

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Israel in Egypt

Unedited version of the English Oratorio HWV 54
from 1739, performed according to the traditions of the time

with

Miriam Allan & Sarah Wegener ~ Soprano
David Allsopp ~ Altus (Countertenor)
Benjamin Hulett ~ Tenor
Steffen Balbach & Daniel Raschinsky ~ Bass

Hanoverian Court Orchestra
(on period instruments)

Maulbronn Chamber Choir

Conductor ~ Jürgen Budday

A concert at the UNESCO World Heritage Site
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This live recording is part of a cycle of oratorios and masses, performed in the basilica of Maulbronn Abbey under the direction of Jürgen Budday. The series combines authentically performed oratorios and masses with the optimal acoustics and atmosphere of this unique monastic church. This ideal location demands the transparency of playing and the interpretive unveiling of the rhetoric intimations of the composition, which is especially aided by the historically informed performance. The music is exclusively performed on reconstructed historical instruments, which are tuned to the pitch customary in the composer's lifetimes (this performance is tuned in $a' = 415$ Hz).

With "Israel in Egypt" you listen to the 10th Handel-Oratorio from this concert-cycle, which is documented on disc.

During the second half of the 17th century, there were trends toward the secularization of the religious oratorio. Evidence of this lies in its regular performance outside church halls in courts and public theaters. Whether religious or secular, the theme of an oratorio is meant to be weighty. It could include such topics as Creation, the life of Jesus, or the career of a classical hero or biblical prophet. Other changes eventually took place as well, possibly because most composers of oratorios were also popular composers of operas. They began to publish the librettos of their oratorios as they did for their operas. George Frideric Handel also wrote secular oratorios based on themes from Greek and Roman mythology. He is also credited with writing the first English language oratorio.

"Israel in Egypt", the fifth of the nineteen oratorios which Handel composed in England, was written in 1738, the composition of the whole colossal work occupying but twenty-seven days. It was first performed April 4, 1739, at the King's Theatre, of which Handel was then manager. It is essentially a choral oratorio. It comprises no less than twenty-eight massive double choruses, linked together by a few bars of recitative, with five arias and three duets interspersed among them. Unlike Handel's other oratorios, there is no overture or even prelude to the work. Therefore - exactly how conductor Jürgen Budday did it - many artists starts the performance of "Israel in Egypt" with the Overture from the Oratorio "Solomon". Especially because of the fact, that Handel replaced in 1756 the first part of "Israel in Egypt" (which was originally a funeral anthem for Queen Caroline) through an shortened version of the first act from his oratorio "Solomon".

Handel's London oratorios usually includes three parts or acts. However, "Israel in Egypt" has been published and almost performed with two parts, which follows the compositional technique for Oratorios in Italy.

The first part describes *"the exodus"* of the Israelites from Egypt to escape the slavery. Six bars of recitative for tenor suffice to introduce the first part, "Exodus", and lead directly to the first double chorus, the theme of which is first given out by the altos of one choir with impressive pathos. The chorus works up to a climax of great force on the phrase ("And their Cry came up unto God"), the two choruses developing with consummate power the two principal subjects - first, the cry for relief, the second, the burden of oppression; and closing with the phrase above mentioned, upon which they unite in simple but majestic harmony. Then follow eight more bars of recitative for tenor, and the long series of descriptive choruses begins, in which Handel employs the imitative power of music in the boldest manner.

The second part, "The Song of Moses", is basically a huge praise and victory anthem, which reflects the persecution and salvation. It ends in praise and glory to the Lord. A few bars of recitative referring to the escape of Israel, the choral outburst once more repeated, and then the solo voice declaring ("Miriam the prophetess took a trimbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam answered them"), lead to the final song of triumph. That grand, jubilant, overpowering expression of victory which, beginning with the exultant strain of Miriam ("Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously"), is amplified by voice upon voice in the great eight-part choir, and by instrument upon instrument, until it becomes a tempest of harmony, interwoven with the triumph of Miriam's cry and the exultation of the great host over the enemy's discomfiture, and closing with the combined power of voices and instruments in harmonious accord as they once more repeat Miriam's words ("The Horse and his Rider hath He thrown into the Sea").

Miriam Allan (Soprano I)

Miriam Allan, master class graduate student of Emma Kirkby and Julianne Baird and winner of the London Handel Competition 2003, was born in Newcastle (Australia) in 1977. She studied at Newcastle University and graduated from there with several distinctions. She has performed the most important works of Bach, Handel and Purcell with leading choirs and orchestras such as the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Sydney Philharmonic. She has also appeared as a guest with the Song Company and Sounds Baroque, including at their concertante performances. In addition to this she also gives recitals. In the summer of 2003, she sang not only the title role in the Handel opera "Semele" for the Pinchgut Opera, she also appeared in the world premiere of "Dreaming Transportation" at the Sidney Festival and sang in the first Australian performance of Bach's St Mark Passion by the Sidney Philharmonic under Arno Volmer as well as performing in Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater". Meanwhile, Miriam Allan lives in London, where she teaches singing at the Westminster Under School. She performs with ensembles such as Concerto Copenhagen, Israel Camerata, the London Handel Orchestra, the Leipzig Chamber Orchestra or Concerto Köln and is working with conductors like Trevor Pinnock, Sir John Elliot Gardiner and William Christie.

Sarah Wegener (Soprano II)

The British/German Soprano with "silver soprano of Strauss dimensions" (orpheus international) has become an international sought-after interpret within a very short time. Sarah Wegener studied with Prof. Bernard Jaeger-Böhm in Stuttgart. After passing with distinction in 2006, she continued her studies in the class of Lied interpretation, working with Cornelis Witthoefft. 2007 she won the 1st prize of the "International Max-Reger-Competition for Lied" in Weiden. Sarah Wegener has been invited to prominent festivals like the Salzburg Biennale, the Bachfest Leipzig and "La folle journée" Nantes, to the Tonhalle Düsseldorf, to "De Singel" Antwerp, the "Opéra Garnier" Paris, the Philharmony Luxembourg and the Konzerthaus Berlin, where she made her debut performing "Ein deutsches Requiem" by Johannes Brahms. In 2011 Mrs. Wegener will give a concert at the Schwetzingen Festival. Because of her enormous gamut and of her exceptional skills, compositions by modern composers belong also to her repertoire - she performed, for example, the premiere of a song cycle by Georg Friedrich Haas.

David Allsopp (Altus, Countertenor)

The "highly intelligent, vocally brilliant countertenor" David Allsopp began his musical training at an early age as a chorister at Rochester Cathedral and went on to spend four years as a choral scholar at the King's College in Cambridge. From there he moved to the renowned Westminster Cathedral Choir where he combined his growing career as a soloist with the daily services. David sings with many of London's major consort groups and has toured extensively both in Europe and further afield. On the solo platform, he has given many performances - although he specialises mainly in Baroque repertoire, his background means that he is equally at home with renaissance and medieval works and with more modern composers such as Britten and Tavener. Recent appearances have seen David in venues such as Karlsruhe Opera House, the Musikverein in Vienna and St John's, Smith Square in London.

Benjamin Hulett (Tenor)

The young and honoured British Tenor is currently principal tenor at the Hamburg State Opera and recently made his debut at the "Bayerische Staatsoper" Munich as "Oronte" in Handel's Alcina. He has appeared for example at the BBC Proms under Sir Andrew Davies, Sir Roger Norrington and Sir John Eliot Gardiner, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw under Phillippe Herreweghe, Markus Stenz and Jos van Veldhoven, the Halle Handel Festival under Howard Arman and Frieder Bernius. Other concert appearances include those with the BBC Symphony, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra, RPO, King's Consort, Wiener Akademie, Monteverdi Choir, Orchestre des Champs-Elysees, Stavanger Symphony and Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestras. Benjamin Hulett studied musicology at the New College in Oxford and opera and vocal technique at Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

Steffen Balbach (Bass I)

Steffen Balbach was born in 1971 and studied church music at the College of Church Music in Esslingen. He was full time cantor of the Christus-Church in Donaueschingen and completed his vocal studies at the Freiburg Conservatory with the highest possible point count. Since then, he has sung the bass and baritone parts of countless oratorios, cantatas and masses. In 2001 he reached the final round of the renowned international vocal competition Belvedere in Vienna. Stefan Balbach works with the choir of Radio Bavaria and the Gewandhaus-Kammerchor, Leipzig. He has been a choir member and soloist of the National Opera in Stuttgart since 2002.

Daniel Raschinsky (Bass II)

The German bass-baritone was born in 1983. He attended the Christophoruschule in Altensteig, where he received piano lessons and choral singing training supported by a scholarship. As a member of the Christophorus-Kantorei he performed concerts and participated in numerous national and international choir competitions. In 2005 Mr. Raschinsky began to study singing at the "University of music and performing arts" in Stuttgart under Prof. Jaeger-Böhm - since 2008 with Prof. Dunja Vejzovic. Beside performances as a soloist Mr. Raschinsky has been a member of the "Stuttgart Chamber Choir", the "Wuerttemberg Chamber Choir" and the "Circus Musicus" under Prof. Dieter Kurz. His repertoire spans opera, major parts in the great oratorios, as well as Lieder literature and contemporary music.

Maulbronn Chamber Choir (Maulbronner Kammerchor)

The Maulbronn Chamber Choir was founded in 1983 and counts today as one of the renowned chamber choirs in Europe. Awards like the first places at the Baden-Württemberg Choir Competitions in 1989 and 1997, the second place at the German Choir Competition in 1990, the first prize at the German Choir Competition in 1998 and the second place at the International Chamber Choir Competition in Marktoberdorf 2008 show the extraordinary musical calibre of this ensemble. The Chamber Choir has managed to make quite a name for itself on the international scene, too. It was received enthusiastically by audiences and reviewers alike during its debut tour through the USA in 1983, with concerts in New York, Indianapolis and elsewhere. Its concert tours in many European countries, in Israel and Argentina as well as in South Africa and Namibia have also met with a similar response.

Hanoverian Court Orchestra (Hannoversche Hofkapelle)

The Hanoverian Court Orchestra under concertmistress Marlene Goede-Uter remains totally faithful to the tradition of historic court orchestras. Performing on reconstructed historical instruments the sound of this ensemble is hallmarked by the fact that the musicians also have experience of playing with different music ensembles on the European Baroque scene and view historical performance practices as a means of keeping current. The repertoire of the Orchestra is not restricted to the many forms of Baroque music alone, but also includes classical works, with Mozart operas and the Romantic era being particularly favoured. Their constant involvement with 17th and 18th-century music has made the Court Orchestra musicians masters of their respective instruments. The result is the expressive and elegant style of playing, that assures the orchestra its prominent position. The Hanoverian Court Orchestra has been the "orchestra in residence" at the Herrenhausen Festival Weeks since 2006.

Jürgen Budday (Conductor)

is artistic director and founder of the Maulbronn Chamber Choir. He studied church music and musicology at the Academy of Music in Stuttgart from 1967 to 1974 and, since 1979, he has taught at the Evangelical Seminar in Maulbronn. This also involved his taking over as artistic director of the Maulbronn Monastery Concerts and the cantor choir. In 1992, he was named Director of Studies, in 1995 came the appointment as Director of Church Music and in 1998 he was awarded the "Bundesverdienstkreuz" (German Cross of Merit) as well as the Bruno-Frey Prize from the State Academy in Ochsenhausen for his work in music education. At the Prague International Choir Festival, Jürgen Budday received an award as best director and, since 2002, he has also held the chair of the Choral Committee with the German Music Council. Jürgen Budday has started a cycle of Handel oratorios that is planned to span several years, which involves working with soloists like Emma Kirkby, Michael Chance, Nancy Argenta and Mark Le Brocq (to name but a few). The live recordings of these performances, that have received the highest praise from reviewers, has won him international recognition. Till these days 10 oratorios by G.F.Handel are documented on discs.

"No conductor and no choir have so consistently recorded so many Handel oratorios as Jürgen Budday and his Maulbronn Chamber Choir." (Dr. Karl Georg Berg, Handel Memoranda Halle 2008)

CD I

1. Overture
(from the Oratorio Solomon)

Israel in Egypt (1739)

A Sacred Oratorio
Words attributed to Charles Jennens

Part The First: Exodus

2. RECITATIVE (TENOR)
Now there arose a new king over Egypt,
which knew not Joseph;
and he set over Israel Task-masters
to afflict them with burdens;
and they made them serve with rigour.

3. COUNTERTENOR SOLO & CHORUS
And the children of Israel sigh'd
by reason of the bondage;
and their cry came up unto God.
They oppress'd them with burdens;
and made them serve with rigour.

4. RECITATIVE (TENOR)
Then he sent Moses, His servant,
and Aaron, whom he had chosen;
these shew'd His signs among them,
and wonders in the land of Ham.
- He turned their waters into blood.

5. CHORUS
They loathed to drink of the river:
He turned their waters into blood.

6. AIR (COUNTERTENOR)
Their land brought forth frogs,
yea, even in the king's chambers.
He gave their cattle over to the pestilence.
Blotches and blains broke forth
on man and beast.

7. 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 devour'd the fruits of the land.

8. CHORUS
He gave them hailstones for rain;
fire, mingled with the hail,
ran along upon the ground.

9. CHORUS
He sent a thick darkness over the land,
even darkness, which might be felt.

CD I

1. Ouvertüre
(aus dem Oratorium Solomon)

Israel in Ägypten (1739)

A Sacred Oratorio
Words attributed to Charles Jennens

Erster Teil: Der Auszug

2. REZITATIV (TENOR)
Nun kam ein neuer König in Ägypten,
dem Joseph fremd war:
und er setzt' über Israel Fronvögte,
die sie drückten mit Arbeit
und mit Diensten unbarmherzig.

3. ALT-SOLO & CHOR
Und die Kinder Israels schrien
in ihrer harten Knechtschaft:
und ihr Schreien stieg auf zu dem Herrn.
Sie erlagen der Arbeit
und weinten laut um Rettung.

4. REZITATIV (TENOR)
Da sandt' Er Moses, Seinen Diener,
und Aaron, den Er erwählet:
die wirkten Seine Zeichen
und Wunder in dem Lande Ham.
- Des Stromes Gewässer ward zu Blut.

5. CHOR
Mit Ekel erfüllte der Trank nun:
des Stromes Wasser ward zu Blut.

6. ARIE (ALTUS)
Der Strom zeugte Frösche, die füllten das Land,
ja, kamen in des Königs Kammer.
Er liess von Seuchen schlagen alle Herdentrift.
Schwarzes Geschwür brach aus
an Mensch und Tier.

7. CHORUS
Er sprach das Wort:
und es kam der Fliegen Gewühl, der Fliegen
und Mücken Schwarm in ihre Höfe.
Er sprach: und der Zug der Heuschrecken kam
und tilgte alle Frucht auf dem Feld.

8. CHOR
Er sandte Hagel herab,
Feuer in dem Hagelsturm
rauscht im Donner auf das Land.

9. CHOR
Er sandte dicke Finsternis über all das Land,
tiefes Nachtgraun, das niemand sah.

10. CHORUS

He smote all the first born of Egypt,
the chief of all their strength.

11. 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.

12. CHORUS

Egypt was glad when they departed,
for the fear of them fell upon them.

13. CHORUS

He rebuked the Red Sea,
and it was dried up.
He led them through a wilderness.
But the waters overwhelmed their enemies,
there was not one of them left.

14. CHORUS

And Israel saw the great work
that the Lord did upon th' Egyptians;
and the people feared the Lord,
and believed the Lord and His servant Moses.

10. CHOR

Er schlug alle Erstgeburt Ägyptens,
den Kern der ganzen Macht.

11. CHOR

Doch mit dem Volk Israel
zog Er dahin gleichwie ein Hirt.
Er führt 'es hinaus mit Silber und Gold:
führte das ganze Heer aus Ägypten auf einen Tag.

12. CHOR

Froh sah Ägypten seinen Auszug,
denn die Furcht vor ihm überkam sie.

13. CHOR

Er gebot der Meerflut, und sie trocknete aus.
Er führte durch die Tiefe trocken sie hindurch
wie durch ein Wüstenland.
Doch die Feinde überströmte die Wasserflut,
dass auch nicht einer entkam.

14. CHOR

Und Israel sah dieses Werk,
das der Herr tat am Land Ägypten:
und ganz Israel fürchtete ihn
und erkannte den Herrn und Seinen Diener Moses.

CD II

Part The Second: Moses' Song

1. INTROITUS (CHORUS)

Moses and the children of Israel
sung this song unto the Lord,
and spake, saying:
I will sing unto the Lord,
for He has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider
hath He thrown into the sea.

2. DUET (SOPRANO I & II)

The Lord is my strength
and my song.
He is become my salvation.

3. CHORUS

He is my God
and I will prepare Him an habitation:
my father's God.
And I will exalt Him.

4. DUET (BASSO I & II)

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.

5. CHORUS

The depths have covered them,
they sank into the bottom as a stone.

CD II

Zweiter Teil: Moses Gesang

1. INTROITUS (CHOR)

Moses und die Kinder Israels
sangen also zu dem Herrn,
Ihn laut preisend:
Ich will singen dem Herrn,
denn Er hat geholfen wunderbar:
das Ross und den Reiter
hat Er gestürzt in das Meer.

2. DUETT (SOPRAN I & II)

Der Herr ist mein Heil
und mein Lied.
Er ward allein mein Erlöser.

3. CHOR

Er ist mein Gott
und ich will bereiten ihm eine Wohnung:
meines Vaters Gott.
Und ich will ihn preisen.

4. DUETT (BASS I & II)

Der Herr ist ein Mann des Krieges:
Herr ist sein Name.
Die Wagen des Pharaos und seiner Knechte
warf er ins Meer;
seine auserwählten Hauptleute
versanken im Roten Meer.

5. CHOR

Die Tiefe deckte sie,
sie sanken in den Abgrund wie ein Stein.

6. CHORUS

Thy right hand, O Lord,
is become glorious in power:
Thy right hand, O Lord,
hath dashed in pieces the enemy.
And in the greatness of Thine excellency,
Thou hast overthrown them
that rose up against Thee.
Thou sentest forth Thy wrath,
which consumed them as stubble.

7. CHORUS

And with the blast of Thy nostrils
the waters were gathered together,
the floods stood upright as an heap,
the depths were congealed
in the heart of the sea.

8. AIR (TENOR)

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."

9. AIR (SOPRANO)

Thou didst blow with the wind:
the sea cover'd them,
they sank as lead
in the mighty waters.

10. CHORUS

Who is like unto Thee, O Lord,
among the Gods?
Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness,
fearful in praises, doing wonders!
Thou stretchest out Thy right hand:
the earth swallowed them.

11. DUET (COUNTERTENOR & TENOR)

Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth Thy people,
which Thou hast redeemed.
Thou hast guided them in Thy strength
unto the holy habitation.

12. CHORUS

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

13. AIR (COUNTERTENOR)

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.

6. CHOR

Herr, Deine Hand
tut große, herrliche Wunder:
Dein Arm hat, o Herr,
zerschlagen in Stücke die Feindesmacht.
Und in der Größe Deiner Herrlichkeit
hast Du sie gestürzt all',
die gegen Dich stritten.
Du sandtest Deinen Grimm,
der verzehrte sie wie Stoppeln.

7. CHOR

Und vor dem Hauch Deines Mundes
zerteilten sich allsbald die Wasser,
die Flut stand aufrecht wie ein Wall,
die Tiefe erstarrte
im Herzen der See.

8. ARIE (TENOR)

So sagte der Feind:
"Ich eile nach, bis ich sie erhascht,
bis ich geteilet den Raub,
und stille die Rachlust an ihnen.
Ich will ziehn mein Schwert,
mein Arm soll sie verderben."

9. ARIE (SOPRAN)

Aber Du ließest Wehn Deinen Hauch:
das Meer deckte sie,
sie sanken wie Blei
in dem mächt'gen Wasser.

10. CHOR

Wer vergleicht sich Dir, o Herr,
unter den Göttern?
Wer gleichet Dir, glanzvoll in Heiligkeit,
schrecklich und herrlich, wundertätig!
Du strecktest aus die Rechte:
da verschlang sie das Grab.

11. DUETT (COUNTERTENOR & TENOR)

Du in Deiner Gnade hast Dein Volk geleitet,
das Du hast erlöst.
Und Du hast geführt sie mit Macht
zu Deiner heiligen Wohnung.

12. CHOR

Das hören die Völker und sind erstaunt:
Schrecken fasst sie rings umher;
all' die Eingeborenen Kanaans
ergreift die Angst durch die Stärke Deines Arms.
Sie werden erstarren wie Stein,
bis vorüber Dein Volk zieht, o Herr,
das Du erworben hast.

13. ARIE (COUNTERTENOR)

Bringe sie hinein
und pflanze sie auf den Bergen
in Deinem Erbteil,
an den Ort, o Herr,
den Du erhöht zu Deiner Wohnung
und zu Deinem Heiligtum, o Herr,
das Deine Hand bereitet.

14. CHORUS
The Lord shall reign for ever and ever!

15. RECITATIVE (TENOR)
For the horse of Pharao
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.

16. CHORUS
The Lord shall reign for ever and ever!

17. RECITATIVE (TENOR)
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 with dances,
and Miriam answers them:

18. SOPRANO SOLO & 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.
The Lord shall reign for ever and ever:
I will sing to unto the Lord,
for He hath triumphed gloriously:
the horse and his rider
hath He thrown into the sea.

14. CHOR
Der Herr regiert auf immer und ewig!

15. REZITATIV (TENOR)
Denn die Reiter Pharaos
mit all ihren Wagen
und ihren Rossen sanken ins Meer,
und der Herr ließ
des Meer's gewalt'ge Fluten auf sie fallen:
doch die Kinder Israels
gingen hindurch in der Mitte des Meers.

16. CHOR
Der Herr regiert auf immer und ewig!

17. REZITATIV (TENOR)
Und Miriam, die Seherin,
die Schwester des Aaron,
nahm die Pauk' in ihre Hand;
die Schar der Weiber, sie folgte ihr nach
mit Pauken und mit Reigen,
und Miriam sang vor ihr:

18. SOPRAN SOLO & CHOR
Singet zu dem Herrn,
denn er hat gesieget wunderbar!
Der Herr regiert auf immer und ewig!
Das Ross und den Reiter
hat Er gestürzt in das Meer.
Der Herr regiert auf immer und ewig:
Ich will singen dem Herrn,
denn Er hat geholfen wunderbar,
das Ross und den Reiter
hat er gestürzt in das Meer.