



EXODUS 1-2 GOD AS ISRAEL'S SAVIOR; BIRTH OF MOSES AND FIRST 40 YEARS

The book of Exodus is actually a *continuation* of Genesis, and is only artificially divided here because of the length of the narrative. The name means in Greek "a going out" and in the Hebrew it is actually called "these are the names" or *shemoth*.

Who wrote the book of Exodus? According to the Bible, it was Moses himself, who wrote the book that was later divided into five parts. As Exodus 34:27 mentions, he wrote what God had explicitly told him: "Moses then wrote down *everything* the Lord had said." In Deut. 31:24 it says, "Moses finished writing in a book the words of this Law *from beginning to end*." There are some parts that were later added, such as Moses' own death in Deut. 34:5, probably by Joshua, the next leader used by God.

Importance of the book of Exodus

Exodus is one of the most important books in all the Old Testament. As Eugene Merrill states, "The exodus is the most significant historical and theological event of the Old Testament because it marks God's mightiest act in behalf of his people, an act which brought them from slavery to freedom...from a people of promise—the Hebrews—to a nation of fulfillment—Israel."

"To it the book of Genesis provides an introduction and justification, and from it flows all subsequent Old Testament revelation...In the final analysis, the exodus served to typify that exodus achieved by Jesus Christ for people of faith so that it is a meaningful event for the church as well as for Israel" (*Kingdom of Priests*, pp. 57-58).

So here we enter a new section in the Bible. Edward Young points out: "Exodus marks the first great division in the Pentateuch. Up to this point, the Law was distinguished primarily by narrative; from here on it is characterized by legislation. The people are now ready to be organized as the theocratic nation, and hence must receive the legislation necessary for such organization. This legislation consists of *three parts*: that given at Mt. Sinai (Exodus, Leviticus), that given in the wilderness wanderings (Numbers), and that delivered in the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy)" (*Introduction to the O.T.* p. 62). The book of Exodus begins by mentioning the seventy that

entered Egypt and how they quickly multiplied. In the several hundred years they were in Egypt, they multiplied similar to the United States which from such a small beginning with 102 Pilgrims, it now has 280 million people. The Israelites were now approximately 2 million in size.

A new pharaoh disregards the Israelites

After this time, "There arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph" (1:8). This means a new king came to the throne that did not recognize what Joseph had done many years before, neither did he give favor to the Israelite people.

According to the biblical timeframe, the date of this oppression is some time before Moses' birth. Since the Bible says in 1 Kings 6:1 that Solomon began to build God's temple 480 years before the Exodus, and it is fairly unanimous that Solomon began the construction around 966 B.C., 480 years from then would put the Exodus around 1446 B.C. Since Moses was born 80 years before this time, his birth would be around 1526 B.C.

It is remarkable that this period coincides with the expulsion of the Hyksos, the Semitic foreigners that ruled Egypt for around 150 years. Now the native Egyptians reestablished their rule with a new dynasty, called the 18th, that is against anything that reminds them of the Semitic overlords, and the Israelites shared this racial heritage. It was the Pharaoh Ahmose who expelled the hated Hyksos and established a nationalistic policy. His son Amenhotep I (1570-1525) continued with his father's policy, and the oppression would have happened sometime during this period.

It was natural for this new dynasty to be afraid of the growing population of Israelites and to distrust them, for they had similar racial ties with the hated Hyksos and conceivably could join a future invasion in an Hyksos attempt to reconquer the land. Whatever the reason, this pharaoh concluded he had to drastically stop their propagation. So he instructed the two women who supervised the Israelite midwives that they were to kill all the male Israelites after they were born.

As Vernon McGee mentions, "God told Abraham that Israel would have times of hardship in Egypt. Genesis 15:13 says, "And he said to Abram, 'Know certainly that your descendants will

be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.' Three things are predicted in this verse. The Israelites were to be strangers in a strange land; they were to be servants, that is, slaves; and they were to be afflicted. All of these predictions had come true in just the first few verses of Exodus 1.

"This is another attempt of Satan to destroy the line leading to the Lord Jesus Christ. Satanic attempts to cut off the line leading to Christ run all the way through the Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Many attempts have been made to destroy the Jews, and it is quite interesting to note the way anti-Semitism has spread throughout the world. It is satanic in its origin, and therefore no child of God should have any part in it. It is generally people with no knowledge of God who persecute the Jews" (*Thru the Bible*).

God's first intervention to save His people

So God intervened to save His people by instilling a godly fear in the midwives, "But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive" (1:17).

This incensed the pharaoh, and now instructed *all* the Egyptians to participate in this infanticide. Moses is born at this time, and again, to better understand the general history, the dating is important, for it shows how well Egyptian history around that time melds in with the biblical account.

Summary of the pharaohs in the book of Exodus

Here is a brief summary by the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* of the Egyptian pharaohs that probably were involved in the narratives of the book of Exodus: "Amenhotep I ruled in the newly centralized government from 1546 to 1526 (actually begun by his father Ahmose I) and was succeeded by Thutmose I (who ruled ca. 1526-1512). Moses was born (ca. 1526) in this king's reign (or at the end of the reign of Amenhotep I). This king's famous daughter, Hatshepsut, may have been the royal princess who discovered Moses along the Nile. When Thutmose II (1512-1504) died, Thutmose III was very young. So his stepmother, Hatshepsut, contrived to make herself ruler starting in 1503. [The general picture of Hatshepsut, adds Merrill, "leads us to identify this bold queen as the daughter of Pharaoh who rescued Moses. Only she of all known women of the period possessed the presumption and independence to violate an

ordinance of the king to kill the Hebrew males and under his very nose at that!]. During Hatshepsut's brilliant reign Egypt experienced prosperity. In these years *Moses* spent his youth in the royal court. After Hatshepsut's death in 1428 Thutmose III ruled alone till 1450. Thutmose III liquidated the entire royal court and attempted to obliterate Hatshepsut's name from monuments in the land. At that time Moses probably found the court of Egypt inhospitable and fled to Midian.

"Thutmose III became a powerful kingdom builder, extending his empire to include Syria. Thutmose III was succeeded by Amenhotep II (1450-1425), *the Pharaoh of the Exodus* (1446). Unlike his warring father, Amenhotep II seems to have suffered military reverses because he was not able to carry out extensive campaigns. His weak war efforts may have resulted from the loss of all or most of his chariots, in the waters of the Red Sea. The so-called "Dream Stela" of Thutmose IV records that the god Har-em-akht told the young prince in a dream that someday he would be king. If Thutmose IV had been the eldest son, proof of his throne-right would have been unnecessary. It is logical, therefore, to assume that he was a younger son, not the oldest son, of Amenhotep II. This accords with Exodus 12:29 that the eldest son of Pharaoh died the night of Israel's first Passover."

Moses' first forty years

When Moses is born, just as in Germany's Nazi history, being an Israelite was almost a death sentence. If any Egyptian heard an Israelite baby crying, they were instructed to kill him. "And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him...put the child in it and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank. And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him. Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her maidens walked along the riverside; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it" (2:2-5).

Notice the account is something different than what many think. She did not send the little ark down the Nile River, rather she laid it in a place where the reeds would protect it, and near a place where Egyptian women bathed. She also had Miriam look out for the ark in case it began to drift. So this was a carefully laid out plan.

What Moses' mother could not imagine was that it was the pharaoh's own daughter that would bathe that day and would be moved with compassion to adopt him. Miriam appeared close by, and the princess told her to find a Hebrew female to help wean the child. Little did she know it would be Moses' own mother who would nurse him for 3 months. "And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying 'Because I drew him out of the water'" (2:10). It is interesting that Moses' name has three meanings, one in Hebrew, "Drawing out," and two in Egyptian, "Son of the water," or "Son of Mose," a suffix taken from previous pharaohs such as Ahmose and Thutmose.

Moses' birth and adoption

McGee comments, "The first forty years of Moses' life were spent in the courts of Pharaoh. He was raised and trained like an Egyptian. He looked like an Egyptian, talked like an Egyptian, and acted like an Egyptian. Moses was educated in the great Temple of the Sun which was the outstanding university of the day. We underrate what the Egyptians knew and accomplished. Their knowledge of astronomy was phenomenal. They knew the exact distance to the sun. They worked on the theory that the earth was round and not flat. They knew a great deal about chemistry which is evidenced by the way they were able to embalm the dead. We have no process to equal it today. Their workmanship and ability with colors were fantastic. Their colors are brighter than any we have today.

"In addition to all of their other accomplishments, the Egyptians also had a tremendous library. And Moses, we are told, was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians...The Book of Acts, gives us some insight into this period of Moses' life: 'And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds'" (Acts 7:20-24)."

Moses defends an Israelite and kills an Egyptian

The Bible says, "Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. [There are even some Egyptian murals that show how the slaves were whipped.] So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one

who did the wrong, 'Why are you striking your companion?' Then he said, 'Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?' So Moses feared and said, 'Surely this thing is known!' When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian" (2:11-15).

The account of Stephen adds, "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand" (Acts 7:23-25).

So Moses wanted to be their liberator. A noble thought, but he hadn't consulted with God. He tried to do it through his own strength, and failed miserably. Still, he wanted to do the right thing, and kept his true faith despite all the enticements of the Egyptians.

We read in Hebrews 11:24-27 about what motivated Moses, "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

Moses had the right faith, but he still did not understand he had to do things according to God's will and time, not his. It would take 40 long years before God was ready to use him. Moses would marry, have two children, and dwell with the Midianites. The pharaoh who sought him out finally died, and a new one arose in Egypt. It was now time for God to act mightily through Moses, although Moses was not ready to act mightily for God. We will read about this in the next Bible study.