

Exodus 1-2

The Holy Scriptures contain many stories. See if any of these are your favorites:

- The Life of King David
- The Reluctant Prophet Jonah
- The Boys of Babylon
- The Creation and Adam and Eve
- The Life of Joseph
- The Flood
- The Life of Moses and the Exodus
- Samson and His Exploits
- Suffering of Job
- The Stories of Ruth or Esther
- Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
- Joshua and the Conquest of the Promised Land
- The Birth, Life, Crucifixion and Resurrection Of Jesus Christ
- Peter's Denial and Restoration by Jesus Christ
- Saul (Paul) Conversion
- Pentecost

I'm sure your list is just as long!

The above stories are history. They contain so much thought-provoking ideas, situations, and truths. I think that if you would ask even non-believers, they might also list some of these. Up on top of the list would be the Flood story or the Exodus. But while these are great stories of real people, they are even more so great stories about God. The theme of each might be boiled down to "sinful man" vs "The Holy God" with a scarlet thread binding them together.

The Exodus is such a story. The subtitle would be "I AM come down".

Our story starts in Genesis 46 and continues through this, the Second Book of the Bible, the Second Book of the Five Books of Moses, a.k.a. the Torah.

So, let's begin!

(Exodus 1:1) Now these *are* the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt; each man and his household came with Jacob: (2) Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah; (3) Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin; (4) Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. (5) All those who were descendants of Jacob were seventy persons (for Joseph was in Egypt *already*).

If you recall Acts 7 where Stephen gives an account of the history of the Jews, he said in verse 14 that there were 75 people who came to Egypt:

(Acts 7:14) Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to *him*,

seventy-five people.

The shortest explanation is rather simple: Stephen is using the Septuagint (Greek OT) that counted Jacob's family differently. The Septuagint added 5 more sons (or grandsons) born to Joseph.

(Exodus 1:6) And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation.

History is fast-forwarded to the death of Joseph and his brothers. It's a summarized statement for the death of the sons of Jacob. Some died before, perhaps some died afterwards.

(Exodus 1:7) But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.

God blessed Joseph beyond what he imagined! God continued to bless the children of Israel for the sake of their ancestors, especially Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

(Exodus 1:8) Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

Not that he didn't know of Joseph but that he simply didn't regard Joseph and his family as important. His focus was simply on the present not the history behind it!

(Exodus 1:9) And he said to his people, "Look, the people of the children of Israel *are* more and mightier than we; (10) come, 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."

God prospered Jacob's family and it grew so large that the idea of them being a "nation" was taking shape in the mind of the current king. There could have been millions of Jacob's descendants at this point which might have seemed like as many as the stars of the heavens to their host.

The population growth became a worry to the king. First, the Egyptians didn't care for "foreigners" who were "racially inferior" to themselves. Secondly, their numbers were growing beyond the current population of Egypt. What would Egypt do if they decided to join forces with Egypt's enemies.

(Exodus 1:11) Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses.

You'd think if they feared them that much, that the Egyptians would treat them nicer. But politics is all about control. So, the logic was, "if we keep them busy building cities for Pharaoh, then they can't get into much trouble".

The timing of this slavery is unknown as well as how long it lasted. Some believe 284 years, some 134 years. By the way, the pyramids were not built by the Israelites – they were built a long time before this took place.

(Exodus 1:12) But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.

In order words, “But God...”. God took 70/75 people of the 12 sons of Jacob and built a Nation of millions – just as he promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

The more they grew in numbers the more fearful the Egyptians became.

(Exodus 1:13) So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor.

Once again, the translators of KJ and NKJ chose a word that is not as strong as its Hebrew counterpart, especially for post-twentieth century readers. The Hebrew word means “with force” and/or “with cruelty”.

(Exodus 1:14) And 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.

Not **only** working the fields to feed the Egyptians, but with brick to build the supply cities mentioned in verse 11. (And don’t forget, all the sons of Jacob were shepherds and this vocation was most likely passed down thru the generations as well).

Interesting that the Hebrew word for bitter is “maror”. This is the same word used in the Passover Seder for “bitter herbs” that are eaten during the service.

(Exodus 1:15) Then 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."

The two midwives are mostly likely two of the older ones that had oversight of the other midwives in Goshen. It would have been impossible to birth that many babies by just 2 midwives.

(by the way, their names mean “brightness” and “brilliant”, for those who like to know what the names mean).

The king simply demands that they kill all the male babies that are birthed (presumably killing them before their first breath so that the wife believed that it was still-born). Satan’s strategies are so limited. This same tactic was used by Herod near the time of the birth of Jesus. Satan isn’t omniscient; he does know that God ordained that the Promised Seed would come from the Israelites. Having the king kill all the males would ensure that the savior would not come.

(Exodus 1:17) 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." (Exodus 1:20) 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.

But the midwives did not comply. Their excuse is that the Hebrew women give birth too quickly and the midwives cannot get there fast enough.

But the midwives feared God (had the highest reverence for Him) and would not do as the king demanded. Therefore, God blessed them and protected them. (“brightness” and “brilliance” certainly reflected the Glory of the God they served!).

(Exodus 1:22) 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."

Most believe that this does not refer to all of Egypt but rather to all the Hebrews. So, whether born by mid-wives or not, all boys were to be drowned. It would have been a self-inflicted and mortal wound to Egypt if they didn't increase **their** population!

(Exodus 2:1) And a man of the house of Levi went and took *as wife* a daughter of Levi. (2) So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he *was* a beautiful *child*, she hid him three months.

A man and woman have birth to a “good” male child. (the word “beautiful” can mean good, beautiful, cheerful, precious and the like. Knowing God and wanting to please him rather than the king, she hid this child for three months. She was able to keep him quiet and out of site.

(Exodus 2:3) But 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. (4) And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him.

As the baby grew, it was becoming more difficult to keep him hidden (out of hearing of her neighbors or from searches of the king's soldiers). She decided to make a waterproof ark and placed him in it and then put it in the Nile river. Oh my, how coincidental is it that she chose an ark to save him!

His sister keeps an eye on the ark to see what might become of her baby brother.

This woman trusted God with the life of her son!

(Exodus 2:5) 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. (6) And 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."

It just so happened that Pharaoh's daughter came down to the Nile to bathe. She just so happened to see the ark among the reeds. She has her maid fetch it and discovers that it's a baby who then starts wailing. Ignoring her father's edict, she has compassion on the baby even though she recognizes that it's a Hebrew baby. It is significant that her heart outweighed her mind. She was willing to bear the displeasure of her father, the king, for a baby Hebrew boy that ostensibly “raised from the dead”.

(Exodus 2:7) Then 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?” (8) And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, “Go.” So the maiden went and called the child's mother. (9) Then 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. (10) 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**."

The baby's sister is nearby. She offers to have a Hebrew woman nurse the child. Jewish writers, including Josephus and writings in the Talmud all say that there were some Egyptian women tried to nurse the baby, but he just wouldn't accept it. This could be true, and the biblical account might be a summary of a longer period. But regardless, the daughter of Pharaoh agrees to have a Hebrew woman nurse the baby. **It just so happens** that the baby's own mother comes. Pharaoh's daughter readily gives the child up.

After two or three years of caring for her own son, the time comes when she must give her son up again. As difficult as this is, she once again must trust God to care for her son.

Pharaoh's daughter names him "Moses" because she drew him out of the water. The name is derived from another Hebrew name, "Mashah" which means to pull out. His Hebrew name is "Moishe" which means rescued or drawn out of water.

(Exodus 2:11) Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. 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.

Moses grew up. Some say that he was 18 or 20 but Stephen uses the most common tradition about Moses' age, that he was 40:

Acts 7:23 NKJV "Now when he was forty years old, it **came into his heart** to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.

The OT scriptures don't record his age. Stephen says that "it came into his heart to visit his brethren". Obviously, there are 2 things to note: 1) Moses knew of his heritage. 2) the Holy Spirit was the one who "put the idea into his heart".

God is in control! *But Moses is out of control.* He kills the Egyptian and buried him in the sand, thinking he got away with it AND that he did a good thing for the Hebrew man. It's not known whether the Hebrew recognized Moses or not. Some suggest that Moses may have been "testing" the waters so to speak about his position as a Hebrew step-grandson of Pharaoh. Perhaps he desires the position of the one to save his people. If so, this was NOT the way to go about it.

(Exodus 2:13) 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?" (14) 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!" (15) 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; and he sat down by a well.

Moses, knowing the state of the Hebrew people, that they were in bondage to the Egyptians, can't understand how two Hebrew men could be fighting when they have a common enemy!

Once again, he gets involved but one of them says, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Wow!! Talk about irony! Talk about a rhetorical question that had an actual answer! But the problem is, it doesn't say that either of the men was the man Moses helped the day before. So, the murder is not as well hidden as Moses had hoped!

Fear comes upon Moses and for good reason. Pharaoh learns of the situation and orders that Moses be killed.

Again, any hope of helping his people is like the desert sands being blown away by a strong wind. And, me thinks that the refiner's fire is about to be turned up!

But, Moses is two-steps ahead of Pharaoh. He flees and goes to Midian. This is about a 200+ mile trek. Midian was the name of one of Abraham's sons from his wife Keturah.

Once in Midian territory, Moses rests by a well. We read about this several times since this practice was a way to learn about the people of the region and to see if any would be hospitable.

(Exodus 2:16) Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock. (17) Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

While Moses is resting, a group of shepherdesses came to draw water for their father's flock. Other shepherds came and decided to take chase the girls away. But Moses comes to their rescue and helped them water their flocks.

(Exodus 2:18) When 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." (21) Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah 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."

Reuel's name means "friend of God". This is the same person as Jethro whose name means "His excellence". He is "**the**" priest of Midian. Most believe that he retained his knowledge and understanding of the God of Abraham and therefore was also a "priest of the Most High God".

So, Reuel is taken aback by the **soon** return of his daughters. They were often run off by the other shepherds, so it normally took them quite a while to get water for the flocks. Their explanation must have sounded strange: an **Egyptian** helped them and drew enough water from the well to water the flock.

(he must have been dressed like one or looked like one)

Reuel is only taken aback by their inhospitality! They left him at the well. "Go get him and invite him to eat with us!"

Moses was pleased with their hospitality and evidently was invited to stay with them. After a

time, Reuel gave Zipporah to be Moses' wife and after some more time, she bore his first son: Gershom which means "refugee" or "stranger".

Certainly, Moses feels like a stranger in a strange land - born a Hebrew, raised as an Egyptian step-grandson of Pharaoh, and then fled as a murderer.

(Exodus 2:23) Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. 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.

"In the process of time" that is, after many days or years...

The king is dead...Crying out before he died might have been a death sentence. The last thing you do in the presence of a dictator is complain!

The children of Israel...not the nation of Israel but the descendants of Israel (Jacob).

While their cries fell on the deaf ears of the Egyptians, there was One who heard their cry, from His very Throne Room!

(Exodus 2:24) So 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*.

The chapter ends with a simple acknowledgement that God heard their cries. He never forgot the covenant! This is a way that his children recognize that He is faithful to His Covenantal Promises. That God "acknowledged" them is to say that He truly understood their current situation. He is about to act! Not with providential circumstances but with a spectacular revelation of His power, glory, grace and mercy!

Buckle up your seat belts...the ride is about to begin!

God has, for the most part, orchestrated His plans without much direct intervention. As a matter of fact, we will see this weekend, when we study Genesis 46 that God speaks directly to Jacob after many years of silence (for our understanding, it was in Chapter 35 that he last spoke to Jacob and didn't speak to him again. I believe we have seen that with Joseph, God did not speak with him at all. Not because He was displeased with them but perhaps to test them. He had spoken great and precious promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! Now, through the years until those promises came to fruition, would they and their descendants stay the course or get totally off course? Would they forget their God and Creator? Or would they honor Him by living according to the Faith of Abraham, his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob? Or would they assimilate into the prevailing culture that surrounded them? They often did. But did they forget God? We've seen in our study in Genesis that the sons of Jacob did marry outside the family, even Joseph did. But we've also seen that they knew God and learned what a gracious and merciful God He was!

This is also something to think about as we study Exodus. It will be easy to get His children out of Egypt (by God's standards) but will it be easy to get Egypt out of the Children of Israel. You can

answer that anyway you want...but don't be too judgmental for the same question can be asked of us!