

## Introduction

- Film called *The Prince of Egypt*; details the first two-thirds of the life of Moses. Though perhaps not authentic in every detail, the truth of God's miraculous deliverance of His people and their exodus from Egypt was obvious.
- Moses was indeed [The Prince of Egypt](#)
  - raised in the splendour of Egyptian royalty...
- However he was much, much more
  - God delivered him to become the [Prince of Israel](#), the Lawgiver, the deliverer of his people.
- Moses, like us, is something of a mixture:
  - on one hand he was a mighty man of God
  - and on the other he was often rash and impetuous
- The Bible divides his life into three forty-year segments
  - D.L. Moody said of him, "[Moses spent forty years thinking he was somebody, forty years learning he was nobody, and forty years learning what God can do with a nobody.](#)"
- In order to begin to understand Moses' life, we must first understand his beginnings amidst the brutality Israel faced in Egypt
  - and also the strange circumstances surrounding his birth
- Finish by reflecting on what these particular incidents might say to us today

## The Brutality of Egypt (1:1-22)

### The Legacy of Joseph (vv.1-7)

- Exodus means "exit" or "going out."
  - v.1-7 tell us how Israel came into Egypt
  - the rest of the book will tell us how they went [out](#) of the country!
- Israel began with Abraham and his promised son Isaac. Isaac had a son named Jacob who had 12 sons. One of the twelve was Joseph. His brothers were very jealous of him and so they sold him into slavery in Egypt. God was with Joseph and after many trials exalted him to the position of Prime Minister. Because of a severe famine in the Middle East, Joseph's brothers came to buy food in Egypt. Eventually, Joseph revealed himself and the Pharaoh gave them the fertile land of Goshen in Egypt.
- In Goshen, the Hebrews prospered (cf. Gen.47:27)
  - over the next 400 years, they lived in great prosperity and grew to great numbers
  - note the superlatives in v.7, "[the children of Israel were fruitful.](#)" It says they "[increased abundantly.](#)" They "[multiplied](#)" and "[grew exceedingly mighty](#)" (lit. became very numerous). Finally, "[the land was filled with them.](#)"

### The Problem of the Hebrews (vv.8-10)

- Think for a moment about what life in Egypt was like for the Hebrew people during this period.
  - Egypt was [fertile](#). The Nile River was used for irrigation. Once each year it overflowed its banks adding rich alluvial deposits of topsoil on the fields. The climate was mild and virtually anything would grow there.
  - Egypt was [wealthy in Natural Resources](#). There were fish and waterfowl galore. The fertile pastures provided rich grazing for livestock. The ample papyrus plants provided fiber for paper, baskets, sandals, etc... There was an inexhaustible supply of clay for bricks. The cliff along the river provided sandstone, limestone, granite and other minerals. Copper came from the deserts and gold from the upper regions.
  - Egypt was a [Sophisticated Society](#). Egypt was a literary nation. Acts 7:22 says, "[And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.](#)" Today there are many remnants of their hieroglyphic texts. Some of them date over 1500 years before Moses. They excelled in the arts, including painting, sculpture and making fine jewelry. Egyptians are most remembered for their science and engineering. The Great Pyramid at Gizsa has

a 775' per side square base, is 481' tall and is made of 2.5 million blocks each weighing 2.5 tons. By Moses' day, the Temple of Karnak had been built and the Great Sphinx had already been carved.

- Egypt was **A Pagan Culture**. In all of their learning, they had no knowledge of Creator God. They worshiped the river, the animals and believed their king was a god.
- Living under the New Pharaoh: **outright paranoia**.
  - v.8 says, "**Now there arose a new king... who did not know Joseph.**" For 400 years, the Egyptians had blessed the Hebrews. Now all that was about to change.
  - the new Pharaoh pointed out that "**the children of Israel are mightier than we.**" He feared they would continue to "multiply" and if there were a war they might "join our enemies and fight against us." Note he feared they might "go up out of the land." **He not only feared them but wanted to take advantage of them.**
  - many scholars date the Exodus in the 18th Egyptian dynasty. If so this makes for an interesting historical parallel. The Pharaohs had only recently thrown off the dynasty of foreign rule by the Hyksos (hick'-sos), the "shepherd kings" and returned the country to native rulers. Their mistrust of foreigners is understandable.

### The Strategies of Pharaoh (vv.11-22)

- In v.10, Pharaoh says, "**Let us deal shrewdly [wisely] with them.**" He then began to implement the first of three deadly strategies.

#### **Strategy #1 - Forced Slavery (vv.11-14)**

- At any given point during ancient times about half the population of the world was in slavery to the other half. What makes this unique is that the whole nation of Israel was put into slavery.
- They set "taskmasters" or "slave drivers" over them. Instead of a life of prosperity and peace, the whole nation of Israelites became slaves and was made to build the "supply cities of Pithom and Raamses" on the eastern front.
- The life of slave was very cheap. God only knows the thousands that died building the monuments of ancient Egypt. Pharaoh thought slavery would kill many and break their spirit. V.12 says, "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." By the time of the Exodus there were over 600,000 men above age 20 plus women and children (12:37; 38:26).
- Note also, "the were in dread of the children of Israel." "Dread" comes from a Hebrew word that describes a loathing so strong it causes physical illness. They Egyptians saw the Hebrews as a cancerous growth on their country and they were so frightened of them, they were physically sick.
- They made them serve "with rigor" or harshness. They made their lives "bitter with hard bondage." Still, miraculously the Hebrews grew even stronger. Slavery didn't work at all.

#### **Strategy #2 - Full-Term Abortion (vv.15-21)**

- Abortion is not merely a modern invention. It was the second strategy in the wicked Pharaoh's bag of evil tricks.
- No one is certain what "Hebrew midwives" means. It could mean that they were Hebrews or that they served the Hebrews. The second option seems likely because Hebrews would not be likely to kill their own people and because of v.16, 19.
- "Shiphrah" and "Puah" the two midwives who were summoned to Pharaoh were likely in charge of other midwives. Pharaoh instructed them to kill any boy baby while the mother is "on the birth stools." A girl would be allowed to live.
- Pharaoh assumed that with a generation of males gone, the females would marry Egyptians and within a few years the Hebrews would be absorbed into the Egyptian race.
- v.17 says "the midwives feared God." No doubt these were law-abiding women and obviously feared Pharaoh. However, they "feared God" more for they "saved the male children alive."
- Pharaoh was furious to see Hebrew baby boys. He asked, "Why have you done

this thing?" The midwives offered a half-truth. They told him that the Hebrew women were "lively," that they "gave birth before the midwives come to them." In reality, the midwives were probably intentionally late.

- Again we see in v.20 that "the people multiplied and became very mighty." God also rewarded the midwives because they feared Him. He "provided households for them," that is, He gave them families of their own.

### Strategy #3 - Full-Blown Genocide (v.22)

- Determined to stop this miraculous population growth among the Hebrews, Pharaoh enlisted "all his people." He told them, "Every son who is born you shall cast into the river and every daughter you shall save alive."
- No doubt hundreds, perhaps thousands of Hebrews boys perished in the Nile River. However, there was one baby even the mighty Pharaoh could not kill.

## The Birth of the Deliverer (2:1-10)

### The Fear of a Desperate Mother (vv.1-2)

- v.1 describes Moses' parents as "a man of the house of Levi" and "a daughter of Levi." In other places in the Bible we learn their names were Amram and Jochebed ([Exodus 6:20](#), [Numbers 26:59](#))
- Amram means "exalted people." His name is mentioned in various OT genealogies. 6:20 says he lived to be 137.
- Jochebed means "honor of Jehovah." She is mentioned by name only in 6:20 and Num.26:59.
- Moses had two older siblings. Miriam was probably 8-10 when he was born. Aaron was three (Ex.7:7).
- They were a godly family. Their names reflect that in a time when many Hebrews worshiped the false gods of Egypt, their parents were faithful to Jehovah. In the midst of a pagan society faith is preserved in the family. Parents, faith should be built generation upon generation.
- Imagine their fear and concern knowing the king's orders when they realized Jochebed was expecting. Imagine both their joy and terror when the question "What is it?" was answered, "It's a boy!" Mothers think of carrying a child for 9 months knowing the king ordered all boys to be killed.
- v.2 and Heb.11:23 say Moses was "a beautiful child." Acts 7:20 says he was "well pleasing to God." The idea behind all these words is that he was exceptional or extraordinary. We all know that "no mother ever had an ugly baby." But Moses was different and his family knew it.
- They "hid him three months." Heb.11:23 says, "They were not afraid of the king's command."
- No doubt they lived in the slave quarters where mud brick apartments stood atop each other. Imagine them taking turns in the night soothing his cries. Imagine how much attention it took to keep him quiet. As he grew bigger and stronger, Jochebed knew it was impossible to hide him.

### The Faith of a Deliberate Mother (vv.3-4)

- "When she could no longer hide him" she built an "ark." Interestingly the only other usage of this Hebrew word is for the ark of Noah. Think of the parallels!
- Using the plentiful papyrus or "bulrushes" with "asphalt and pitch" she made it buoyant and waterproof. She then took her precious cargo and "laid it in the reeds by the river's bank." Imagine how hard that must have been!
- Jochebed sent Miriam, Moses' sister who "stood afar off." She kept watch on the basket. This tells us something about Jochebed's faith. She believed God would intervene. You don't send a ten-year old girl to the river to watch her baby brother eaten by the ever-present crocodiles.
- Jochebed made her plans and said her prayers. She entrusted her precious boy to the Lord.
- *Parents, we have to do the same. F.B. Meyer wrote, "There is abundant warrant, afforded by this narrative, for Christian parents to cast their children upon God."*

*The mother whose child goes to earn her living among strangers; the father whose son must leave the quiet homestead for the mighty city; the parents who, as missionaries, are unable to nurture their children on the mission field..., or those who on their deathbeds must part with their babes to the care of comparative strangers may all learn a lesson from the faith that cast the young child on the providence of God, even more absolutely than the buoyancy of Nile. God lives, and loves, and cares. More quick and tender than Miriam's, his eye neither slumbers nor sleeps" (Devotional Commentary on Exodus, pp.26- 27).*

### The Reward of a Faithful Father (vv.5-10)

- God saw Jochebed's faith, heard her prayers and rewarded her greatly.
- Many scholars believe the "daughter of Pharaoh" was Hatshepsut the daughter of Thutmose I and later became the mother of Thutmose III, the king during the Exodus.
- Some suggest that at this point she was barren and spent time at the river to pray to the god of the Nile, Hapi for fertility. Whatever the reason, the God of Providence guided her steps to the precious bundle in the basket.
- She said immediately, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Still, she "had compassion on him."
- Miriam asserted herself and offered to find a "Hebrew woman" to "nurse the child." The princess agreed and Miriam ran to her mother with the good news. The princess sent her home with the baby and the promise of "wages" for her work. She got her baby and a salary!
- Jochebed probably kept the baby for 2-3 years, the normal time Hebrew women weaned their children. Imagine her difficulty when "she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter."
- The princess called him "Moses" which means "drawn out." She said, "I drew him out of the water."

## Transforming Truths for Today

### God is a God of Deliverance

- Though the Hebrews were "afflicted" and their "lives made bitter with hard bondage," though their babies were fed to the crocodiles, God was with them. He kept all the promises He made to them (see Gen.15:13-14). Ultimately, He delivered them. This same Almighty God, our elohim will deliver us from our trials too.

### God is a God of Irony

- Let me give you three ironies concerning today's text.
  - Pharaoh thought the Hebrew males were his enemies, but it was females who preserved Moses. First there were the midwives, then Jochebed, then Miriam and the Princess.
  - The Nile River was supposed to be Moses' place of death but it became his place of deliverance.
  - Moses was "drawn out" of the river that he might "draw out" the people of Israel from Egypt.
  - Joseph said to his brothers in Gen.50:20, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good." What may seem bad in your life, God can use for great good. Trust Him!
- God turns things around, in ways completely and fully in his control, to save those he sets his love upon