

Jochebed - The Trusting Mother
Exodus 2: 1- 10

Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.
Psalm 37:5

By name, Jochebed is mentioned only twice the Bible (Exodus 6:20 & Numbers 26:59). Her name is not even given in the verses we will be studying today. She is not vividly described or mentioned for her beauty as many of the other women we have studied have been. Jochebed rather gives us the example of a woman who walked humbly before her God and imparted that to her children. She is not known for awesome tasks or endeavors but rather for her excellence as a mother. All three of her children were notable in their accomplishments. She was the mother of Moses, the deliverer of Israel. She was the mother of Aaron, the first high priest of Israel and spokesman for Moses. And she was the mother of Miriam, a prophetess and leader of the Hebrew women. Jochebed means “glory of God” and she certainly honored God with her life and her faith. She trusted him for everything, even the lives of her children.

Exodus 2:1-2

The couple being spoken of are Amram and Jochabed, both from the house of Levi. She had been born in Egypt but being a Levite she was probably well taught about God and had knowledge of Israel’s history, promises, and laws. We don’t know a lot about their daily life but it is recorded that during the bondage by the Egyptians, the Levites were exempted from hard labor and allowed to devote themselves to spiritual pursuits to help other Hebrews and tribes by providing encouragement and a strong example. However, regardless of their responsibilities they were still slaves.

Jochebed became pregnant with Moses at a very difficult time. Pharaoh had just issued a new order: “*Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.*” (Exodus 1:22) Imagine how she must have felt. Unlike today when an ultrasound can reveal the baby’s sex months in advance, Jochabed had to wonder for months if she was carrying a boy or girl. Considering the fate that would await a boy, she possibly even prayed for a girl. We see her faith spring into action when she gives birth to Moses. She decides she will not comply with the Pharaoh’s edict: she will hide her son. This choice is even mentioned in the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:23, *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s command.* How she managed to hide him for three months was not recorded. We can imagine there was some anxiety involved in making sure he was safe, that he didn’t cry, finding new places to hide him. Miriam was about 10 and could help but Aaron was only 3 and needed attention himself. (Plus 3 year olds are not great with keeping secrets!) We can be sure as she walked close to God that he gave her wisdom and ingenuity to hide Moses for three months. Hebrews reveals two more things about Jochebed:

1. Moses was no ordinary child. In Exodus 2:2 he is called a “*goodly child*”; in Acts 7:20 he is described as “*well pleasing to God*”; and in Hebrews 11:23 a “*beautiful child.*” There

was something that stood out to her, something that made her realize that God had a special purpose for her son.

2. Jochebed had faith and was not afraid of the king's edict. By faith she hid him for three months. This took a lot of faith because she was not only risking Moses' life if they were caught. She was also putting at risk her own life plus that of the whole family - her husband and her two other children. But Jochebed knew the king's edict was wrong, so she obeyed God's law rather than the king's law. She could trust God with her child because she trusted Him to take care of her. She had faith. She saw something in her child. She obeyed God rather than the king.

Exodus 2:3-5

There came a day when she knew she couldn't hide him any longer, she had to let him go. (As I write this phrase it comes to my mind, she had to let him go so he could be the one to tell Pharaoh to "let my people go.") God had helped her hide Moses for three months and she knew her God of infinite compassion would not forsake her now. The plan she devised was a dangerous one, that of leaving her baby in a handmade ark floating at the water's edge close to the dangerous current of the Nile River plus its inhabitants.

Dangers of the Nile

1. Fast currents that flow north and empty into the Mediterranean.
2. Flooding/parasites
3. Nile Crocodile
4. Hippos
5. Variety of venomous snakes



Knowing this about the Nile I would be hesitant to go there myself, let alone leave my 3 month old baby there. Oh, the courage and faith Jochebed must have had as she wove by hand the basket of bulrushes from the papyrus plant and then covered it with pitch to make it watertight. The Hebrew word used for this "basket" is *tevah*, an ark. The only other time we find *tevah* used is in Genesis when talking about the ark that Noah built. We can see the

similarity between them: Noah floating in an ark amidst a chaotic flood and Moses lying helpless in a tiny ark subject to the whims of the Nile. They were both totally dependent on God to protect and deliver them. What positive faith Jochebed must have had that God would protect her child as she worked diligently to finish the ark.

Imagine the emotions that overwhelmed she as she carefully placed Moses in his little ark among the reeds of the Nile and then backed away, leaving him alone in the water. Yes, Miriam was keeping an eye on him from a distant place on the shore. But she, his mother, had done all she could and now she had to let him go and trust God. The same applies to us today. There are times in our lives when we've done all we can and said all we can say and then we need to let it go and trust God.

Exodus 2: 5-9

Jochabed's courage and resourcefulness were met with with divine intervention. We see God fitting together all of the pieces to bring about His plan.

1. Jochebed just happened to put Moses in the right spot on the Nile
2. Pharaoh's daughter just happened to see the basket
3. Moses just happened to cry at the right time
4. Pharaoh's daughter had compassion on a Hebrew child and decided to disobey her father's edict and spare his life
5. Miriam just happened to be nearby and suggested she could find a Hebrew woman to nurse him
6. Jochebed just happened to be available and able to nurse
7. Pharaoh's daughter had enough influence to actually save Moses
8. Jochebed got Moses back - for awhile; God even got her paid for taking care of her own son

Only God could work out all of these details in such a marvelous way.

Jochebed probably got Moses back for three to five years. That was plenty of time for her to teach him about God and God's people and God's plan. I'm sure she taught him all about God creating the world, about Noah and the flood, about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, about Joseph and Egypt, and about God's promise to Abraham that God would deliver His people from Egypt after 400 years of slavery. God in His sovereignty allowed Jochebed to raise Moses herself and to teach him faith in God. She knew she had limited time with her son. You can imagine her diligence in teaching him all she could. *Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.* (Proverbs 22:6)

Exodus 2:10

But there came a day when he grew older that Jochebed had to let him go AGAIN...to let him go and trust God. Letting your children go is never easy for a parent. And it doesn't happen just once. It happens over and over again - the first time leaving your child with a sitter; the first time dropping them off at school; graduation; college; marriage; over and over again. You have to entrust them to God's care - they belong to Him anyway. God calls us to give them a firm foundation in the things of God and then send them out into the world. Jochebed did this job well and understood that she had done all she could do; it was time to let go and trust God.

When Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter he became Egyptian royalty. Certainly, he was raised with both the science and learning of Egypt. Acts 7:22 says, *And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.* It is reasonable to think he was instructed in geography, history, grammar, writing, literature, philosophy, and music. When he traveled he rode in a princely chariot. If he floated on the Nile, it was in a magnificent ship; he lived the royal life.

In later years, when the priests of Egypt would try to initiate Jochebed's son into idolatry, he would remember his mother's God and her faith in Him. He would remain a Hebrew at heart all the years of his life. We can be certain it was his mother's early influence that enabled Moses to make the decision to leave the court and go out among his brethren and lift their burden, for from her he had inherited loyalty to his own race. ²⁴ *By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,* ²⁵ *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,* ²⁶ *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.* (Hebrews 11:24-26)

Whether Jochebed lived to see this or not we do not know. She may have never known of the great legacy she left behind in her three children. But her faith, resourcefulness, and trust in God are reflected in their character, especially Moses. His unwavering faith was definitely shaped by the upbringing of his mother. ²⁷ *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.* ²⁸ *By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.* ²⁹ *By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.* (Hebrews 11:27-29)

Jochebed's story shows the profound impact one individual, motivated by faith, can have on the course of history. Her life serves as a powerful example for us of the transforming power of faith in the face of adversity. It wasn't easy by any means but she gave Moses to the Lord, trusting Him with her son's life. Because of this the whole nation of Israel was delivered from slavery. May we, in great faith and trust, be able to give God complete control over the things we consider precious and then see Him work in marvelous ways.

*You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You,
Because he trusts in You.
Isaiah 26:3*