

1. Birth, Danger and Protection

Exodus 1:1 - 2:10

Exodus 1 Persecution of the Israelites

About 400 years have now passed from the time when Jacob and his family came to Egypt to escape the famine in Canaan.



HISTORICAL CHECK

About 400 years - So when did the Exodus really take place?

Egyptian history does not mention the Exodus event, which is not surprising, because in the past, the Pharaohs did not record their failures. The Bible does not name the Pharaoh whom Moses confronted. Josephus mentions the name of the princess who adopted Moses but this does not help us in dating the event either. Pharaohs of that time would each have had many wives, sons and daughters and not all their names have been preserved in records found by archaeologists today.

Most Bible scholars agree the Exodus event took place sometime between 1450 BC and 1270 BC.

Bible scholars who believe it is the earlier date quote 1 Kings 6:1 says that the construction of Solomon's temple began 480 years after the Exodus, which would then place the Exodus event at around 1450 BC. If the Exodus occurred around this date, then it is likely that the Pharaoh of the persecution would have been Thutmose I and his successor, Amenhotep I would have been the pharaoh of the Exodus.

Some Bible scholars however have argued for a later date for the Exodus event. The main evidence for the later date is the Biblical reference to the store cities of

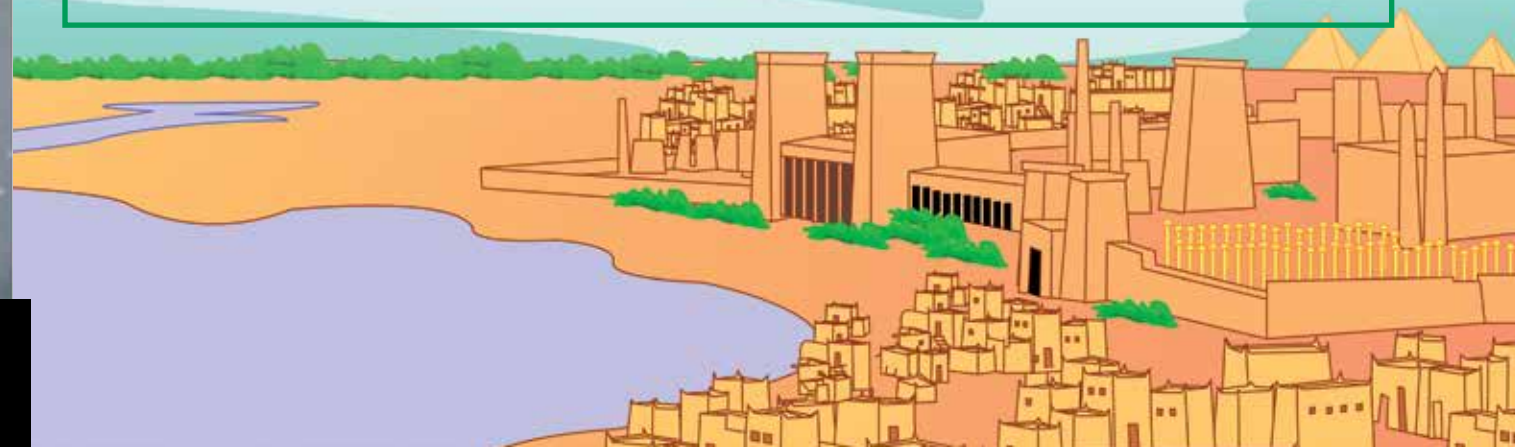
Pithom and Ramesses in Exodus 1:11. These cities were built by Ramesses II who ruled from 1279 - 1213 BC. These scholars have argued that the dates (as referred to in 1 Kings 6:1) should have been calculated using a different method. They have placed the Exodus date as around 1270 BC. If the Exodus took place during the later date, then the Pharaoh of the persecution would have been Seti I and Ramesses II would have been the Pharaoh whom the adult Moses confronted.



Picture of Pharaoh Ramesses II.

Whether it is the earlier or the later date, it does not change any of the key lessons from the story. In both the dates, Egypt was a regional superpower. A mighty act of divine intervention was required to free the Israelite slaves from the clutches of any pharaoh in this period. A series of miracles were also required to see the freed nation safely through a hostile and dry wilderness to the Promised Land.

For further reading, refer to the Tyndale Commentary on Exodus p.40-44 and The New Lion Handbook to the Bible p.159.



GEOGRAPHICAL CHECK

Egypt

Ancient Egypt did not have the borders that it has today. It was a narrow stretch of land about 750 miles long and 20-30 miles east and west of the River Nile.

Refer to map of Ancient Egypt

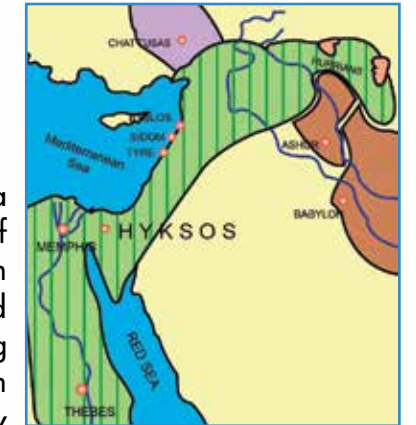


Pharaoh at that time

During the time of Joseph, the Northern half of Egypt was conquered and ruled by the Hyksos or

Shepherd kings. Refer to Map of Hyksos Kingdom.

They were a Semitic line of conquerors from Asia who ruled an area covering Syria and North Egypt. Ethnically they were closer to the Jews. They probably saw the Jews as allies against the native Egyptians who still ruled the Southern part. For further reading, refer to Halley's Bible Handbook, p.111 - 113, and the Exodus Case p.110



Joseph, with the permission of the pharaoh at that time, had helped to settle his family clan in the land of Goshen which was an excellent place for planting crops and rearing animals. The sons of Jacob lived and multiplied in the land of Egypt, until they had become very large in numbers.

Ex 1:8 Then a new king, who did not know about Joseph, came to power in Egypt. All the good that Joseph had done for Egypt was now forgotten. The Egyptians only saw the Israelites as potential enemies.

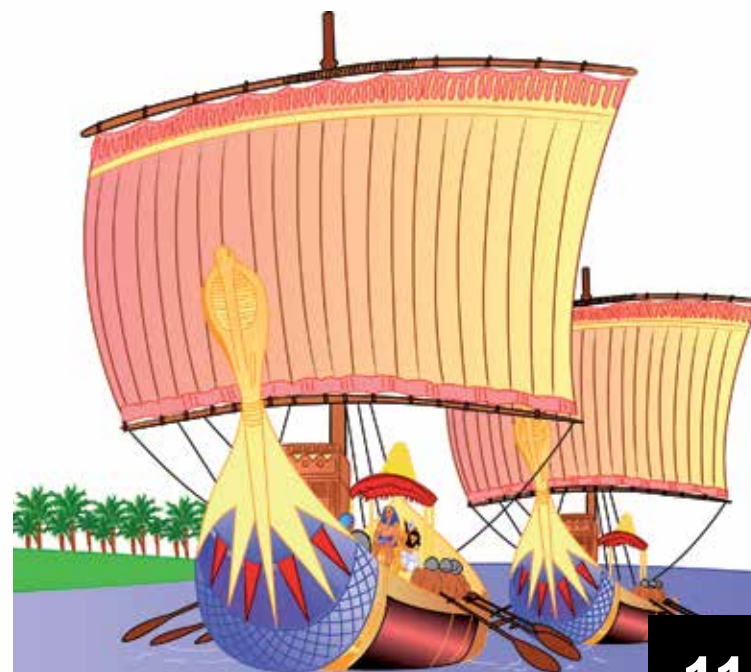


HISTORY CHECK

New king

The Hyksos ruled Egypt from about 1800 BC to about 1580 BC. Around 1580 BC, Amosis drove out the Hyksos kings, and conquered Palestine and Syria. He started the 18th Dynasty of Egyptian kings which ruled Egypt during the time of the Exodus.

Refer to Halley's Bible Handbook p. 111



They live and multiply on our eastern borders." Pharaoh then asked, "So what is the advice of my ministers?" The minister replied, "They have become too numerous

for us. If they unite with any of our enemies they could even defeat us in battle. Our advice is to use them as slaves."

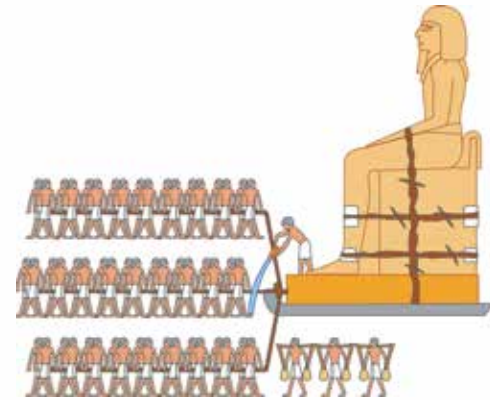


DO YOU KNOW?

Use them as slaves

We have much archaeological evidence to show that the Egyptians were ingenious builders. They built tall structures and giant pyramids without the assistance of modern mechanical devices. However, they did require one thing; mass human labour in large numbers. In Goshen, just next to Ramesses was a very large race of people conveniently located to provide the slave labour force. Refer to diagram on the right - *How Did They Do It?*

This is a reproduction of a Twelfth Dynasty illustration of how large objects were moved. Modern engineers have found that while moving



blocks weighing as much as six tons on a sledge, they could reduce friction to nearly zero by wetting the track with water. In this way, and with a large labour force, the Egyptians moved stone blocks weighing up to 16 tons. Refer to *Imagining Egypt*.



Hebrew slaves at work.

The Minister continued, "Make them build our cities and do all our heavy work. Order the midwives to kill all new-born baby boys. This should help reduce their numbers and show them who their masters are."

Pharaoh then said, "Organize them into slave groups. Set slave masters over them and make them work. See to it that they are

forced to work very hard. Show them no pity."



DO YOU KNOW?

Reduce their numbers - Over population problem - simple solution

It is estimated that the population of Egypt during the Roman occupation was about 7 million. This number was probably about the same or a little less during the reign of the Pharaohs in the thirteenth century BC. The number of Jews at that time was about 2 million. This is based on a record of 600,000 men above 20 years old found in Numbers 1:46. When we compare these numbers, it then becomes very obvious why Pharaoh was nervous about them joining with an enemy and possibly overthrowing their dynasty. For further reading: *Halley's Bible Handbook (24 Edition) p.129 - 134.*



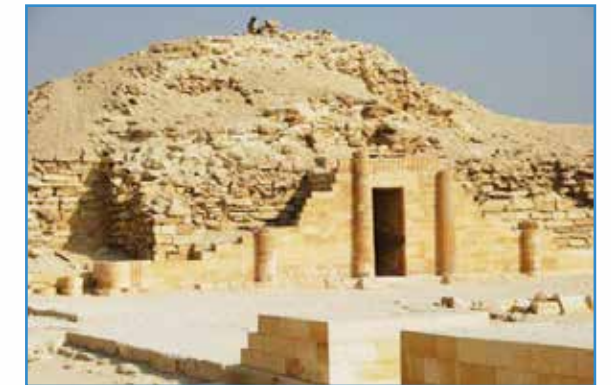
DO YOU KNOW?

Make them build our cities

Like any of the great world powers of their time, the Egyptians reveled in their large building structures. Among the largest and most splendid of their buildings must have been their temple cities. Refer to the diagram below of the Luxor Temple.

This was a cult temple dedicated to three gods. The modern town of Luxor is the site of the famous city of Thebes (Waset, in ancient Egypt), the City of a Hundred Gates. The Second Open Courtyard and New Entrance Pylon were the largest and most beautifully ornamented structure of the city, built by Ramasses II.

It is very likely that Moses would have witnessed the building of these structures.



Make them build our cities
Ruins of a Temple in Saqqara near the site of the earliest Pyramid.

These temples were being built even before Abraham visited Egypt.



The Great Pyramid of Giza, standing at 451 feet high and constructed using over 2.3 million stone blocks was truly a wonder of the ancient world. These structures were not built by Hebrew slaves but shows the ingenuity of the Egyptian builders. Built around 2,500 BC, they would have been 500 years old when Abraham first entered Egypt.



Stone blocks used to build the pyramid weighed between 2 and 16 tons

All photos by: Author

Ex 1:11 So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour, and they built **Pithom and Ramesses** as store cities for Pharaoh. ¹²But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and ¹³worked them ruthlessly. ¹⁴They made their lives bitter with hard labour in brick and mortar... in all their labour the Egyptians used them ruthlessly.

Some time later, Pharaoh met with his ministers again. He asked them, "What is your report this time?" One of them replied, "The Hebrew people continue to multiply in spite of the hard labour that we have inflicted on them.

Pharaoh said, "Perhaps you have not been hard enough on them."

The minister replied, "Great one, we have. But they are strong. Even the midwives have

not been successful. They report that the Hebrew babies are born, before they arrive. That is why they are unable to kill the baby boys as you have instructed."

Pharaoh was angry now. He made a decision and announced, "Then we must kill them ourselves. I am the morning and the evening star. I am Egypt; and this is my decree: ^{Ex 1:22} Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live."



Pharaoh in discussion with his ministers again.

Exodus 2 Birth of Moses

It was during this time of great suffering that a child was born to the family of Amran and Jochebed, from the tribe of Levi. Amran said to his children, "Miriam! Aaron! The Lord has blessed us. We have a baby boy."



Amran, Jochebed and baby Moses.

Miriam replied, "But father, what shall we do now? The Egyptians are going to kill all baby boys." Jochebed, their mother replied, "We will hide him. The Lord has given us this beautiful child. **Surely He will protect the child.**"

Three months passed by. Pharaoh's soldiers continued to search for baby boys among the Hebrew slaves.

Ex 2:3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got a **papyrus basket** for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile.



INTERESTING INFO

Surely He will protect the child - Additional information from Josephus

Amran and Jochebed kept the birth of their new-born child a secret and until they could no longer keep him hidden. They then decided to entrust the care of the infant to God. According to the Josephus account, they risked their lives by trying to hide the infant. Pharaoh's decrees included death to the whole family should any parent try to hide their newborn baby boy.



INTERESTING INFO

Papyrus basket

Moses was placed in a Papyrus basket by his mother. It is made from reed stems and tied together with papyrus leaves. Jochebed coated the basket with tar and pitch to make it water proof.



HISTORY CHECK

Pithom and Ramesses

Pithom and Ramesses were to be built as store cities for the Egyptians. The building of these two cities are historically associated with Ramesses II (c. 1290 - 1225 BC). They were probably built as part of his Asiatic campaign, as they stand on the eastern end of the Nile delta. Huge stone blocks were found in the ruins of Tanis with the name Ramesses inscribed on them. This caused some confusion as people thought they had found the city of Ramesses. But later discoveries have corrected some of these earlier conclusions.

It is now believed that the buildings at Tanis, built by Osorkan II around 850 BC, used the huge carved stones stolen from the original city of Ramesses (now known as Qantir) that was built by the Hebrew slaves.



For further reading, refer to Tyndale Commentary on Exodus p.54 and Treasures from Bible Times, p.77-78



Baby Moses inside a papyrus basket.

Miriam said, "Mother, we have not even given him a name." Jochebed replied, "The Lord will provide one for him. Miriam, follow your baby brother and see what the Lord has planned for him."

The basket floated down the river. God protected the basket and set it on a path into the royal palace area of the Egyptian princess. **Ex 2:5** Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it.



The princess discovers the basket.

6 She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. She said, "Poor little thing. This must be one of the Hebrew babies. I will keep this baby. But I shall need a nurse for the baby."

Miriam then slowly came out of her hiding place and approached the princess. The princess said, "Who are you?" Miriam replied, "I am Miriam. I am a Hebrew. **7**...Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"



Miriam offers to help the princess.



DO YOU KNOW?

Pharaoh's daughter - Additional information from Josephus

The Bible does not tell us the name of Pharaoh's daughter, but it does tell us about what she did and how she felt. The story is told in Exodus 2:5-10. Pharaoh's daughter defied her father's orders knowing that it was a Hebrew child. Then she even paid Jochebed to nurse her own baby, and thereby protected the baby from her father's decree. This is God's hand at work. The Lord used the daughter of the enemy leader to rescue His appointed deliverer.

Josephus gives additional information in this story. He named the princess as Thermuthis. She ordered several women to try and suckle the infant but he refused to suckle from their breasts. Miriam then appeared and offered to help find a Hebrew woman to nurse the infant. She brought Jochebed and the child happily suckled from her breasts. According to Josephus, Thermuthis then adopted the child because she did not have any children of her own. Josephus also mentions that when the child was young, the seers and advisors of the Pharaoh wanted to kill the child because



they thought the child would bring destruction to Egypt. Thermuthis protected the child and did not let them harm him. Unfortunately the name Thermuthis, given by Josephus, does not help us date the birth of Moses because the Pharaohs of that time usually had many sons and daughters (example Ramesses II had over sixty daughters) and Thermuthis is not found in any of the surviving Egyptian records.

For further details refer to Jewish Antiquities Book 2, paragraph 210 & Tyndale Commentary on Exodus, p.58

The princess said, **8**"Yes, go," And the girl went and got the baby's mother. The princess said to Jochebed, **9**"Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." Jochebed took the baby and nursed him.

So while he was a little child, before he was weaned, his parents taught him as much as they could about their faith. Amran taught the child, "Abraham was Isaac's father. And he was Jacob's father. God promised them a good country in Canaan." Jochebed added to the lesson, "... and many descendants."

Ex 2:10 When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. The princess said, "I shall name you **Moses** because I drew you out of the water."

And Moses grew up in the palace courts of Egypt. He was given an Egyptian education that was the best in the land, because he was officially the son of Pharaoh's daughter. This was the first step in Moses' training to be the **leader of God's people**.



Moses is brought to stay with the princess.



INTERESTING INFO

Child grew older

Hebrew children of that time were usually weaned from between 3 to about 6 years of age. Compare with Samuel, who was given to serve in the temple after he was weaned from Hannah, his mother. Assuming that Moses was weaned when he was about 5 or 6, then it is very likely that his parents would have had some time to teach him the faith of their fathers before giving him up to the princess of Egypt.



ALERT! NEW TESTAMENT PICTURE

Leader of God's people

Moses was chosen by God to deliver God's people. Like Jesus, Moses was chosen, protected and cared for by God. Like Jesus, Moses had a special ministry and task to do i.e. to save God's people. Moses saved the Israelites from slavery and death in Egypt. Jesus Christ saves all believers from slavery to sin and eternal condemnation and makes us a part of God's family.



INTERESTING INFO

Moses - What's in a name?

The princess ^{Ex 2:10}..named him Moses saying, "I drew him out of the water." We do not know for sure but Pharaoh's daughter may have also chosen the name as it resembles the second half of some great earlier Pharaohs such as Thutmose, Ahmose and others. Today, it appears that Moses did outshine the Pharaohs. Refer to Tyndale Commentary on Exodus, p.58

Authors Note: Today if you ask the average person on the street, "How many Pharaohs can you name?", it is not likely that you would get a confident answer. Ask any person if he has heard of Moses the great lawgiver and you probably will get a positive answer.

Understanding the Story

1. The growing number of Israelites makes Pharaoh feel very threatened. He makes them suffer as slaves and even tries to destroy them. But the Lord's hand is seen in protecting the Israelites.
2. Moses is rescued from death by Pharaoh's own daughter and is brought up under her protection. This is God's way of preparing Moses for a very important task in the near future.

Questions for Discussion

1. How do you think the family of Moses felt when Moses was born? Remember that Pharaoh had sent soldiers to kill all new born baby boys. Discuss what you think each family member felt.
2. Why did the midwives not obey the orders of Pharaoh?
3. Why do you think Pharaoh's daughter defied her father's order?

Moses and the Exodus - The Story and the History

2. Moses and the Burning Bush

Exodus 2:11 - 4:17

Exodus 2 Moses Flees to Midian

About 40 years have now gone by and Moses has grown up to be a man. During this time, Moses learnt that he was a Hebrew by birth, and only an Egyptian by adoption.

This knowledge must have caused him to think very hard about the purpose of his life. The story of Moses' life continues in Exodus chapter 2 and verse 11 onwards.

^{Ex 2:11} One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labour. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people.

¹²Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.



Moses kills an Egyptian.

¹³The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?" ¹⁴The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of

Moses grows up as a prince of Egypt 'powerful in speech and action' (Acts 7:22)

