

## The World Moses Grew up in

### *Israel in Egypt*

**Text:** Exodus 1:1-22

#### **Introduction:**

1. In this chapter, the scene and the tone are set for the drama of redemption that will unfold in the rest of the Book. It also sets the scene for the Moses, the main character of the Book. “The theme of Exodus is deliverance. For deliverance, you need a deliverer and that’s where Moses comes in, the great liberator, legislator and mediator.” (Wiersbe)
2. To get a good understanding of these early chapters of Exodus and of the Book as a whole, we need to remember that Egypt is a type of the world in the Scriptures. Pharaoh therefore would be a picture of the devil, the god of this world system. The slavery of the Israelites pictures the life of the unsaved in Satan’s kingdom of darkness. The Passover Lamb is a clear type of the Lord Jesus Christ who sets the sinner free from slavery to sin and Satan.
3. Let’s take a look at Israel in Egypt as described in this first chapter of Exodus. We will study the chapter under three headings.

#### **I. THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT (VS. 1-7)**

##### **A. The Genealogy of the Patriarchs (Vs. 1-6)**

1. Observe the chapter commences with the word ‘now’ demonstrating that Exodus continues the narrative concerning Israel commenced in Genesis. The second Book of the Bible is linked to and follows on from the first Book of the Bible.
2. There is a brief recap of the original 70 who came and settled in Egypt. The twelve sons of Jacob are listed according to their mothers, starting with the sons of Leah and Rachel and then the sons of the two maids Bilhah and Zilpah.
3. The death of Joseph, his brethren and that generation are noted. Exodus 1 takes us from the time of Joseph in Egypt and brings us forward almost 400 years to the time of the Exodus under Moses.

##### **B. The Growth of the People (Vs. 7)**

This verse records the prolific growth of the descendants of Jacob. By the time of the Exodus, the Bible notes that there were about 600, 000 men (Ex. 12:37; 38:26). Add women and children and you are looking at somewhere in the order of 2.5 to 3 million people. The growth of the Israelites was due to two reasons:

1. The fulfilment of a prophecy (Gen. 12:2, 13:16, 15:5, 22:17, 26:4, 28:14). God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that he would multiply their seed and make of them a great nation. In Egypt we see God fulfilling His word and making Israel into a nation of people.
2. Their obedience to a precept (Gen. 1:28, 9:1, 7; 28:3, 35:11, 48:4)
  - a. God commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28)

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- b. God reiterated this command after the flood to Noah and his family (Gen. 9:1, 7).
- c. God commanded Jacob to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 35:11)
3. Note: You get the distinct impression from reading Exodus 1 that the birth rate amongst the Hebrews was much higher than the Egyptians (Vs. 9). While the Israelites were embracing God's natural order for the marriage bed, the Egyptians were pursuing every form of sexual deviation. We know from Leviticus 18 that immorality and perversion of the worst kind was endorsed and practiced in Egypt including adultery, Sodomy and bestiality. **Where you have the decline of sexual morality in a nation, you also have a corresponding decline in that nation's birthrate.** When pleasure becomes the only pursuit, disconnected from the responsibility and privilege of childbearing, there is a loss of meaning and an inevitable drift towards perversion.

## II. THE MASTERY OVER THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT (VS. 8-14)

### A. The Slave master of the People (Vs. 8-10)

1. Pharaoh's ignorance of Joseph (Vs. 8). Pharaoh's ignorance and disregard for what Joseph had done for Egypt is key to understanding his persecution of Joseph's people (Israel). Pharaoh's problem was that he didn't know Joseph. This new Pharaoh was ignorant of how much he owed to Joseph who had been used by God to save Egypt from starvation.
2. The problem in the world today is that people don't know Jesus! It was ignorance of Joseph that led Pharaoh to persecute God's people. It was ignorance of Jesus that led Saul of Tarsus to persecute the church. And it is ignorance of Jesus Christ that fuels the world's hatred of Christians today.
3. Pharaoh's sinister plot (Vs. 9-10)

This is actually the first of two main plans Pharaoh came up with to try and destroy the nation of Israel. Pharaoh would try to destroy Israel through slavery. When that didn't work, he would try slaughter. Pharaoh's aim in enslaving the people was:

  - a. To stop them multiplying (Vs. 9-10a)
    - i. It was the rapid growth of Jacob's seed that moved Pharaoh to summon key people in the nation and to enact the policy of enslavement.
    - ii. Pharaoh claimed to be acting 'wisely' but his wisdom was the wisdom of this world which is foolishness with God (1 Cor. 1:20, 3:19). His wisdom was not from above but was "earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:13-18).
    - iii. He viewed the growth of the children of Israel as a liability, not an asset.
    - iv. Satan hates the multiplication of God's people (spiritual seed). When the church grows and flourishes, the world is 'grieved' not glad (See Vs. 12).

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- v. Satan hates the multiplication of human life (natural seed). Satan is a murderer and hates human beings who are made in the image of God.
- b. To stop them leaving (Vs. 10b)
  - i. Notice that Pharaoh was concerned they might side with their enemies and in so doing, “get them up out of the land”. The purpose of enslaving the Israelites was to keep them in Egypt, the house of bondage. Pharaoh hated them but at the same time wanted to keep them captive.
  - ii. What a picture of the devil! He hates mankind but at the same time does not want them to leave his kingdom of darkness. He is a cruel and evil master who desires to hold sinners in bondage and ultimately see them go to hell with him for all eternity. Mark it down. Satan does not want you to be set free and will do everything in his power to keep you in bondage. But the blood of the Lamb has the power to set you free from this devilish dictator.

### **B. The Slavery of the People (Vs. 11-14)**

These verses describe the slavery conditions the Israelites were put under by this cruel dictator. Their slavery in Egypt was characterized by:

1. Bondage (Vs. 11a, 14a)
  - a. Note the word ‘they’. It was not just Pharaoh but Pharaoh and the Egyptians who enslaved the Israelites. Pharaoh used the Egyptian nation and its people to subjugate the children of Israel. In a similar way, Satan uses the world system to enslave mankind.
  - b. Taskmasters were put over the people with the specific job of “afflicting them”. Notice the word ‘afflict’ is used twice (Vs. 11, 12). The word means “to punish or inflict pain upon” (TWOT). It means “to grieve, distress, trouble, harass” (Webster’s 1828). Note also the phrase “hard bondage” in verse 14. As time passed, and they continued to multiply, the afflictions were increased (Vs. 12a)
  - c. What a picture of a life of slavery to sin. The taskmasters represent the sins that rule your life as an unsaved person. While sin may promise temporary pleasure, it actually inflicts pain upon you. It lashes your life with sorrow and scars. People are deceived into thinking they are “living their best life” when in reality, a life of sin is the worst life you can possibly have. Sin brings enslavement but Christ has the power to make us free (John 8:34-36). True life starts the day you are made alive by Jesus Christ who is the Life (John 14:6).
2. Burdens (Vs. 11b)
  - a. Pharaoh ensured their lives were filled with burdens. To build Pharaoh’s treasure cities would have involved the carrying of many heavy burdens.
  - b. Satan ladens the lives of the unsaved with the burdens of sin and its consequences. It is the life of slave labor for a cruel master.

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- c. Praise God, our precious Lord Jesus carried the burden of our sin to the cross and paid the price for it in full. When we come to the cross in faith, the burden of sin is rolled away! Isaiah 53:4 “Surely he hath **borne** our griefs, and **carried** our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”
3. Brokenness (Vs. 13, 14b)
  - a. The word ‘rigour’ means “to break in pieces, to crush” (Rawlinson). It means “to break apart, fracture” (J. Strong)
  - b. The beatings and the burdens were designed to break their spirits and their bodies. Satan’s desire is to break and crush you. Everywhere we look in the world we see lives broken and crushed by sin. Only Christ can take such brokenness and bring healing and restoration.
4. Bitterness (Vs. 14a)
  - a. The same Hebrew word is translated ‘grieved’ (Gen. 49:23), ‘provoke’ (Ex. 23:21), ‘vexed’ (2 Kings 4:27, Job 27:2) and ‘bitter’ or ‘bitterness’ multiple times.
  - b. “It is interesting to note that the Hebrews expressed tragic, unpleasant experiences in terms of the sense of taste, the bitter.” (TWOT)
  - c. Sin promises sweetness but leaves a bitter taste in the mouth. Sin does **not** make people happy! On the other hand, we can “taste and see that the LORD is good” (Ps. 34:8).
5. Birthing (Vs. 12)
  - a. Pharaoh’s plan failed spectacularly! The Israelites continued to multiply and grow, even in the midst of bitter slavery. It shows that the devil cannot ultimately stop God’s Sovereign plan for His people. One writer said, “The Jew has stood at the graveside of every persecutor.” (Dean Inge)
  - b. We are also reminded of the principle that growth often comes during seasons of affliction. Psalm 119:67, 71 “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. (71) *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.*”

### III. THE MURDER OF THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT (VS. 15-22)

Realizing the slavery policy wasn’t working to reduce the Jewish population, Pharaoh now adopts an even more evil plan. He conspires to murder Jewish baby boys in their first breathing moments. Given the high birth rate of the Israelites, this represents infanticide on a huge scale. Three evil rulers in Scripture ordered the slaughter of innocent children: Pharaoh (Exodus 1), Athaliah (2 Kings 11) and Herod (Matthew 2). Look at Pharaoh’s two attempts to exterminate the Jewish boys.

#### A. The Medical Murder Plan (Vs. 15-21)

1. The Directive to the Midwives (Vs. 15-16)
  - a. The **Betrayal** of this command (Vs. 15-16a). Pharaoh commands the very ones responsible for nurturing and preserve life to become the murderers of innocent life. This would represent an absolute betrayal of the office of midwife.

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- i. Sadly, the state sanctioned murder of innocent children by the medical profession is very much a part of our country and it is no less wicked than what was going on in ancient Egypt. What a betrayal of the very heart, soul and purpose of the medical profession which historically was all about preserving life!<sup>1</sup>
  - ii. What is particularly sinister about our society is that this killing of innocent life goes on under the banner of “compassion” and so called “rights”.
  - iii. Proverbs 6:16-17 “These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and **hands that shed innocent blood.**”
  - b. The **Brutality** of this command (Vs. 16b). Think of it. He was commanding those midwives to take those precious little baby boys and kill them as soon as they were born – “if it *be* a son, then ye shall **kill** him.” What evil cruelty this would have been to both the mother and the child if they had carried it out. Abortion today is cruel, brutal and unspeakably evil.
  - c. When children are aborted:
    1. The baby suffers physically. Researchers now believe that a baby can feel pain in the womb as early as 15 weeks. Other data suggests it could be as early as 12 weeks.<sup>2</sup>
    2. The mother suffers physically, emotionally and spiritually.
    3. The nation suffers numerically. Proverbs 14:28 “In the multitude of people *is* the king's honour: but in the want of people *is* the destruction of the prince.” Since 1980 there have been over 1.7 billion abortions in the world according to the US Abortion Clock.<sup>3</sup> Approximately 90,000 babies are aborted in our own country of Australia every year.
  - d. Note: The bigger picture is the war between the seed of the serpent and seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). Satan, through Pharaoh, was seeking to destroy the seed of Israel so that the Messiah would not come.
  - e. Note: We should also observe that it was boys who were the target of this monstrous campaign. Pharaoh knew that a nation without men would be devoid of strength and leadership. Our boys are under tremendous siege from the devil in our day also! Satan murders them spiritually through an anti-male, pornographic culture. He murders many young men through suicide. The suicide rates in Australia are 16.2 per 100,000 for males and 4.8 per 100,000 for females.<sup>4</sup>
2. The Disobedience of the Midwives (Vs. 17-22)

“The midwives were named ‘Shiphrah’ meaning “beauty” and Puah meaning “Glittering, splendid light”. They were well named, for their

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., the Hippocratic oath which contains among other things, a commitment to maintain the utmost respect for human life.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/pro-life/when-can-a-fetus-feel-pain/> Viewed 18/2/24.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.numberofabortions.com/> Viewed 18/2/24.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/geography/international-estimates-of-suicide> Viewed 18/2/24.

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example casts its glittering beauty and brilliance over a dark period, and they must be regarded as two of the great women of the Bible. Putting their own lives at risk, they determined to obey God rather than men.” (Grant)

- a. The motivation behind their disobedience (Vs. 17)
  - i. The reason they refused to carry out Pharaoh’s edict was because they “**feared God**”. Remember. Pharaoh was the most powerful ruler on earth at that time and on the human level, held the lives of these midwives in his hands. But they feared God more than they feared Pharaoh. Proverbs 9:10 reads, “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.”
  - ii. This is the first recorded case of civil disobedience in the Bible and it is a reminder that earthly authorities are to be disobeyed if they command something contrary to God’s law (See 2 Sam. 23:3 & Acts 5:29). The ten commandments had not yet been given but God’s view of murder had already been made known to Noah in Genesis 9:6. Praise God the midwives stood between the king’s brutal decree and those precious babies.
- b. The interrogation of their disobedience (Vs. 18-19)
  - i. Pharaoh summons the midwives and demands an answer as to why they had not followed his command. It is a reminder of the courage of these ladies. They risked their own lives to save the lives of those precious babies.
  - ii. The question as to whether their answer to Pharaoh was a lie is hotly debated amongst Bible commentators to this day. The Bible does not clearly say either way. What we do know is that their actions in rescuing the lives of these babies was commended or rewarded by Almighty God.
  - iii. Note: I would suggest there is a case in extreme circumstances like this when lives are at risk to seek to keep the truth of those life saving activities from the evil authorities. A creative excuse like that of the midwives is appropriate.
- c. The reward of their disobedience (Vs. 20-21)

These verses put to rest any doubts concerning the character of Shiphrah and Puah. These dear ladies were blessed, honoured and rewarded by God for their efforts in saving lives. Their reward was threefold:

  - i. God honoured them. So noteworthy was the godly actions of these two ladies, their names and their example are recorded in God’s eternal Word. These midwives go down in Biblical history as pro life heroines.
  - ii. God blessed their efforts (Vs. 20). Because these midwives honoured human life, the children of Israel continued to multiply in a mighty way.
  - iii. God blessed their families (Vs. 21). The phrase “made them houses” has the sense of “households” (See 2 Sam.

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7:11, 27, Ruth 4:11 for similar phraseology). God blessed these courageous women with families of their own. They saved the lives of other people's children so God blessed them with children of their own. The fruit of the womb is God's reward (Psalm 127).

- iv. "The midwives being blessed with families reminds us that service done for God is often repaid in kind. These midwives had preserved families by their daring disobedience of the king's command, and God in turn gave them families." (Butler)
- v. We are reminded of the truth of 1 Samuel 2:30 "...for **them that honour me I will honour**, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

### B. The Mandated Murder Plan (Vs. 22)

Pharaoh moves from a secret genocide plan to a public genocide plan.

1. Having failed in his initial plan with the midwives, Pharaoh now issues an edict to the whole nation. Every male child was to be thrown into the river Nile and drowned. Egypt was the most advanced civilisation of the day. Archaeology has revealed remnants of their architecture, writing, art, government and wealth. Yet they were prepared to stoop to the cruellest and lowest acts of genocide to achieve what they perceived to be for their benefit.
2. No doubt babies were killed in this way. Jochebed's actions in hiding Moses reveal that there was a very real danger her son would be killed if found.
3. Joseph Parker writes, "Pharaoh did not charge the people to cut the sod, and lay the murdered children in the ground; the sight would have been unpleasant, the reminders would have been too numerous; he said, Throw the intruders into the river; there will be but a splash, a few bubbles on the surface, and the whole thing will be over. The river will carry no marks; will tell no stories; will sustain no tombstones; it will roll on as if its waters had never been divided by the hand of the murderer."
4. Abortionists are like this. Imagine if tombstones were erected for every aborted baby in the nation!

### Conclusion:

1. Are you still a sin slave in Satan's house of bondage? You can be set free today through the power of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's perfect Lamb. Will you receive Christ as your personal Saviour today?
2. Will you take a stand against evil laws in our day? What is your view of human life? How much do you value it?
3. Are you going through a time of trial and affliction in your Christian life? Let God grow you through it by His grace.