

EXODUS CHAPTER 1-2

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The Introduction to Exodus in the previous lesson has shown its tremendous impact on the world.

Summary:

Jacob's Family in Egypt
A new Pharaoh Oppresses Israel
The Birth of Moses
Moses Flees to Midian
God Hears Israel's Groaning

JACOB'S FAMILY IN EGYPT

(1:1 NLT) These are the names of the sons of Israel (that is, Jacob) who moved to Egypt with their father, each with his family: **(2) Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, (3) Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, (4) Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. (5) In all, Jacob had seventy descendants in Egypt, including Joseph, who was already there.**

- Exodus is tied closely with the ending of Genesis. All of these names are familiar to the reader of Genesis. The official count was **seventy**, but by adding in some daughters, granddaughters and some known slaves, the actual count was much higher. The **seventy** were the official heads of tribes and families within those tribes.

A NEW PHARAOH OPPRESSES ISRAEL

(6) In time, Joseph and all of his brothers died, ending that entire generation.

- Abraham's grandson **Joseph** was the leading person in the final chapters of Genesis, but **Joseph** and all of his **brothers** were gone now. With them, the special privileges that Israel had enjoyed are gone, also.

(7) But their descendants, the Israelites, had many children and grandchildren. In fact, they multiplied so greatly that they became extremely powerful and filled the land.

- The passing of the twelve brothers did not prevent the people from being **fruitful** with children. Such fruitfulness was commanded by God.

Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

(Genesis 1:28 NLT)

Such fruitfulness was also direct blessing from the Lord. They had been settled in the area of Goshen and became a strong people within the hosting nation of Egypt. Look ahead at verse 9.

- Egyptians believed themselves to be a superior race and did not mix with the Hebrews. This enabled the Lord to keep His people as a distinct nation within the larger land of Egypt. God used the racism of the Egyptians to keep His people separate.

(8) Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done.

- Evidence had pointed to a *Semitic* Hyksos ruler being the Pharaoh during **Joseph's** time in **Egypt**. Now the Egyptians had regained control of the throne and the new line of rulers were not favorable to **Joseph's** people.
- **Tom Bradford** describes the scene:

The first job of the new King of Egypt was to dismantle any foreign influence that could threaten Egypt. And, that meant gaining control over the Israelites whose numbers had grown into menacing

proportions. Undoubtedly the Israelites were the majority people in the Nile delta areas. So, the solution was a straight-forward and simple one: subjugate them; make the Israelites into forced laborers.

- The purposes of God in setting up a nation *that wanted to leave Egypt* were being carried out unknowingly by these extreme pagans.

(9) He said to his people, "Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are. (10) We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more. If we don't, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country. "

- The Pharaoh knew the **Israelites** would like to leave Egypt, and a **war** from a neighboring country would give them the opportunity. They seemed a threat to Egyptian national security. But he badly needed their enormous labor force to continue his building programs.

(11) So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. They appointed brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down with crushing labor. They forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses as supply centers for the king.

- **Israel** was slipping into **slavery**.

(12) But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and spread, and the more alarmed the Egyptians became.

- There were more and more babies and families expanded. The expansion of the Hebrew families brought dread on the **Egyptians**. Israel could not have grown this way back in Canaan because they were already beginning to intermarry with the local people.

In Egypt, Israel could grow without being assimilated because of the entrenched racism of the Egyptians.

(13) So the Egyptians worked the people of Israel without mercy. (14) They made their lives bitter, forcing them to mix mortar and make bricks and do all the work in the fields. They were ruthless in all their demands.

- **Israelite** men were pressed into unwilling service, both in building construction as well as **field** work. The pyramids date from an earlier time. It must have seemed to these sons of Abraham that God was far away, but He had a plan to deliver them from their **bitter** experiences.

(15) Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave this order to the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah: (16) "When you help the Hebrew women as they give birth, watch as they deliver. If the baby is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live."

- The **king** ordered two of the **midwives** to **kill** the male children at birth. The **girls** could work hard as slaves but would not be a political threat to the government. They would not become warriors. **Shiphrah and Puah** were probably leaders in the midwife profession and would communicate with others of their trade.
- The real **killer** was the **king**, but he assigned the **killing** to the **midwives**. God has promised a Messiah and killing all of the boys would keep God's plan from working. Recall Jacob's words:

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the One to whom it belongs, the One whom all nations will honor.

(Genesis 49:10 NLT)

(17) But because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king's orders. They allowed the boys to live, too.

- **The midwives** answered to a higher law and would not take the **lives** of the newborn **boys**.
- **Tom Bradford** said:

Being a midwife was one of the few professions open to women in that era. It was respected and valued, as much as it was needed. Midwifery was also quite organized and the midwives were paid by those whom they served; there was a midwife guild, and probably Shifra and Pu'a were the head of the guild (which is why Pharaoh specifically summoned those two).

(18) So the king of Egypt called for the midwives. "Why have you done this?" he demanded. "Why have you allowed the boys to live?" (19) "The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women," the midwives replied. "They are more vigorous and have their babies so quickly that we cannot get there in time."

- These professional ladies had worked for both **Hebrew** and **Egyptian women** who were **giving birth**. The **Hebrew** women had their babies **quickly** and naturally the late-arriving **midwives** would not take them away from the mothers. It would be a short route to death for the **midwives**. What they said could very well have been true, although there were other reasons that they did not report to the **king**.

(20) So God was good to the midwives, and the Israelites continued to multiply, growing more and more powerful. (21) And because the midwives feared God, He gave them families of their own.

- **God** rewarded the **midwives** with children of their own. It sounds like they did not have **families** of their own prior to this round of events.

(22) Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile River. But you may let the girls live."

- The **Pharaoh** enforced his law by requiring the *Egyptians* to drown every **Hebrew** male child they encountered.

THE BIRTH OF MOSES

(2:1) About this time, a man and woman from the tribe of Levi got married.

- We learn in other Scripture that the man was Amram and the wife was Jochebed. Amram married his aunt. Exodus 6:20. This was before Moses and the Hebrew law, so the marriage was not against the law because it had not yet been given.



(2) The woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She saw that he was a special baby and kept him hidden for three months.

- Jochebed had other children prior to this one. Miriam and Aaron were older than Moses. Numbers 26:59.
- Jochebed identified the baby as being **special** in some way. But the **baby** was under the death sentence when he opened his little eyes for the first time. Nevertheless, the baby boy had something **special** in his favor: he was the child of believing parents.

It was by faith that Moses' parents hid him for three months when he was born. They saw that God had given them an unusual child, and they were not afraid to disobey the king's command.

(Hebrews 11:23 NLT)

(3) But when she could no longer hide him, she got a basket made of papyrus reeds and waterproofed it with tar and pitch. She put the baby in the basket and laid it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile River.

- Perhaps the **baby** cried enough that the mother was afraid an Egyptian would hear and drown the baby. The writer uses the same Hebrew word (H8392) here as was used of the ark of Noah in Genesis 6. She was obeying the law by putting the baby in the river (1:22). She just had her own modification to the plan of Pharaoh.

(4) The baby's sister then stood at a distance, watching to see what would happen to him.

- **The sister** is Miriam. God was making an opening for Miriam to save the baby. It had consequences for the nation.

(5) Soon Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the river, and her attendants walked along the riverbank. When the princess saw the basket among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it for her.

- **Wilbur Fields** comments:

Probably this was a religious ceremonial washing of some kind. The Nile river was the lifestream of Egypt. The ancient Egyptians regarded the river as worthy of divine honors. They wrote hymns to it. They felt that its waters imparted fruitfulness and long life. Note that Pharaoh made frequent trips out to the water (Ex. 7: 17; 8:20).

- The focus is on **the daughter of Pharaoh** and her **maid**. She wanted to know what was in **the basket**.

(6) When the princess opened it, she saw the baby. The little boy was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This must be one of the Hebrew children," she said.

- It is a blessing that **she felt sorry** for **the baby**.

(7) Then the baby's sister approached the princess. "Should I go and find one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" she asked. (8) "Yes, do!" the princess replied. So the girl went and called the baby's mother

- Big **sister** was right on top of the situation, arranging for the **mother** of Moses to care for him.

(9) "Take this baby and nurse him for me," the princess told the baby's mother. "I will pay you for your help." So the woman took her baby home and nursed him.

- **Wilbur Fields** gives us insight here:

... we can be completely sure that the child Moses grew up with spiritual care also, hearing songs and words about God and his people Israel. As far as we know the only training Moses could have received about God was that which he received at home as a very young child. But the earliest impressions upon a child often stick with him all his life. This certainly proved true in the case of Moses.

(10) Later, when the boy was older, his mother brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him as her own son. The princess named him Moses, for she explained, "I lifted him out of the water."

- Observe how the faith of **Moses' mother** was rewarded. Previously she cared for **Moses** at great peril; now she worked under the protection of **Pharaoh's daughter**. Previously she cared for him at her own expense; now she gets royal wages for child care.
- He was given an Egyptian name related to **water**. It is seen in other Egyptian names such as *Ahmose* and *Thutmose*.
- **Moses** did not identify with his foster mother or the Egyptian people, not because he was a rebel, but because of his faith. Hebrews 11:24-25 NLT says,

It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.

- Just as the Lord moved His man Joseph into the top ranks of the Egyptian government of his time, so the Lord is moving His man **Moses** into the top ranks of the present Egyptian government for education and legal position. It will serve him in coming years.

MOSES FLEES TO MIDIAN

(11) Many years later, when Moses had grown up, he went out to visit his own people, the Hebrews, and he saw how hard they were forced to work. During his visit, he saw an Egyptian beating one of his fellow Hebrews.

- He saw how **his** brethren were being mistreated and took action.

(12) After looking in all directions to make sure no one was watching, Moses killed the Egyptian and hid the body in the sand.

- His action was not authorized or commanded by the Lord and it led to the death of the **Egyptian** overlord.

(13) The next day, when Moses went out to visit his people again, he saw two Hebrew men fighting. "Why are you beating up your friend?" Moses said to the one who had started the fight. (14) The man replied, "Who appointed you to be our prince and judge? Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?" Then Moses was afraid, thinking, "Everyone knows what I did."

- When **Moses** intervened in a dispute between to **Hebrew** men, he learned that they knew he **killed** the **Egyptian**.
- **Wilbur Fields** sees a major lesson here:

Moses had to learn that God would give Israel deliverance by HIS own hand, rather than by Moses' hand. This lesson required forty years of sheep-herding in humiliation.

We must not, however, find fault with Moses' impulsiveness. At least he tried to do something. Simon Peter was also impulsive, and in an act of questionable violence he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (Mark 14:47). God used both Peter and Moses to do great things. Their decisiveness showed their potential for leadership, once they were properly disciplined. God does not get much service from those who know all the right things to do, but do not do anything.

(15) And sure enough, Pharaoh heard what had happened, and he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in the land of Midian. When Moses arrived in Midian, he sat down beside a well.

- The news of the **killing** went everywhere, even reaching the ears of **Pharaoh**, who issued the death penalty for young **Moses**.
- **Moses** quickly left Egypt for the land of **Midian**, perhaps 250 miles away. While he was there, he had a significant encounter.
- Water **wells** were a common place to meet local people just as Jacob met Rachel by a **well**.
- The **Midianites** were descendants of Abraham through his wife Keturah (Genesis 25:2,4) This way, they were remotely related to the Israelites. They are later called Kenites and were friends with the nation of Israel.

(16) Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters who came as usual to draw water and fill the water troughs for their father's flocks.

- The **priest of Midian** was a worshiper of the one true God. **God's** worship was not confined to Israel only.
- The priest had **seven daughters** and they came to the well to **water** their **flocks**. Ladies cared for sheep as well as did the men.

(17) But some other shepherds came and chased them away. So Moses jumped up and rescued the girls from the shepherds. Then he drew water for their flocks.

- The male **shepherds** drove the ladies away from the **water**, but **Moses** stood up for them so the flocks of the ladies were **watered**. Though **Moses** had failed at bringing justice to his people in Egypt, he still could stand up against wrong. This time he was successful.

(18) When the girls returned to Reuel, their father, he asked, "Why are you back so soon today?" (19) "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds," they answered. "And then he drew water for us and watered our flocks."

- The daughters were off work early and their dad learned that it was an **Egyptian** who took the ladies' part and even **watered the flocks**.

(20) "Then where is he?" their father asked. "Why did you leave him there? Invite him to come and eat with us."

- Reuel's hospitality kicked in and Moses was invited to the family home for food and housing.
- **Eating** bread involved a personal pledge of friendship and protection.

(21) Moses accepted the invitation, and he settled there with him. In time, Reuel gave Moses his daughter Zipporah to be his wife.

- Over time, a romance developed with one of Reuel's **daughters** and **Moses** married **Zipporah**.

(22) Later she gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, for he explained, "I have been a foreigner in a foreign land."

- Moses hadn't left Egypt permanently and that is seen in the name of his **son**.
- What lessons did **Moses** learn while living in Midian?
 - He learned to trust less in his own abilities.
 - He learned patience, at least more than he had in Egypt.
 - He learned about the terrain. He would later lead Israel through this very area.
- Moses had some understanding that a Savior was coming. Consider Hebrews 11:26 NLT:

He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward.

GOD HEARS ISRAEL'S GROANING

(23) Years passed, and the king of Egypt died. But the Israelites continued to groan under their burden of slavery. They cried out for help, and their cry rose up to God.

- **The king** who was oppressing **Israel** died and the oppression only got worse. They **cried to God** about their **slavery**.

(24) God heard their groaning, and He remembered His covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

- The **God** of mercy and grace heard and viewed all of this in light of **His covenant** with the patriarchs.

(25.) He looked down on the people of Israel and knew it was time to act.

- God had not intervened as the years rolled by, but now He knew it was time to get into action on the part of Abraham's descendants.