

Exodus 1-2 – Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

There's a time gap of about 350 years between the end of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus.

During this time, some important changes took place in Egypt.

The most important was a *change of dynasties* that saw the native, ethnic Egyptians reassert control over their kingdom, ousting the foreign Hyksos from power.

The Hyksos were a *Semitic people* from the region of West Asia who had slowly migrated into Egypt during the end of what is known as the *Middle Kingdom*.

They settled in the northern and central areas of Egypt and progressively took control until they ended up dominating the whole northern region of Egypt.

Because the Hyksos were Semitic, they welcomed more settlement from other Semitic people, like Jacob and his family.

This helps explain why Joseph could rise to power as the Prime Minister in Egypt.

The native ethnic Egyptians loathed the Hyksos, and while the Hyksos controlled the northern and Central regions of Egypt, the ethnic Egyptians managed to maintain a foothold of control of southern, or what is known as *Upper Egypt*.

It's a bit confusing when studying Egyptian history because you find regular reference to *Upper & Lower Egypt*; and we tend to think of this in terms of North & South.

But Upper and Lower refers, not to direction but to elevation.

The Nile flows South to North, from a higher to lower elevation – and so, upper and lower.

Ancient Egyptian history is divided into 5 basic periods:

Old, Middle & New Kingdoms w/ these being separated by the 1st & 2nd Intermediate periods.

These divisions are really quite simple:

Egypt is marked off by a total of 30 dynasties based around ruling families. [\[1\]](#)

[Show Map]

The 3 *Kingdom periods* were marked by a general *unification*

of Upper & Lower Egypt, while the *Intermediate periods* were marked by *fragmentation & disunity*.

Jacob's family migrated to Egypt during the *Second Intermediate Period*.

But as the family grew and multiplied, and the years passed, they witnessed the *end* of the Second Intermediate period and the *rise of the New Kingdom*, marked by a resurgence of ethnic Egyptian dominance, and an oppression of the foreigners who had come to live in their land.

For those who want to research this further, the Pharaoh of the migration to Egypt was probably Sesostris III (1878-1843 BC).

The Pharaoh who *began* the oppression of Jacob's descendants was Ahmose I (1570-1546 BC).

Moses born in 1525 when Thutmose I reigned (1525-1512 BC).

Thutmose III (1482-1450 BC) was the king of Egypt who severely oppressed Israel [Exodus 2:23]

And Amenhotep II (1450-1423 BC) was the Pharaoh of the Exodus in 1446 BC.

OUTLINE OF EXODUS

I. The Exodus • Chs. 1-13:16

II. The Journey to Sinai • Chs. 13:17-40:38

Tonight

I. The Exodus • Chs. 1-13:16

A. Israel Oppressed • Ch. 1

B. Moses Is Born • Ch. 2

CHAPTER 1

A. Israel Oppressed • Ch. 1

1. 1-7 • Israel multiplies

¹Now these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: ²Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; ³Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; ⁴Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

⁵All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt *already*).

⁶And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that

generation. ⁷But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.

In the census given in Numbers 1, which was taken at Mt. Sinai as the Nation of Israel was preparing to march toward the Promised Land, we find 603,000 males 20 years and older.

If they represented about ¼ of the total population, then the Israelites numbered some 2,000,000 people!

This works out to an annual growth rate of only about 5%.

2. 8-14 • Egypt oppresses

⁸Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

This is Ahmose I, the founder of the New Kingdom.

⁹And he said to his people,

The ethnic Egyptians who had now reasserted control over the kingdom and reunited the Upper and Lower regions.

“Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; ¹⁰come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.”

Ahmose and the Egyptians had reason to be fearful of the Israelites; they were following in the same footsteps of the Hyksos who had only recently in their history taken control of the kingdom.

Also at this time, the Egyptians were growing wary of the *Hittites* who were menacing their northern borders.

A union of the Hebrews with the Hittites meant certain defeat for the Egyptians.

But numbering 2 million, the Egyptians didn't want to oust the children of Israel; they had come to depend on them as an important part of the society.

They provided food, goods, and services the Egyptians depended on, so they needed a way to keep them around while limiting their power and opportunity to exert control.

The answer? Turn them into a race of servile workers.

¹¹Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply

cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹²But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. ¹³So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. ¹⁴And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor.

Some of the popular pictures of the Jews in slavery in Egypt depict them as building the pyramids but the pyramids were already ancient by this time.

The children of Israel were pressed into service building *other* monumental projects as well as a host of other servile tasks.

[Picture of mud bricks by Nile river side]

Even though the Egyptians afflicted them severely, they continued to multiply rapidly.

This was God's plan & purpose for Israel's time in Egypt.

He intended Egypt to be a kind of "womb" for Israel; a place where they could grow from a family into a mighty nation.

God's blessing meant their proliferation while the tough conditions of slavery meant their preparation to be a people who could endure the rigors of the Exodus and Journey to Canaan.

It would also motivate them to *want* to leave Egypt!

God removed Jacob's family from Canaan to Egypt because the children of Israel could not have grown this way *in* Canaan.

As the story of Judah and Tamar in Gen. 38 shows us, the children of Israel would have *intermarried* with the wicked Canaanites.

Egypt, on the other hand, was so racist and had such a strong system of apartheid that Israel could grow there over several centuries without being assimilated.

So, from Israel's perspective, their slavery in Egypt was a hard time.

In the midst of their bitter slavery, it must have seemed hopeless to the children of Israel, and the idea that God was working out His plan must have seemed very far away. Yet it was true none the less.

This kind of growth in the face of affliction has always been the story of God's people.

The more they are afflicted, the more they grow, as the ancient Christian writer Tertullian said, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.”^[2]

Christian missionaries began a *small* but solid work in mainland China prior to the Communist takeover there.

It was thought by many that the brutal heel of the Communist boot had wiped out the Christian presence.

But when China opened to the West in the early 70’s, it was discovered that the Church had grown dramatically during the years of persecution and numbered in the millions.

Because it was God’s purpose to turn Israel from a clan into a nation, Pharaoh and the Egyptians could not thwart it.

3. 15-22 • Infanticide ordered

15Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah; **16**and he said, “When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see *them* on the birthstools, if it *is* a son, then you shall kill him; but if it *is* a daughter, then she shall live.”

One of the things we know about the ancient Egyptians was their skill with mathematics.

Pharaoh was likely shown population projections for the Israelites by some of his advisors.

The more of them there were, the faster they would grow.

They were witnessing a virtual population *explosion* and this led to dire action on Pharaoh’s part – to command wholesale infanticide for the Hebrews!

So the king called for these 2 midwives and told them what to do.

We should think these 2 women were the only midwives among the Jews.

Since midwifery is a trade, these two were the chief midwives, the head of the guild of midwives.

Pharaoh meant that they were to pass on this order to the rest of the midwives and kill every male child.

Now, this wasn’t a very wise plan on Pharaoh’s part because it wouldn’t take long for word to spread among the Jews that the midwives had orders to do this and they would stop calling for

them – which is exactly what the mid-wives reported to Pharaoh.

17 But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive. **18** So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?” **19** And the midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women *are* not like the Egyptian women; for they *are* lively and give birth before the midwives come to them.”

The midwives would be deeply repelled by the idea of killing the children they helped birth – this was their sworn cause – to assist in the bringing forth of life.

Theirs was a sacred duty and privilege and they weren't about to violate it by taking the lives of these children.

Indeed, women usually *became* midwives *because* they had proven barren!

In their desire for children, they became midwives so they could at a least help!

So they disobeyed Pharaoh in their desire to obey God, and when Pharaoh saw his order was not being obeyed he demanded an explanation.

That's when the midwives composed a story – they said that by the time they got to the house where they heard there was a birth, it had already taken place and the child was safely in its mother's arms.

20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. **21** And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them.

In other words, these midwives conceived and had their own children. Did God reward them for *lying* to Pharaoh?

No! He rewarded them for courageously obeying Him when such obedience could have resulted in their condemnation and judgment by Pharaoh.

This brings up an important discussion on the topic of *Ethics & The Christian*.

Because we live in a fallen world, there *may be* times when we are *forced* into making a choice that is the *lesser of two evils*.

We see that with the two midwives.

They were moved to *disobey* Pharaoh because to obey him would have been to disobey *God*.

The sanctity of human life compelled them to disobey his order to kill the baby boys.

As Peter said to the Sanhedrin in Acts. 4, when the civil government countermands the law of God, it is God we must obey!

But the sanctity of life that moved them to *disobey* Pharaoh's command to kill the babies, also moved them to *lie to him* about what they had done.

If they had told the truth, it would have meant the execution of themselves and the other midwives who had participated in the plot.

At that moment, as they stood before Pharaoh, they were faced with an ethical decision that was a choice between the lesser of two evils; lying, or condemning some to death.

They rightly chose the higher of these two choices.

The sanctity of life is a higher ethical imperative than telling the truth.

While deceit is sin, murder is a *greater* sin – and the midwives had every reason to believe that if they had told the truth, it would have surely led to the death of themselves, and their fellow midwives.

Rahab the harlot who hid the Jewish spies who'd come to scout Jericho lied to the city officials who asked her about them. For this she was rewarded – and even ended up becoming part of the line of the Messiah!

Again, she wasn't rewarded for lying, but for protecting the life of the Jewish spies.

The point is this – because we live in a fallen world – it may occasionally be the case that we are forced into choosing the lesser of two evils.

Having a moral sense sharpened by the counsel of God's Word will allow us to evaluate where the greater moral weight lies and choose appropriately.

22 So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, "Every

son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.”

Pharaoh is not saying that *all*, meaning *even the Egyptian* baby boys are to be drowned – he’s giving a command to *all the Egyptians* that they are to throw any *Hebrew* baby boy they discover into the river.

The covert order that had been given to the midwives is now made public and expanded to everyone.

The Jews were considered a scourge that had to be eradicated.

Pharaoh’s attempt to destroy the children of Israel is one of the Bible’s first glimpses of anti-semitism – which is nothing less than a satanic conspiracy to wipe out the Jewish race and so forestall the Coming of the Messiah and His Ultimate victory over the devil.

CHAPTER 2

B. Moses Is Born • Ch. 2

1. 1-10 • His early years

¹And a man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi. ²So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful *child*, she hid him three months. ³But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid *it* in the reeds by the river’s bank. ⁴And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.

Though his parents aren’t named here, Exodus 6:20 tells us their names were Amram and Jochebed.

They had a little boy and there was no way they could obey Pharaoh’s order to kill him, so they hid him for 3 months until his cries grew too loud to avoid being heard.

Then his mother made a little watertight boat out of the rushes that grew along the banks of the Nile, place the baby in, and set it loose on the current.

Her elder daughter was then given the task of following it at a discreet distance to see what would become of it.

⁵Then 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. ⁶And when she opened *it*, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.”

This is a tender and touching scene. What woman wouldn’t feel intense sympathy and compassion for the little tyke – and especially because this baby was so fair as v. 2 says.

⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?”

The sister, seeing the Pharaoh’s daughter’s intent to keep the child, now comes forward and offers to provide a wet-nurse who can feed the child.

This was a common practice in that time – even for royal or noble women who had given birth themselves.

Nursing was considered too domestic and too much of a bother to be done by important women.

Servants were found who would feed and raise the child in it’s infant years.

⁸And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Go.” So the maiden went and called the child’s mother. ⁹Then Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give *you* your wages.” So the woman took the child and nursed him. ¹⁰And 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.”

Jochebed not only had her son restored to her so that she could nurse and raise him till his adolescent years, but she was compensated for it by the coffers of the royal house!

When the time of nursing was ended and the boy had grown to his late childhood, he was then returned to live in the palace full time.

Pharaoh’s daughter named him *Moses*, which means “Drawn out” because she had rescued him from the Nile.

Little did she know that this name would prove to be prophetic of his destiny in *drawing out* his people from slavery in Egypt.

2. 11-15 • He flees Egypt

11 Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens.

Acts 7:23 says this happened when Moses was 40 years old.

As you can see, time is being condensed here. Moses, who penned this, passes over the years he spent in the palace and all the learning he enjoyed through the royal tutors.

He just moves the story along to that point at which his destiny as the deliverer of Israel began in earnest.

Acts 7:22 says that . . .

Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.

Egypt was one of the most learned & scientific societies at that time so Moses would have been instructed in geography, history, grammar and writing, literature, philosophy and music.

And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. 12 So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

It becomes clear as we read Moses' story that he had a sense of divine destiny.

He knew all about the time when he was born and how so many others like him had been drowned, but he'd been spared.

And not just spared but raised to a place of privilege and favor. He'd heard of the promises made to his great ancestors and how the Land of Canaan was where God promised they would live as a nation.

As he witnessed the deprivation and brutality inflicted on his fellow Hebrews, he wondered if maybe he'd enjoyed such a course in life to be the one through whom their deliverance would come.

Moses was certainly just in preventing the beating of **one of his brethren**; yet at the same time this was perhaps a premature attempt to fulfill his destiny - to make himself the deliverer of Israel from Egypt's bondage in a way logical to human planning.

Acts 7:23-25 shows us exactly where Moses' heart was . . .

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.

O! how it provoked him when he saw one of his fellow Hebrews being abused.

There had to be a bit of guilt when he saw it because all around him his people were suffering cruelly while he sat in the lap of luxury.

So, in an attempt to salve his own conscience, and see if maybe he was to be the deliverer of Israel, one day when he saw one of his brother Hebrews getting whooped by an Egyptian, he checked to make sure no one was looking, then he killed him and hid the body.

Surely, word would now get back to the other Jews that they had a *champion*, someone on the inside who would look out for them.

Why, maybe it would even embolden the Jews to stand up to the cruel Egyptians as he'd done!

¹³And 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?" ¹⁴Then he said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"

If Moses had any aspirations to being their leader – this would quickly quench them.

In his attempt to help them, they only read it as meddling on his part and wanted nothing to do with the little rich kid who'd once been one of them but was now just play-acting as one of the filthy Egyptians whom they despised so much.

Moses read nothing but rejection in these words – and it cut him to the quick.

And if he'd been hoping word would get to the Jewish elders about what he'd done to defend one of his fellow Jews, this common man's words revealed that the word of his previous day's murder

of the Egyptian had spread quickly indeed – too quickly!

So Moses feared and said, “Surely this thing is known!”

15When 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; and he sat down by a well.

The presence of Moses was *tolerated* in the palace for the Pharaoh’s daughter’s sake.

Moses was an *odddity*, a *curiosity*, maybe even a way for the Pharaoh to feel better about the diabolical plan he’d had to commit genocide on the Jews.

Kill thousands, but invite one to be raised in the luxury of the palace.

Whatever reason Moses was allowed to stay near the throne, it all came to a swift end when news reached the court he’d killed an Egyptian – this could not be tolerated and meant Moses’ immediate execution.

Moses knew that, so he fled to the region of Midian which was beyond the reach of Pharaoh’s justice. [Show Map]

Moses could find no refuge to the north in Canaan and Syria because there was a treaty between Egypt and the Hittites who ruled that area.

Any fugitives from either kingdom who sought refuge in each other’s regions were arrested and extradited.

So Moses went in the only direction that afforded safety - Midian

3. 16-22 • His life in Midian

16Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father’s flock.

We later learn this man is a *true priest of God*.

He was a descendant of Abraham’s through his wife Keturah, whom he married after the death of Sarah. [Gen. 25:2-4]

This man had 7 daughters who were shepherdesses.

As he sat by the well they came up, and began to water their sheep.

But it wasn’t long till some other fellows came and chased them away.

17Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their

flock.

Moses saw the injustice of what was happening and defended the sisters and their flocks against these bullies.

18When they came to Reuel their father, he said, “How *is it that* you have come so soon today?” **19**And they said, “An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock.” **20**So he said to his daughters, “And where *is* he? Why *is it that* you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.”

The father of the sisters and the man identified as the priest of Midian is named *Reuel – Friend of God*.

A bit later he’s called *Jethro*. Reuel was his *name*, while Jethro was his *title* = as in ‘*excellency*’ and referred to his role as the *chief priest* of Midian.

Hospitality is one of the dearest virtues of nomadic societies, as this was, so Reuel was worried his daughters may have not been as polite as they should be to this strange visitor all the way from Egypt.

21Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah [Little bird] his daughter to Moses. **22**And she bore *him* a son. He called his name Gershom, for he said, “I have been a stranger in a foreign land.”

Gershom means “*stranger*.”

4. 23-25 • Israel cries for help

23Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died.

That is, Thutmose III, the Pharaoh who had been in place when Moses fled.

After Thutmose III, came Amenhotep II who carried on in the same practice of brutal oppression of the children of Israel.

Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. 24So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. **25**And God looked

upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.

This does not mean that God had forgotten them for a time.

The language simply means that the time had come for their deliverance.

The purpose for their sojourn in Egypt was now complete and it was time for them to go and take possession of Canaan, the Land God had promised them.

Vs. 24 & 25 simply mean that God now began to move in a different way to effect their redemption.

[1] The framework for the study of the Dynastic period of Egyptian history, between the 1st dynasty and the Ptolemaic period, relies on the *Aegyptiaca* of Manetho, a Ptolemaic priest of the 3rd century BC "Egypt," *Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2000*. © 1993-1999 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

[2] Guzik, David, *On-Line Commentary - Exodus*