour. 14 And they embittered their life with hard service, in clay, and in brick, and in all service in the field; with all their service which they laid on them with rigour.

15 And the king of Mizraim said to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiprah and the name of the other Puah. 16. And he said, When ye deliver the Hebrew women and look upon the stool, if it be a son, then ye shall kill him, and if it be a daughter, then she shall live. 17 And the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Mizraim spake unto them, but saved the men-children alive. 18 And the king of Mizraim called the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and saved the men-children alive? 19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not like the Mizrite women; for they are lively; and have brought forth ere the midwife comes in unto them. 20 And God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied and waxed very mighty. 21 And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses. 22. And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive. ¶ 2.

It is the custom of the sacred writer to note the great moments and turning points in the history of God's dealings with man, and to pass lightly over the current of events that flow naturally from the tendency thus given. The entrance into Egypt was one of those leading movements: the departure from it is another. The intervening period of 210 years is summed up in the chapter before us, if we except certain events relative to Jacob and Joseph, which wind up the settlement of the chosen family in Egypt, and a few circumstances concerning Moses which are introductory to the national migration. The present chapter recounts the extraordinary increase of the family of Israel, and the ineffectual measures taken by the king of Egypt to check their growth.

Ver. 1-7. The increase of the chosen seed. Here the historian, after the manner of Hebrew composition, goes back to the descent of Israel into Egypt as the starting point of the new train of events about to be related. *And these are the names.* The recapitulation of the heads of houses in Jacob's family prepares the way for the vast augmentation about to be recorded. *Of Israel.* This word is here well chosen. The significance of the name, and the occasion of its application, still lived in the memory of the patriarch's posterity. The outward privileges of the prince that had power with God and with man descended to them, and the inward character that corresponded with such a parentage was no doubt to be found in many of them. And now that the estrangement of the nations from the true God was become general and obvious, it was the more necessary that the chosen family should be reminded by this sacred name of the high destiny to which they were called. *Every man and his house.* They were already distributed into twelve houses, when they went down into Egypt. The sons of Leah are placed first, Benjamin son of Rachel next, and afterwards the four sons of the handmaids. *Seventy souls.* Jacob himself is included among the seventy souls, the natural head being essential to the unity and integrity of the family. The Sept. here has seventy-five, (see on Gen. xlv. 27). Joseph is now mentioned apart from the others, because he had been in the country before them. v. 6. *And all that generation.* As some of those who descended with Jacob were mere

infants, more than half of the 210 years would have elapsed before their decease. This would bring us within twenty years of the birth of Moses. v. 7. The rapid growth of Israel into a nation is the fact of this paragraph. It is expressed as usual in Hebrew, by a climax of verbs; *were fruitful* is taken from the vegetable world, in which the increase varies from a small multiple to several hundreds fold; *increased* (spawned, swarmed), is borrowed from the finny tribes, in which the rate of increase rises to many myriads; *multiplied* is a general word referring to number; and *waxed exceedingly mighty* is a similar phrase, alluding to the strength which numbers confer, composed of a verb and an adverb repeated, and therefore well adapted to complete the climax. Then follows the result, *the land was filled with them*. It is quite evident that this statement implies a rate of increase amazingly higher than that which was usual in those days, and still higher than any that can be found in the present crowded state of the world. The circumstances were favourable for such an increase. They had scope and verge in a wide and thinly peopled country; and they were placed in the best of the land (Gen. xlvii. 11). These advantages alone, however, could not account for their accelerated growth; for the Egyptians were not much less favoured in these respects. But the blessing of Jehovah, the God of promise was now realised to them. After a long delay the word came to Israel the third patriarch, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a congregation of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins," (Gen. xxxv. 11). We see also the effect of the migration into Egypt. In Kenaan the inevitable tendency was to lose all family distinction, and merge into the nations of that country. Only in a border land, on a territory specially ceded to them by a people who had a national antipathy to their pursuits, could a select nation have grown up without coalescing in blood, in language and in institutions with the surrounding tribes. Hence in Goshen the chosen family grows in 210 years into the chosen nation, destined to witness among the nations for the unity, spirituality and mercy of the Creator of all.