

FPFWC Christian Development



Out of Slavery to Nationhood

October 2022

Fall Quarter

October 1, 2022

Lesson #1 –The Birth of Moses

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Exodus 2:1-10

ICE BREAKER –

1. How should we handle frustration?
2. *Why should we trust God in impossible situations?*

Key Verse – “The woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.”—Exodus 2:2

LESSON BACKGROUND

Centuries before the events of this lesson’s Scripture text, God had promised Abraham, a nomadic herdsman from Mesopotamia, that his descendants would be numerous (Genesis 15:5, see lesson 1). One such descendant, Joseph (25:24), was removed from his ancestral land and taken to Egypt. Through God’s power and directives, Joseph ended up in a position of high regard in service to the Egyptian pharaoh (41:41–57).

Ultimately, Joseph brought his extended family to live with him in Egypt (Genesis 50:22; Exodus 1:1–5). His descendants would become the Israelites. Centuries later, they “were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied ... and the land was filled with them” (1:7). God’s promise of numerous descendants had become a reality.

Jacob’s descendants would be in the land of Egypt for a total of 430 years (see Exodus 12:40). Eventually, a new pharaoh came to power and was concerned regarding the growth of the Israelite population (1:8–10).

The exact identity of the pharaoh in question is unknown. The construction of cities “Pithom and Raamses” (Exodus 1:11) has led some scholars to estimate that the pharaoh in question was Rameses II (approx. 1290–1224 BC). He oversaw vast construction projects and kept numerous slaves, realities that align with the first chapters of Exodus.

However, Scripture describes how Solomon began construction on the temple 480 years after the Israelites left Egypt (1 Kings 6:1). This timing would place the exodus at approximately 1447 BC, outside of the reign of Rameses II (compare Exodus 12:40–41; Galatians 3:17). Specific details regarding the exact timing of the exodus and the pharaoh involved may never be recovered.

The pharaoh in question saw the growing presence of Israelites as a threat. To suppress their increase in number and to exert power over them, the pharaoh established hard labor for the Israelites and placed slave masters over them (Exodus 1:11–14). The pharaoh’s oppressive treatment intensified in his declaration that “every son that is born ye shall cast into the river” (1:22).

Despite this oppression, God blessed Jacob's descendants. Because of the shrewdness of Hebrew women (see Exodus 1:15–20), more Hebrew boys survived infancy than the pharaoh intended. Today's Scripture text highlights the response of several women to the pharaoh's unjust declaration. A seemingly small event—the birth of a child and his upbringing—served as the way by which God provided a just response to an unjust situation.

LESSON COMMENTARY

Moses' Mother Endeavors to Save Her Son (2:1–4)

2:1–4. The narrative quickly moves from the menace of Pharaoh's command to the nation as a whole to the peril it posed for one Levite couple (Amram and Jochebed, cf. Ex 6:20) and their newborn son. The description that the child **was beautiful** indicates that even in infancy this child was recognized as exceptional (cf. Ac 7:20; Heb 11:23). The tenderness of a mother's love led to desperate measures to preserve Moses' life. In terms reminiscent of the ark of Noah (which preserved life), Moses was placed in a papyrus basket covered with **tar and pitch** (cf. Gn 6:14) and set afloat on the Nile (in literal, if not intentional, obedience to Pharaoh's command; cf. 1:22). This ark was placed out of the current of the river (**among the reeds**) and watched over by his sister (Miriam, cf. Ex 15:20; Nm 26:59).

2. Moses' Life Is Preserved by Pharaoh's Daughter (2:5–10)

2:5–10. Either by the design of Moses' mother or simply God's providence, the ark was placed near the spot where a royal princess **came down to bathe at the Nile** (2:5). In short order, the ark and child were discovered and the crying infant elicited the princess' pity, even though she recognized that this baby was **one of the Hebrews' children**. Sensing the princess' intention to preserve this child, Moses' sister stepped forward with a bold proposal to find a wet-nurse to care for the infant, a proposal that was quickly accepted. By this unlikely means Moses' life was spared and he was reunited with his birth mother (who was paid for the privilege to nurse him).

As the son of the Egyptian princess, he received a royal upbringing (and likely a high level Egyptian education, Ac 7:22) but being cared for by his birth-mother, he would also have understood his heritage as a Hebrew. His name, **Moses**, perhaps related to contemporary Egyptian names (Ahmose, Thutmose), was a pun drawn from his being "drawn out" (the meaning of a Hb. verb *mashah*) of the water. It is unlikely that an Egyptian princess would have made a pun using a Hebrew verb; the name was likely given or suggested by Moses' birth mother. God's providential care was clearly evident. Just as God was faithful in protecting Moses, this episode would encourage the Israelite readers of Moses' book that He would be faithful to them as they would fight to enter and subdue the promised land in the years to come.

LESSON NUGGET – Isn't it interesting how God is able even in adverse circumstance to work His will, to work His purposes? "***All things work together***

for good to those who love God.” Romans 8:28 It took faith for the parents of Moses to put their son into the river, obeying at least the spirit of the Egyptian law. God rewarded their faith. Jochebed not only got her son back, but she was paid to take care of him.

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary