

STERN HALL, WEST LONDON SYNAGOGUE

Sunday 10th. April, 1994

-----  
ISRAEL IN EGYPT

by

GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL

-----  
LONDON CONCORD SINGERS  
AND ORCHESTRA

Soloists

Sopranos : Olive Simpson, Janet Lincé

Mezzo-Soprano : Susan Elliott

Tenor : Paul Zimmerman

Basses : Tony McIntee, John Penty

Conductor : Malcolm Cottle

Handel's early reputation in this country was built on his Italian operas, although it was something of a struggle to get the public to accept them. However, it was with the oratorios - written to be performed during Lent, when the theatres were closed by law - that he achieved lasting fame. These oratorios soon grew to be something more than substitute operas, becoming a major feature of the English musical scene and launching a tradition of choral singing that was to extend far beyond these shores.

Israel in Egypt was written in 1738, receiving its first performance in the following year, three years before *The Messiah*. Originally there was an extra part to the piece - a reworking of the extended anthem Handel wrote for the funeral of Queen Caroline - entitled *The Lamentations of the Israelites over the death of Joseph*. This presumably accounts for the fact that, unusually, there is no overture.

The work starts with a recitative followed by the opening chorus in a mood of exalted mourning. The gradual division of the chorus into eight parts hints at more startling developments to come. These are soon realised in the chorus "*He spake the word*" where Handel uses, for the first time since his days in Italy, a full-scale 'cori spezzati' technique. There follows a dazzling display of virtually every kind of choral writing, there are only seven solos and duets (apart from the four short recitatives) interposed between a total of twenty eight choral numbers.

This emphasis on the chorus is not the only remarkable feature of *Israel in Egypt*, there is also a very large amount of 'borrowing' or reworking of music by other composers - sixteen numbers in all. What is even more unusual is the antiquated style of most of Handel's sources, which gives a distinct flavour of the antique to the work as a whole.

I S R A E L I N E G Y P T

PART ONE

1. **Recitative** : Now there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph; and he set over Israel taskmasters to afflict them with burdens, and they made them serve with rigour.
2. **Solo and Chorus** : And the Children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and their cry came up unto God. They oppressed them with burdens, and made them serve with rigour; and their cry came up unto God.
3. **Recitative** : Then sent He Moses, His servant, and Aaron, whom He had chosen; these showed His signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. He turned their waters into blood.
4. **Chorus** : They loathed to drink of the river. He turned their waters into blood.
5. **Aria** : Their land brought forth frogs, yea, even in their king's chambers. He gave their cattle over to the pestilence; blotches and blains broke forth on man and beast.
6. **Chorus** : He spake the word, and there came all manner of flies and lice in all their quarters. He spake; and the locusts came without number, and devoured the fruits of the ground.
7. **Chorus** : He gave them hailstones for rain; fire mingled with the hail ran along upon the ground.
8. **Chorus** : He sent a thick darkness over the land, even darkness which might be felt.
9. **Chorus** : He smote all the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength.
10. **Chorus** : But as for His people, He led them forth like sheep: He brought them out with silver and gold; there was not one feeble person among their tribes.
11. **Chorus** : Egypt was glad when they departed, for the fear of them fell upon them.
12. **Chorus** : He rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up.
13. **Chorus** : He led them through the deep as through a wilderness.
14. **Chorus** : But the waters overwhelmed their enemies, there was not one of them left.
15. **Chorus** : And Israel saw that great work that the Lord did upon the Egyptians; and the people feared the Lord, ....
16. **Chorus** : ....and believed the Lord and his servant Moses.

-----  
I N T E R V A L  
-----

PART TWO

17. **Chorus** : Moses and the Children of Israel sung this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying:
18. **Chorus** : I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.
19. **Duet** : The Lord is my strength and my song; He is become my salvation.
20. **Chorus** : He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, .....
21. **Chorus** : ...and I will exalt Him.
22. **Duet** : The Lord is a man of war: Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath He cast into the sea; his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.
23. **Chorus** : The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.
24. **Chorus** : Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed to pieces the enemy.
25. **Chorus** : And in the greatness of Thine excellency Thou hast overthrown them that rose up against Thee.
26. **Chorus** : Thou sentest forth Thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.
27. **Chorus** : And with the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.
28. **Aria** : The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.
29. **Aria** : Thou didst blow with the wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters.
30. **Chorus** : Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the Gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out Thy right hand, .....
31. **Chorus** : ....the earth swallowed them.

32. Duet : Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth Thy people which Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation.

33. Chorus : The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on them: all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away: by the greatness of Thy arm. They shall be as still as a stone; till Thy people pass over, O Lord, which Thou hast purchased.

34. Aria : Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established.

35. Chorus : The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

36. Recitative : For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

37. Chorus : The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

38. Recitative : And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dances. And Miriam answered them:

39. Solo and Chorus : Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; (The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.) The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.